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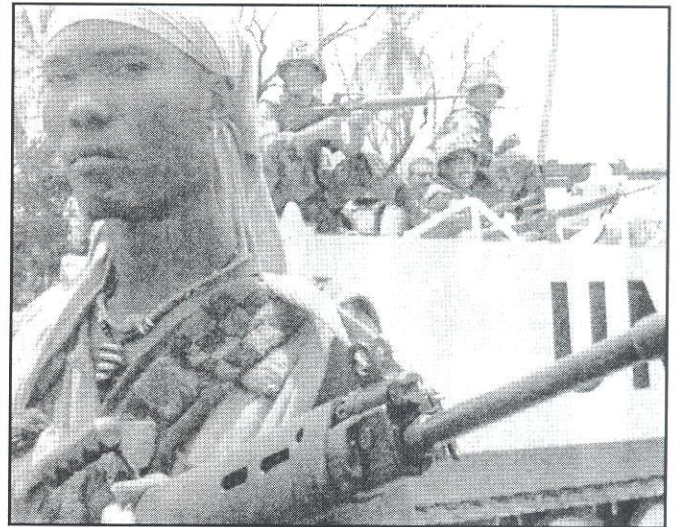
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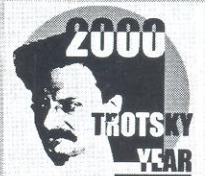
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Nationalise to save jobs

Sierra Leone



Where is
Britain Going?



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Sierra Leone: The nightmare legacy of imperialism

“If you want to know the value of a diamond here you should take all the arms and legs they chopped off and put them on one side, and all the diamonds dug up over the past ten years and put them on the other, and then you divide one into the other. That is the value of a diamond in Sierra Leone”, said Jonah Dumbuya, his right arm and ears hacked off.

Sierra Leone is a very rich country in diamonds and bloodshed. It is in the grip of a nightmare. Following the crisis in Zimbabwe, we now have the renewed crisis in Sierra Leone.

The Labour government has committed 700 heavily armed paratroopers and several ships for "humanitarian" reasons to evacuate UK and European citizens, and provide back-up to the "peace-keeping" UN forces involved in Sierra Leone's civil war. As each day passes, and with the capture of the rebel leader Sankoh, it is clear that British forces are being drawn deeper into the conflict.

According to Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, and architect of Labour's "ethical" foreign policy, the whole intervention is to be kept under review. Now the British paratroopers have been engaged in fighting the rebels, four of whom were shot dead.

The reason for the protracted civil war tearing Sierra Leone apart is the legacy of British colonialism and the struggle by the ruling cliques to rob the country's wealth. This small West African country of only 4.5 million people has suffered from eight years of civil war, which has left 50,000 dead and forced half the population to flee their homes.

Many of today's problems stem from the way in which Sierra Leone was established. In 1787 the British founded Freetown as a base. It later became Britain's biggest naval base in the South Atlantic. Later in the 19th century, British forces conquered the tribes inland, and organised an artificial state based upon different peoples, speaking 23 languages and hundreds of dialects.

With the anti-colonial struggle of the 1950s, Britain was forced to grant Sierra Leone independence in 1961. But power was handed over not to the people but to a clique of powerful families who set about plundering the country. Britain, however, propped up these corrupt regimes right up

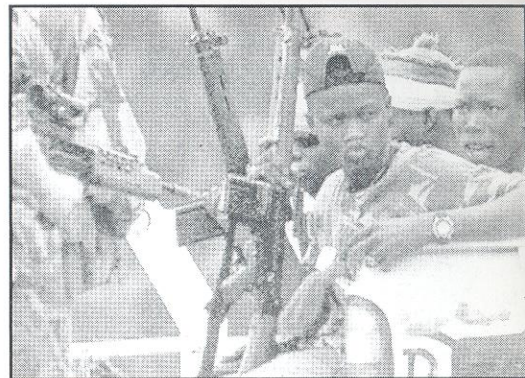
to the present time. When the government was overthrown in 1997, Sandline, a British security company, tried to provide weapons to help restore the exiled government, but fell foul of a UN arms embargo, to the embarrassment of Robin Cook.

As a reaction to the corrupt governments that ruled Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was formed under Sankoh. In 1991, the RUF started an uprising against the corrupt government which is still continuing. The rebels have used the most brutal methods to achieve power, including the mutilation of children. In reality, it is a brutal conflict between two sets of gangsters. While cynically resting on the aspirations of the masses, both sides are determined to plunder the country for themselves, determined to seize control over its vast diamond reserves. From these resources they are able to purchase weapons supplied by the imperialists.

One of the RUF's most important allies is President Charles Taylor of neighbouring Liberia. "Taylor has provided a safe haven for RUF fighters and has helped to establish their trade in diamonds, in return for a large share of the profits", according to Africa expert Comfort Ero. As long ago as 1987, Taylor planned to use Sierra Leone as a base for launching the 1990-97 civil war in Liberia. As a bourgeois bonapartist Taylor secured power in 1997, strengthened his presidency, eliminated his opponents and imposed tight controls on the media.

"Mr Taylor's assistance and encouragement was the single biggest cause of the war that has transformed diamond-rich Sierra Leone into a graveyard populated by the maimed victims of a nightmarish conflict", explains the *Financial Times*.

Last July a "peace" agreement between the three main rival groups was signed, which gave each a share in the government and promised their war crimes would be forgiven. To make sure the agreement held, the United Nations sent 11,000 troops to Sierra Leone to help police the country. The warring factions were supposed to disarm, but Sankoh, who was made chairman of the country's Strategic Mineral Resources Commission, made secret preparations to restart the war, topple Kabbah and seize power.



The UN troops were met with fierce resistance from the RUF and Sankoh, who were determined to hold on to the diamond areas. UN units were attacked, robbed of their equipment and more than 500 of them kidnapped. It was an enormous blow to their prestige.

Now the Liberian gangster Charles Taylor, who has backed the RUF for his own ends, is being involved in mediation talks, making in the words of the *Financial Times* "an extraordinary transition from notoriety to quasi-respectability." The latter notes ironically that "Mr Taylor came to power in a process every bit as brutal as the one that has brought rebel leader Foday Sankoh to international prominence."

The sanctimonious *Sunday Times* recently stated that "Post independence has shown that most African states have neither the ability or determination to manage their own affairs." This is false. It has been the role of imperialism in backing different crooks that has caused this mess. To one degree or another, all the wars which are taking place in Africa at the present time - twenty in all - are being fought out by agents of the different imperialist powers, keen to establish new spheres of influence.

Neither the British army nor the United Nations will bring peace and stability to Sierra Leone. They represent interests that have contributed to the turmoil on the African continent. It is capitalism and the stranglehold of imperialism that is the underlying cause of the crisis. Only the working class can resolve the problem armed with a socialist programme that can transform the continent. Only the working class can overcome the national and ethnic divisions and lay the basis for a socialist Africa, linked to a socialist federation of the world. Only then can the misery of war, poverty, hunger and violence be ended for ever. ☆

N. Ireland: Sectarian impasse

As the Good Friday Agreement stumbles from one crisis to another, hopes have been raised that the new "concessions" given by the provisional IRA on weapons will be sufficient to draw the Unionists into another power sharing executive and assembly with Sinn Fein.

by *Michael Sweeney*

The new proposal from the IRA on May 6 to "allow a number of our arms dumps" to be "inspected by agreed third parties" and to "completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use", is a realisation that the 25-year bombing campaign by the Provisionals has been utterly futile. Both the British and Irish governments have exerted enormous pressure to get this deal after the collapse of the assembly earlier this year.

Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, whose position was undermined by a recent challenge to his leadership, has come out in favour of a return to government. However, he has a stiff fight on his hands with his anti-agreement wing. He has used this threat to squeeze concessions out of the British government on the flying of the British flag and changes to the RUC.

Adams and McGuinness are also under pressure from IRA hardliners who are sceptical about giving up the armed struggle in favour of a power-sharing assembly and some cross border bodies. The leaders of Sinn Fein now realise that a military solution is not possible and want to enter the realm of parliamentary politics. But in the words of Trimble, the IRA's campaign is over because "it was beaten", which has stuck in the throat of republicans.

However, there are many irreconcilable issues that will render the Good Friday Agreement unworkable. The issue of policing, for example, where the RUC being 88% Protestant, is not acceptable to the Catholic population. Despite the changes stemming from the Patten report, the government has bent to Unionist pressure to retain the name of the RUC.

Adams has already said Sinn Fein cannot endorse this line given the sectarian nature of the police force. According to An Phoblacht, "This is as good as it will get. For an undefeated army to make this remarkable concession is commendable... Moves to retain the name of the RUC in any form will wreck this initiative."

It is clear the government is treading a fine line between satisfying Unionists over

the RUC and alienating republicans towards the new force. It is the dilemma that the British government has in reality faced for 30 years. They wanted to grant some kind of independence to the North in the 1960s. There was no political, economic or strategic reason for the British ruling class to maintain its hold.

The problem has been the sectarian monster that has been created by imperialism since its conquest of Ireland, and its use of the Orange Card. The division of Ireland in 1922 was to cut across the social revolution that was developing. The sectarian state created, dominated by Unionism, could never be an attraction for Catholic workers, faced with discrimination.

However, the campaign by the Provisional IRA has only served to drive the Protestant population into the arms of the Orange bigots. These are the only people terrorised by the IRA's actions not the British state. As a result the cause of a United Ireland is further away now than when their campaign began. A new period of partially devolved government will not satisfy national aspirations, nor "on the basis of the market" will it solve one of the social problems facing Catholic and Protestant workers alike.

The main reason for the IRA ceasefire and the endorsement of the Good Friday Agreement was the overwhelming sense of war weariness in the population. There was a desperation for a way out of the bombings, shootings and violence. Unfortunately, the labour movement has allowed the sectarian parties - both Green and Orange - to maintain centre stage.

This blind alley can only be broken by the workers' movement armed with real socialist policies. The whole situation cries out for the building of a genuine Labour Party based on the trade unions. In this way the grip of the sectarian parties can be ended, and a new alternative offered to the working class, both Catholic and Protestant. Class unity can be forged in action in fighting for jobs, decent wages, better housing and education.

James Connolly once said that "the cause of Ireland was the cause of Labour". The conditions that give rise to sectarianism can only be answered by a socialist programme. The only way the border can be eradicated is by a united working class in the struggle for a new society. A socialist united Ireland can be a stepping stone to a federation with a socialist Britain, and the end once and for all of sectarianism in all its forms. ☆

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Needs a united left

UNISON's National Delegate Conference (13-16 July) will take place in a changing political and economic atmosphere. Previous assumptions about the "inevitability" of a second Blair government are fading away in the face of opinion polls showing a fall in popularity that even St. Tony's latter day fatherhood seems unlikely to restore. Conference delegates will also have much to be unhappy about.

by Ron Graves,
UNISON branch secretary
(personal capacity)

Claims that the NHS is undergoing a radical and positive transformation do not reflect the real experiences of workers continuing to do excessively long hours (usually unpaid overtime, which will never be taken back as time off) and suffering ever increasing levels of stress in understaffed hospital wards and departments. The curse of low pay remains endemic throughout the public services and has not been redressed by the miserable increase in the national minimum wage, which had to be wrung out of New Labour by the threat of a backbench rebellion.

Despite UNISON promises that a Labour Government would bring an end to "Tory PFI" we see the Private Finance Initiative (by means of which the capital assets of the public services are handed over to big business while the running costs are carried by the state) continuing to be central to government "strategy". Clearly these and other issues will be taken up at length at the conference, but delegates will not reserve their anger for New Labour.

Within UNISON, there is a growing disquiet about the attitude of a leadership, which seems more interested in attacking activists (suspending individuals and whole branches on dubious grounds) than campaigning on agreed UNISON policy. Regardless of resolutions passed at previous conferences and enshrining the right of members to campaign to change UNISON and government policy, the bureaucracy has reserved to itself the right to ignore conference decisions while disciplining those who attempt to enact them. The lame excuse for failing to hold a ballot on industrial action over low pay in the NHS was that the membership records system was not up to scratch. Now, the same NEC which cannot organise adequate records wants to change the rules to give it more power to control those who could put the

problem right: the activists. This must be opposed.

At the heart of the problem, however, is the disorganisation of the left in UNISON. Despite some loud celebration that left candidates in the General Secretary election between them gathered up almost as many votes as the successful candidate (and that the right-winger was decisively rejected) the fact remains that a low poll and a poor campaign produced a victory for the candidate of the machine. And why? Primarily, because a central plank of the main left candidate's campaign amounted to an argument for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. This undoubtedly lost the votes of many UNISON members who genuinely want a democratic, campaigning union but also see the Labour Party as being theirs.

At what could well be the last UNISON Conference before the next General Election, with the likelihood at best of a much reduced Labour majority and growing economic problems, what is needed, and needed desperately, is the formation of a democratic UNISON Broad Left willing to articulate the authentic instincts of public service workers and prepared to achieve their aims. ☆

PCS: Left gains

Ever since the early days of Thatcher's Tory Government the terms and conditions of the British Civil Service have been under attack. In the guise of "market testing", the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), "Best Value" or "modernisation" the number of staff has been cut and the amount of work greatly increased. The Inland Revenue, for example, improved efficiency last year by 25% and now costs only 1.4p to collect £1 of tax. This has been achieved because of a reduction in staff numbers.

by a PCS member

The Public and Commercial Service Union (PCS) held its 2nd Bi-annual Conference, in Blackpool, during the week beginning 14th May. The conference reflected the profound disagreements between the leadership and the majority of the delegates and union activists. It also highlighted the conditions under which members were working.

Delegates went to the rostrum to explain how they were suffering symptoms of stress. Management initiatives such as "Fitness for work", which have targets for reducing the rate of sick absences by 20% by 2001 and 30% in 2002 assume that staff are falsely taking time-off, and do not encourage people to get better.

Further health and safety problems were identified with the growth of the use of call centres. Longer hours of work and the

demand of the government to be "open all hours" give a lie to their supposed "Family Friendly" policies. These new forms of working will lead to more stress and more sickness - the reduction of the sickness targets will not be met.

Probably the most important debate was held in the section entitled "Partnership & Privatisation". With the proposed partial privatisation (leading to a full privatisation in due course) of National Air Traffic Service fully in mind, the whole principal was opposed. As the Paddington Rail enquiry is showing when the question of safety or making a profit is raised, the money will always win out.

Anger came to the surface over a recent ballot over a partnership agreement with the employer. Whilst the National Executive Committee won the ballot, the issues were sprung on the membership without debate or the expression of opposition views. The victory will prove short-lived, as the Service is cut further and the demands for saving filter through in further job cuts.

On wider issues there was a call for the union to affiliate to the "United Campaign to repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws". This Labour government has yet to release the straightjacket from union activity to allow them to achieve better terms and conditions for their members.

Elections for union positions showed gains for the Left, including the election of a supporter of the left as one of the four Vice-Presidents.

The French daily newspaper *Le Monde*, recently identified the difference between the British and Continental Civil Services as the difference between "Value for Money" and "Public Service". Constant change and the imposition of the values of the capitalist market have eroded the best traditions of the British Civil Service and has left it demoralised and angry. ☆

RMT: Urgent change needed

There is a need for change within the RMT. The rank and file membership are dissatisfied with the service they receive both locally and nationally. Many activists are pursuing personal agendas to the cost of the wider membership. There is also a strong belief that full time officers of the union are working hand in hand with the Blair Government. This can be seen in the lack of action after the Ladbroke Grove incident. That was the best opportunity we had to remove Driver Only Operation from all trains run on Railtrack infrastructure. All we got was a couple of press conferences, no industrial action, no mass campaign against privatisation. Even the Role and Responsibility of the Guard campaign has lost momentum.

Brian Smith

RMT Crewe (personal capacity)

The South West Trains referendum ballot was found to be inaccurate. This gave SWT management the golden opportunity to threaten legal action if industrial action was taken by the RMT. It appears that action was halted on the strength of this perceived threat.

The members survey was a central item of the election manifesto of the General Secretary. Many activists within the RMT are sceptical of the contents of the membership survey which was recently mailed to all members. Much of this scepticism is simply because the survey was ordered by the General Secretary. It was commissioned by the Council of Executives in September 1999. The final return of the survey was 23% of those sent out to members.

Whatever the point of view of the activists, the results of the survey make interesting reading and showed how the RMT may well need to organise in the future.

This survey was part of the promised "root and branch overhaul" of the union. The following key results were produced. Only 11% of members regularly attend Branch meetings (General Rail Grades Branches) but up to 24% attend in the Bus and Road Freight (company and workplace organised branches). Of all members 68% never attend branch meetings. As can be seen the branches that are organised by work place or company the attendance is over 50% better than the General Grades

Rail branches.

There are many within the RMT that want to protect the current arrangements: "Full steam ahead with the gravy train". This may well not be to the long term benefit of the membership of RMT.

It is interesting to reflect on the voting totals for the General Secretary. Only 54% of branches nominated one of the two candidates for election. And I understand only approximately 26% of the membership returned a ballot paper for the General Secretary election.

As can be seen the level of activity within the Union has substantial scope for improvement.

There is a growing opinion within the RMT that the current structure is ineffective and unable to cope with the current industrial climate within the transport industry. As can be seen from the survey results LT Tube, Road Freight and Bus branches are generally better organised and the members are more active within those branches. It is also the case that those members are more satisfied with the service from the RMT.

The same principle applies to Grades. The conferences, the current demarcations are grouped around Grades e.g. train crew and shunting, bus workers, catering, road freight, shipping, engineering, clerical and supervisory, passenger traffic and carriage and wagon, etc. These groupings are not particularly relevant to the transport industry now. Restructuring of many of the former BR companies has removed former grade boundaries. Multi-skilling of the work force and privatisation has meant major changes to the industry. The union structure must adapt to this change in order to keep pace with the membership. A full debate within all sectors of the union must take place to arrive at an agreed solution for the sustained future growth of RMT within the transport industry.

This review will also have to encompass the constitution of conferences grouped by grades/skill groups or company/workplace. (63% of the lay membership support company/workplace branch organisation).

Linking in with this review must be a renewed effort to recruit members into the Labour party via the political levy. This has been generally ignored over the last three years. There is massive scope for recruitment. ☆

Capital Idea



Staff axed on screen

About 45 Vodafone workers at a call centre near Bristol were sacked by computer when a message flashed on screen: "Please log off your computer and clear your desk". On Friday the mobile phone firm announced it was to close five of its 13 centres. A spokesman said: "I don't think it was supposed to happen that way."

Winners and Losers

While the rich are getting richer, the poor are still on the slide further down the ladder. In the mid-1980s, the income ratio of the poorest to the richest 5% of the world's population was 1:78. Today it is 1:123. Meanwhile, despite all the talk of an "African Renaissance", the combined debt of African countries rose from 122 billion dollars in 1983 to 350 billion dollars last year. On present trends this figure will increase dramatically over the next decade. Those living in poverty will increase by a further 116 million.

Give peace a chance?

As wars and internal conflict rage across 20 African countries, which are fundamentally a product of the legacy of imperialism on the continent, some capitalist strategists have been offering some very good "advice". Edward Luttwak, for instance, argues from his comfortable armchair that the Africans should be left alone to fight it out amongst themselves. We must "give war a chance", as this can resolve matters. ☆

Darkest Day for Blairism:

Comments on the local and London elections

"Britain is already a different and better country..."
Tony Blair at the Periodical Publishers Association, 9th May.

"I'm totally opposed to New Labour. They are not any different to the Thatcherites. I would like to see a return to the old values."
George Fleetwood, 48, an engineer.

"I have a wife and two children to raise and I really thought in 1997 that we were heading for a bright new era. Tony Blair has failed to deliver. If anything, he is more of a Tory than many Tories."
Brian Cox, 31, unemployed dockyard labourer.

Labour's heartlands deserted the Blair government on Thursday 4th May. It was a dark day for Blairism and New Labour. It was the worst result for the Labour Party since 1992, with the loss of 600 council seats and Labour's Frank Dobson being forced into third place in London's mayoral election. Labour stalwarts simply stayed at home. If repeated in a general election, Labour would have won 293 seats to the Tories 282, resulting in a hung parliament.

by Rob Sewell

The depth of disillusionment with the Blair government was reflected in a low turnout of 30% nationally, and 32% in London. As a result Labour lost control of Oldham, Walsall, Portsmouth, Southampton and Hartlepool, the seat of Labour Minister Peter Mandelson. In Birmingham, where the threat to Longbridge hangs over the city, Labour's 36-majority was cut to 15. The Liberals were able to consolidate their hold over the former Labour strongholds of Liverpool and Sheffield, which has arisen not only with despair with Blair but the past actions of right-wing Labour councils. A layer of Labour voters voted Liberal in protest at New Labour.

Blair's defeat in the local elections is a continuation of the defeats in Scotland, Wales, the European elections, and now the London mayor. It reflects growing disillusionment with the pro-capitalist policies of the Blair government.

This concern has been expressed even by right-wing Labour MPs, such as Peter Kilfoyle - regarded in the past as beyond the pale - who resigned from the government in protest at its failure to help Labour's "core" supporters. "There is a lot of unease out there", he said. "Let's hope this is a short sharp shock which will renew the leadership's perception of what needs to be done."

Although the Tory Party gained some 600 seats, its loss of the Romsey by-election, a traditional Tory stronghold, to the Liberals is an indication of the mess the

Tories are still in. Hague has taken the party to the right with his speeches against asylum seekers and law and order. But this is out of desperation at the fear of a poor showing at the next general election.

However, Labour cannot take things for granted. In London, the Labour Party failed to take a majority in the Assembly, running neck and neck with the Tories. Dobson was beaten humiliatingly into third place well behind the Tory candidate Norris with only 13% of the vote.

Sectarian conception

As Ken Livingstone said after Labour's defeat: "For the third time - in Scotland, Wales and now London - those with a narrow sectarian conception of Labour have inflicted severe damage on the party." The Blairites have brought the party to the edge of destruction by their policies and antics. They are in danger of throwing away the victory of 1997.

Not only are abstentions running very high, but morale in the party is at rock bottom. There is enormous cynicism of the membership towards the leadership. Many refused to canvass or campaign during the election. The party's ex-assistant general secretary, David Pitt-Watson, has warned about the rank and file's alienation from Millbank. "The culture of Millbank grates with that of the larger party", he said. "Because Millbank and the party in the country operate in these two different political cultures (sic), party members can think of Millbank as distant, arrogant and control-

ling when it has no intention to be so.

"And to the professionals (!), the party on the ground looks like a bunch of amateurs and it treats them accordingly."

He concludes that there could be a disaster. "As a result the electorate will not simply bother to vote. Our activists won't bother to get out of their chairs. We will win the battle, but we will not win the war."

Next election

The fear of losing the next election has forced the Labour leaders to postpone an early date. They are looking for scapegoats. There is talk of abandoning further constitutional "reform", which threatens to abolish the General Committees and the wards of the party, after a threatened revolt. Even Sir Ken Jackson has said "enough is enough". This means the Blair Project - the attempt to turn the Labour Party into a capitalist party - has hit a brick wall.

However, the Blairities are determined to continue with their Tory policies. For them it is only a matter of presentation! They are to push through, despite massive opposition, the privatisation of air traffic control. They are still looking to privatise London Underground. They are completely blind to the processes taking place.

It is time the rank and file called a halt! The Labour government must be forced to abandon this disastrous course. The feeling in the General Committees of the party is one of growing anger with the Blairites. In London, there must be a recall conference to sort out the mess over the mayor. Livingstone, who was manoeuvred out of being the Labour candidate by Millbank must be readmitted into the party at once.

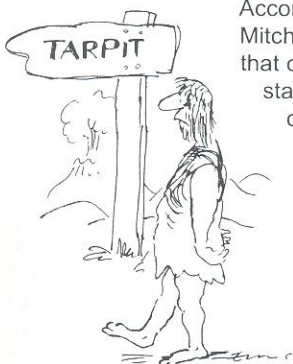
The campaign for real socialist policies must be put back on the agenda now. The pro-capitalist policies of Blair are threatening to shipwreck the party and prepare the way for the return of the Tories. Only on the basis of a nationalised planned economy, under workers control and management, can the reforms that Labour supporters want be carried through. A decent job, a decent wage, a decent education, a decent house, a real future for our children! However, on the basis of the "market" none of these can be secured. Only a bold socialist programme can satisfy the aspirations of working people. It is time to change course! ☆

Labour must change course

Since 1997 Labour's lead over the Tories in the polls has hovered around 13%. Over the same period some quarter of a million manufacturing jobs have been destroyed. Today Labour's lead has fallen to 7%, the lowest since the general election - according to a Guardian/ICM opinion poll published on May 16 - raising the awful spectre of a Tory comeback.

by Peter Harris

Tony Blair was keen to claim credit for the 1997 election victory for himself and New Labour. Now his net personal approval rating has slumped from 34% last year to just one percent today. In reality, Labour's landslide was due to a desire for real change, for an end to the Tory years of sleaze, privatisation and attacks on our living standards. For millions nothing's changed, for many things have got worse.



ABOVE: HOW EARLIER LABOUR TRAITORS WERE PUNISHED.

According to Austin Mitchell MP, "The fact that our vote fell substantially is an indication that people don't think we're making life better for the mass of people." Now Millbank has suddenly discovered the 'core vote'. The only way to win the core vote is to

abandon privatisation, and introduce socialist measures.

Blairism has now demonstrated itself over and over again to be unelectable. Lord Sawyer, Labour's former general secretary and a leading architect of "modernisation", says that Tony Blair's "command leadership style" is leaving many Labour members and MPs feeling cast aside.

No more than a handful of local parties support Blair. Under pressure from below even the tops of the unions are being forced to come out in opposition.

The Times (May 11) reported that seven major unions have secretly organised to intervene at the July National Policy Forum. One unnamed senior union source is quoted as saying, "We've never attempted...to squeeze the leadership like this before...We are at long last practising what we have always preached: unity is strength." Why does this all have to be done in secret? A campaign should be launched by these unions to recapture the Party. A campaign not just on European employment legislation, but against privatisation, for a real increase in the minimum wage and for the renationalisation of the railways, would attract workers into the party. Just ten percent of the members of these unions actively involved in the Labour Party would transform it from top to bottom.

The Big Poll, the general election, is not far away. Now is the time for trade unionists to get involved in the party, to claim it back and to turn it around, to stop the Tories coming back, and to make Labour represent the interests of the core vote that created the party - ordinary working class people. ☆

Labour loses "model" York

Last month Labour lost overall control of the flagship authority of York after a devastating defeat at the hands of the Lib Dems in a local by-election.

York has been held up by the Labour leadership as a Blairite city council which has pioneered "reforms" and efficiency measures.

Despite a campaign involving a string of Ministers, including John Prescott, the party suffered an humiliating loss of York city council on a 25% swing to the Lib Dems in a crucial by-election.

Although the party lost 17 councils and 500 seats in the May elections, this reversal in its safest ward in York gave Labour

25 seats to the Lib Dems' 23, the Tories' three and independents' one.

The turnout was an amazing 35% for this council by-election!

Rod Hills, the council's leader, said he found it hard to understand how a "model New Labour council" could possibly loose. "The truth of the matter is... we couldn't get our vote out."

As with the rest of the local election results, Blairism nationally and locally has disillusioned Labour supporters and has been a disaster for the Labour Party. On this road, more councils will be lost, and Labour's general election prospects put in jeopardy. ☆

Liverpool: Worst results

by Mick Hogan, Liverpool

Labour's worst result in 50 years" was the headline on the *Liverpool Echo* after the local election. The party achieved only 17,391 votes, less than 1 in 20 of the Liverpool electorate.

The Labour vote collapsed two years ago to 20,930 from the 1996 figure of 36,913 and the council was lost to the Liberal Democrats. The blame was put on the "old Labour" leadership on the council and a new Blairite leadership was groomed and took over just before the 1999 elections. What was ignored was the fact that the so called "old Labour" leadership was in fact the right wing that had been hoisted into power following the witch-hunt against the left and any who would not vote for rent increases and redundancies.

At the time *Socialist Appeal* explained that it was the right wing policies and the stark contrast with the 49 Liverpool Labour councillors, later 47 after the death of two comrades, who were prepared to fight for the city in 1983-7 which had led to the collapse in the vote. This was shown by comparing the parlous results of today with the 1986 vote of 70,693. 1986 was the low point of the Labour vote under the 49.

Labour leader, Gideon Ben-Tovim's only defence now is complacency. He stated that Labour was not losing anymore wards when in fact two more were lost over last year. Ben-Tovim's only tactics were to say how new the Labour leadership were *and rely on a Liberal Democrat turncoat* who promptly lost a council seat that had been successfully defended last year.

The real losers however are the council workers and the people of Liverpool, no sooner were the Liberal Democrats elected than they announced 500 job losses and cuts in Education, possibly 15 primary schools, and social services, of £8m.

Now it is up to the trade unions and the community to fight to defend jobs and services, however in the future the party in Liverpool must be taken back by the working class. ☆

Ford stewards call for action

The 2750 job losses at Dagenham, 1350 now and 1400 by April 2002, are the major part of an onslaught on jobs, pay and conditions. The truck fleet are now faced with partial outsourcing. The Halewood Transmission Plant will become part of a joint venture between Ford and the German firm Getrag along with the Bordeaux and Cologne Transmission Plants. This will probably mean the removal of the Halewood Transmission Plant from the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee.

by a Ford Shop steward

The separation of the Halewood Body and PTA plants from the FNJNC is likely to take place this summer when they begin production of the new Jaguar car. The separation of the Visteon Plants will occur in six years time. Out of the current 19,000 hourly paid Ford workers in the 17 UK Plants there will only be 8 Plants and 5000 Ford workers left. In 1980 there were 22 Plants and 80,000 hourly paid Ford workers in Britain. The collective bargaining strength of the Ford combine will be devastated. What will prevent the closure of further plants over the next few years? What bargaining strength will Ford workers be left with in future pay deals? This is the biggest threat we have ever faced.

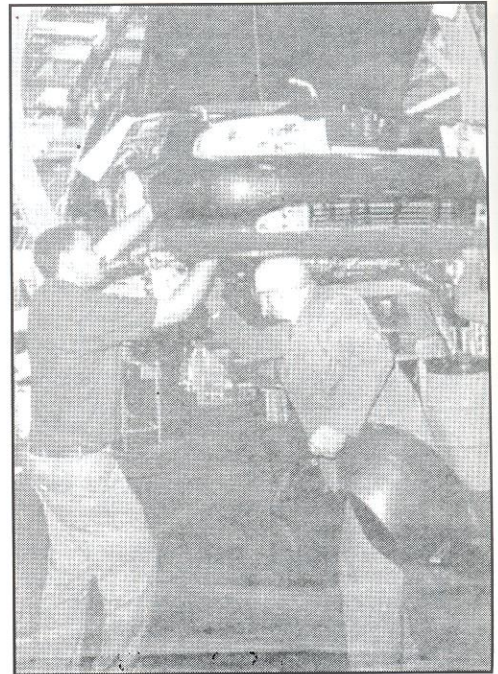
The reneging by the Company of the Blue book agreement on job security for Dagenham should come as no surprise. This Company will tell any amount of lies in their greed for more profit. Look at their promises made three years ago when they said there was no intention to separate Visteon from Ford. Now Chairman of Visteon, Pete Pestillo, has said it was planned right from the start!

The Company say they are ending production in Dagenham due to overcapacity in Europe. Can they be believed? When Dagenham lost Sierra production in 1989 and became a single car plant we were told it would have no impact on our future. Now they say the reason Dagenham will not produce the new Fiesta is due to inflexibility due to the cost of installing a second production line while still producing the old car. Rumours abound that once the workforce in the Body Plant and PTA are made redundant they will re-tool the line and employ a new contract labour workforce, able to impose any conditions and hire and fire at will. This is precisely what happened at the Ford Ipiranga and Sao Bernardo plants in Brazil where altogether 4168 workers were made redundant and the Plants closed and a new plant in Bahia opened, manned entirely with contract labour. Jac Nasser,

worldwide President of Ford, was quoted as saying that this is the way all plants around the world will operate in the future. Mazda, which Ford controls with a 33.4% stake, has announced the possibility of transferring some production to Europe to avoid currency fluctuations. Ford Europe Chairman Nick Scheele was quoted on the day of the announcement on Dagenham as saying "we are obviously talking to them" and "this action does not rule out the possibility of doing that". Transfer of Volvo work is another possibility.

As part of the monopolisation process in the struggle to capture market shares Ford purchased Volvo in March last year. By purchasing Volvo they increased their European capacity by 500,000 cars. By capturing extra market share from Volvo sales they have increased vehicle sales in Europe last year by 110,000 to 1,960,000, up from 1,850,000 in 1998. This still leaves 390,000 overcapacity. They have further increased capacity by purchasing Land Rover and the Solihull plant. Ford made a point of announcing the closure of Plonsk in Poland and Obchuck in Belarus as a way of diverting criticism that they were attacking only Dagenham. But Plonsk only had 240 workers and produced only 28,300 vehicles last year while Obchuck only had 100 workers and produced 434 vehicles! Dagenham produced 191,000 cars and vans last year. That still leaves 200,000 vehicles too many. But why have they kept the press shop and 440 workers in the tool room if the intention is to end vehicle assembly? Why is the 'Business Park', planned for the outsourcing of jobs, still going ahead? Ford will obviously not reveal their plans.

The workers in the Volvo Plants could be under threat. The Born plant in the Netherlands has 5400 workers and produced 263,000 vehicles in 1999. The Ghent plant in Belgium has 3143 workers and produced 151,350. The Uddevalla plant in Sweden has 896 workers and produced 15,000. The Gothenburg plant has 3633 workers and produced 90,206. The promise



to increase Engine production at Dagenham and Bridgend, providing there is no strike action over the redundancies, means 800 jobs at Almusafes in Valencia in Spain are under threat.

Ford's tactic of divide and rule continues. They play worker against worker, one plant against another, one country against another in order to increase their profits and to drive down costs. Their plans are to reduce operating costs by \$1 billion per year. In their annual report they boast that over the last three years they have reduced their operating costs by \$6.2 billion. All this has led to record earnings of \$7.2 billion for 1999. Ford still have cash reserves of \$13 billion after purchasing Kwik Fit for \$1.6 billion, Plastic Omnium for \$500 million, Volvo for \$6.45 billion and now Land Rover. In April Ford announced a \$10 billion bonus as part of a shareholder value enhancement plan - this would be enough to keep the plant open for over 100 years! Jac Nasser last year received a salary of \$1.5 million, a bonus of \$6.7 million and 'other compensation' of \$1.8 million. He also received shares worth \$7 million. If you take the final earnings for 1999 of the top six Executives it amounts to \$38,254,363.

The Dagenham and Basildon shop stewards' committees have called for action up to and including strike action. Now the national leadership must launch a call for strike action for the whole Ford combine. It should be accompanied by a campaign of marches and lobbies to raise awareness and prepare the fight. A meeting of all Ford Shop Stewards should be called to plan the campaign. Direct links with European Shop Stewards' committees should be established to prevent the company's divide and rule. By these means the Company can be defeated in their plans. ☆

... as bosses throw down the gauntlet

The threat to car production at the Ford plant at Dagenham is part of a world strategy by Ford to transform its business. This "most global of the global corporations" is lining up for a battle royal with its workforce. Ford is using overcapacity problems to drive through the biggest assault on terms and conditions of Ford workers since perhaps the early interwar period.

by our industrial correspondent

For more than 15 years, the workers have been subjected to a "softening up" process with the introduction of lean production techniques, including outsourcing, subcontracting, and the break up of the workforce. Everything that the trade union movement has fought for is under threat.

Driven by new market conditions, the Ford Motor Company is reverting to its original bare-knuckle approach. The original Fordism - based on an anti-union and autocratic approach to the workers - is back on the agenda.

The Ford Company's so-called secret of success in its early years under Henry Ford was its total flexibility of labour. The motor industry at that time was a hire-and-fire industry. There were no seniority rights and everyone was employed from day to day. Labour turnover rates were extremely high. According to Huw Beynon, "The plants were run by the iron hand and arbitrary justice of the foreman." (*Working for Ford*)

Ford originally based its position on non-union casual labour. When Ford announced new hirings at its Highland Park plant in Michigan, thousands arrived at the gates seeking work. Some of the newcomers were selected. 'Hey you...' The rest were told that 'men who formed crowds wouldn't be considered'. In the middle of winter they stood there at the gates, waiting. 'No more hirings today.' Perhaps tomorrow. 'No hirings today.' Ford employed repression and violence in its plants in the twenties and thirties. It was a no-go area for trade unions.

The new regime has been described as a machine age nightmare. By 1928 the New York Times was calling Ford 'an industrial fascist - the Mussolini of Detroit'. With increased competition and the world slump, work was speeded up and the wage rate was cut.

"We will never recognise the United Auto Workers or any other union", stated Henry Ford. "Labour union organisations are the worse things that ever struck the earth, because they take away a man's independence."

In reality, it was the regime within Ford that robbed men of their independence. And to back this up Ford employed Bennett's Service men as a three and a half thousand private police force. Ford's Service Department policed the gates of his factories, infiltrated groups of union activists, posed as workers to spy on men on the line and helped operate gangsterism in Detroit.

"Under this tyranny the Ford worker had no security, no rights", says Beynon. Above all, Ford organisation was determined to prevent unionisation. Other car bosses did the same. Between 1933 and 1936, for example, General Motors spent one million dollars on espionage, employing fourteen detective agencies and two hundred spies at a time.

Breakthrough

It was in 1936 that the UAW made a breakthrough, by organising a successful sit-down strike at Midland Steel, the supplier of steel body frames to Chrysler and Ford. A year later the sit-down tactic was successful in forcing GM to recognise the union. However, it was not until 1941 that Ford was forced to follow suit. It took a further three years and a sit-down strike in Dagenham before the Ford Motor Company would recognise unions in Britain.

The post war upswing saw an expansion of the car industry in Britain and elsewhere, employing tens of thousands of workers. With full employment, the unions, and above all the shop stewards organisation, inside Ford became powerful levers to win better wages and conditions for the workers. Profits were booming so Ford was able to give concessions. There were significant elements of workers control, with control over hiring and firing for example. Even then speed-ups and productivity deals were introduced as production was 'streamlined'.

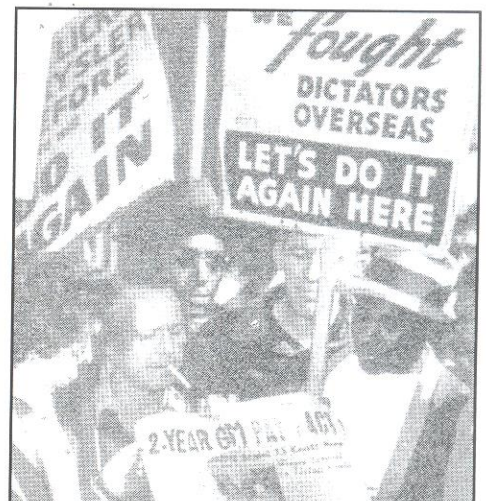
Today, however, with overcapacity and ruthless competition between the car giants, new methods are being introduced to increase the intensity of labour. New 'management-by-stress' techniques involving just-in-time systems, team working, multi-

skilling, flexibility of labour, and contracting out, have all served to transform the shop floor. It is work study with a vengeance. Kaizan, or continuous improvement, is on the order of the day. In layman's language, this is nothing more than continuous speed-up. However, this is not the end, this is the beginning of a corporate shake-up that is about to hit the world car industry. That is the real meaning behind the recent attacks of the Ford Motor Company.

Ford is planning to remove all obstacles to its drive for increased profits. This is not post-Fordism, but a return to the repressive management of the past. Today, workers are not even promised prosperity in return for greater productivity. Survival, not increased prosperity, is what is on offer. This is the nightmare future that the bosses are offering: survival of the fittest, and the rest go to the wall.

Ford has a plan. It has been agreed behind closed doors. They are determined to maintain their market lead, and their booming profits. This can only be achieved by the break-up of the present consensus, and the complete subordination of the workforce. This means casualisation, outsourcing and contract labour. Unionised labour is to become extinct.

However, just as Ford was beaten in the past, the company can be beaten again. This means that the unions must stop adopting the bosses' game. The policy of 'social partnership' has delivered what the bosses wanted, while the workers were placed on the treadmill. It is time to make a stand against company bullying. Only militant trade unionism, coupled with decisive action, can turn the tide. This is the vital lesson of the past. ☆



NISSAN: Bosses threaten UK pull out

In the past British workers were told they needed to follow the example of Nissan to improve our flexibility and efficiency. After years of cuts and a veritable counter revolution on the shopfloor, Nissan has now decided to follow the example of European bosses by threatening closures and job losses. At the end of last year Nissan top management announced the

unprecedented closure of five plants in Japan itself and the loss of 21,000 jobs world wide. The Nissan plant was safe however, because it is a model of flexibility and efficiency.

by our industrial correspondent

Now, however, Nissan is threatening to switch production of its next Micra car away from the UK, raising the spectre of thousands more job losses in the battered motor industry. The Japanese company, like other manufacturers, has found its profits savaged by the high value of the pound, and remember these people are in business to make profit not cars.

The crisis facing the Sunderland plant coincides, not accidentally with Ford announcing the end of car production at Dagenham and the crisis in Rover..

Nissan's bosses are clearly using the fear of job losses against the background of Ford, Rover and the manufacturing crisis in general to blackmail yet more productivity out of the Sunderland workforce. Ford and Rover bosses blame the productivity of the workforce for their troubles. In reality, the fault lies with management and underinvestment, as well as the extreme overcapacity in the world car market, not the workforce who have striven might and main, and accepted the endless impositions of management. What thanks do they receive for their efforts?

Nissan's Sunderland plant is Europe's most efficient, but the company has warned that unless there are drastic cost cuts there, the next Micra will be built in the French and Spanish factories of its partner Renault - Renault bought a 36.8% stake in the firm last year - from 2003.

Nissan is joining in with the European model by maintaining profits and increasing productivity not through investment, that is using technology to improve output, but through cutbacks and changes to hours and conditions, in other words making fewer of us work harder.

Management had already announced plans to improve capacity utilisation from 53% to 82% over the next three years. They intend to move from a shift pattern of 3600 hours of annual production to 4400 hours. This is to be achieved by sackings, closures and threats to make those lucky enough to keep their jobs work harder. The Sunderland plant now finds itself in this category.

Almost half of the 330,000 cars built there this year will be Micras.

Unless the model is replaced, 2,000 jobs could go, with at least a further 10,000 at suppliers, and thousands more in the local community. A decision is expected in late 2000 or early 2001.

Nissan bosses are also keen to use Britain as a base for penetrating the European market, because of its 'flexible' labour laws - that is the anti union laws, and the ability to hire and fire at will. However, the strength of the pound against the euro makes cars produced here expensive on the continent, therefore Nissan bosses are demanding that Britain join the euro. This 'advice' is based not on the interests of the British economy, and certainly not those of their workforce, but solely on their ability to gain market share and profits.

A spokesman for Nissan said: "We have not decided on where we are going to build the next Micra. The UK is a good site but it must win the investment, and to do that it has to reduce its costs by 30 per cent."

Even reaching that target however would not guarantee that Micra production would remain. It is a very small carrot being dangled in the far distance.

Automotive News Europe says Nissan UK chief John Cushnaghan, who has made the firm's calls for Britain to join the single

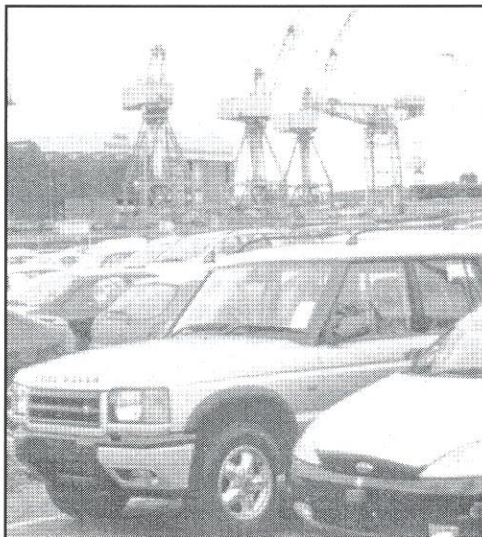
currency, wants fewer platforms used at Sunderland. The Nissan Almera and Primera will continue to be built there, but the Micra can easily share a Renault Clio floorpan. This is clearly blackmail.

The overcapacity in the automobile industry is one of the most graphic illustrations of the waste and inefficiency of the capitalist system. It is wholly unjustifiable and unsustainable.

The Sunderland workforce are clearly not immune from the same anarchic market forces threatening manufacturing workers across the country. They need to link up with Ford, Rover, Vauxhall and all car workers to overcome company divisions. A joint shop stewards body across the industry could organise a united struggle in defence of jobs. The trade union movement and the TUC should be organising just such a campaign in the face of a mass redundancy crisis. It is not the job of union leaders to pontificate over how best to defend the interests of British capitalism, and the bosses' profits. It is their job to organise the fight to defend and improve our jobs, wages and conditions.

That campaign should be taken into the Labour Party too. Not over joining the euro, but to demand an end to the anti-working class laws which encourage these firms to behave the way they do. To demand too that any firm threatening redundancies should be taken into public ownership and run democratically by the workforce themselves.

The car industry in particular should be nationalised. Under the control and direction of the workforce it could produce cars more efficiently, and more efficient cars. At the same time, bearing in mind overcapacity, production could be diversified to meet other needs. While the ownership of these multinationals remains in private hands this colossal waste and inefficiency will continue. While the Labour leaders remain wedded to the market, jobs will continue to be destroyed. No one is safe. Car workers and all workers need a fighting lead from the unions and a change of direction from the Labour government. ☆



Power workers vote for action

Workers in the electricity supply company Scottish Power, which includes Manweb, the Merseyside, North Wales and Cheshire arm of the business, have voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action. A high turn-out in the postal ballot produced an 86% vote in favour of the action. The unions involved are the TGWU, the AEEU and the GMB.

Last December Scottish Power announced that to deliver the cheaper electricity bills of around £315 per year that the electricity regulator requires they would make 450 staff redundant. The company's justification for dumping its staff is to maintain the high profit levels necessary to pay the shareholders the returns they are used to. The redundancies would affect the staff who repair and maintain the electricity network regardless of the negative impact on the security of your electricity supply, and in spite of the huge profits the company makes year in year out.

The staff have endured the dripping tap of voluntary redundancy ever since the Tories privatised the industry and are saying

enough is enough. Mass meetings of staff have taken place in Scotland and at Chester football club where calls to take the company on and to oppose all redundancies received an enthusiastic response. This is the first time that Scottish Power has faced any serious opposition to its plans and, more importantly, the first time that the unions both in Scotland and Manweb have united to take the company on. Shop stewards from Manweb attended the mass meeting in Scotland and Scottish stewards went to the Manweb meeting in Chester.

The unions are determined to force the withdrawal of the job cuts and the ballot result proved that the workers back them and gave a great boost to the confidence of all concerned that this is a fight we can win.

The company recently announced profits of £3720 million and an increase of 10.2% on the dividend for shareholders. The workers received a pay rise of just 3.1%. ☆

by a *Scottish Power shop steward*

Class divide

Profiting from misery

The American company CCA, notorious for running private prisons, has the corporate slogan "If You Build It. They Will Come". It has let loose hopelessly trained non-union warders on inmates. In South Carolina, the authorities were forced to cancel a contract with CCA, when it became known they packed 18 boys into a one-man cell and were forced to use paper cups if they wanted the toilet. Such things couldn't happen here! Well, CCA was given the contract to run Blakenhurst Prison in Worcestershire. When an inquest found that Alton Manning, a black inmate, had been unlawfully killed when he was dragged through the jail in a necklock by a gang of guards, its employees were not punished and indulgent Labour Ministers gave the corporation another contract to run a prison in Salford.

Jobs Unravel

Britain's ailing textile industries suffered a fresh blow with news that Courtaulds Textiles is to shed more than 600 jobs in Bolsover, Wishaw and Middlesbrough. This comes on top of Courtaulds closures at Alfreton, Mansfield and Nottingham, and job losses at its factory in Worksop. "Our members are angry and upset and we plan to fight it all the way", said Bas Morris, deputy general secretary of the Knitwear, Footwear and Textile Workers Union. "How much longer is the government going to sit on the fence? Our industry is shedding jobs at an alarming rate. They must act now." It is about time Labour intervened to nationalise the industry under workers control and management to safeguard jobs. They must have a ten pound note spare. ☆

CWU: Anger Over Deal

The Post Office section of the CWU begins its conference with many activists expressing anger at the controversial Way Forward agreement which changed a range of pay and condition terms for the majority of the postal membership. The first ballot of members on the Way Forward agreement rejected it and the second, after minor changes were agreed, saw it being narrowly passed, following a massive propaganda campaign by both Post Office management and union leaders to get it carried.

The concerns for the future relate to the effect of the reorganisation of the Post Office known as Shaping for Competitive Success (SCS), the role of the regulator under the new Post Office Act, the reduction in the Monopoly (which would allow competitors to cream off the easiest work) and the possibility of privatisation by a future government whether Conservative or Labour. Worryingly, it is well known that a number of ministers and "advisors" have been in favour of Post Office privatisation ever since the election in 1997.

Every section of the Post Office -Royal Mail, Parcels, Counters, Customer

Management- is being told that the future will be difficult, that there are 'market pressures' and competition, and that we must accept still further detrimental and unacceptable changes to pay conditions. It is essential that CWU leaders unite all sections of the workforce so that we can act as one to deal with the problems that confront us. Accepting business, grade or sectional divisions has to end now. This is the only way to achieve reasonable agreements and fulfil the hopes of members to see the end of what they regard as a fundamental "rot" in the Post Office.

Despite the election of a Labour Government the continual pressures from managers in all sections of the Post Office have not abated. There is still misuse of things such as disciplinary procedures. The Crown Office network is being privatised even further and other elements of Post Office clerical work have been either privatised or threatened with privatisation. It is essential for all Post Office workers that the Tories are not re-elected but it is becoming harder all the time to convince CWU members that they must turn out and vote Labour. The Post Office is still a large employer and Post Office workers are a good barometer of working class opinion. The attitudes portrayed at this conference are something that the leaders of the Labour Party, in particular, would be well advised to take note of. ☆

Andy Blake, London 7 CWU (pers cap)

Cool Cymru Warming Up



The Welsh working class and its labour movement has a long and proud tradition of militancy. However, particularly since the defeat of the miners' strike in the 80's, the movement (especially the 'heartlands' of the old industrial areas in South Wales) has been firmly in the grip of the right wing. The annual outings of the Wales TUC and Wales Labour Party Conference have become renowned for their tedium. Unlike the Scottish TUC which still has a spark of socialist fervour, the Wales TUC even removed the teeth from their Welsh dragon logo some years ago. South Wales has more than its share of the dead right wing labour councils in 'rotten boroughs' that New Labour uses as its excuse to attack local government services.

by Mark Turner, Cardiff

Many socialists left the party in the 80's in disgust at the dead weight of the right wing and Kinnock's witchunt, which only strengthened the right wing grip on Labour and the unions.

So, what is the real picture of Labour in Wales three years into a Labour government?

In 1998 the referendum produced a slim victory for the 'Yes' vote for the Welsh Assembly. It was affected by the fact that the movement for devolution was spurred on by the deep desire to mitigate Tory policies in Wales. A Labour government with a massive majority was not something Welsh workers thought they needed protection from. Hence the poor turnout and close victory.

The imposed selection procedure for Welsh Assembly candidates in the party, quickly gave us an inkling of what was to come. The "twinning" procedure meant one constituency would be allowed a male candidate, the twinned constituency then being forced to have a woman candidate. Over half the Welsh constituencies joined the "campaign against twinning" and almost derailed the whole affair. These constituencies were always explicit that it was not a sexist campaign but one against the loss of a constituency's right to select its own candidate. It was a democratic revolt.

This grew into the enormous groundswell of support for Rhodri Morgan in the campaign for the leader of the Assembly.

Alun Michael had not even sought to be a candidate for the Assembly until Blair 'asked' him to stand! He was clearly identified as Blair's man, and before you could blink, the leaders of the T&G in Wales had declared their intention (in their members interests, of course) to vote for Michael.

The entire situation changed; rather like the Ken Livingstone fiasco to come, the Welsh working class were inflamed. Rhodri Morgan is not, and has never been, a left winger, but he was identified as being anti-

Blair, and firmly 'Old Labour'. So outraged were members (and voters) at the parachuting in of Michael that other unions such as UNISON were forced to ballot their members. As later in London, those unions which balloted their members voted for the 'anti-Blair' candidate. Most party members and union members who were asked voted for Rhodri Morgan, but he lost.

Nonetheless Michael could not hold down dissent. When he failed to even get the 'match funding' necessary for Objective One European cash, which had been the number one manifesto commitment, an unlikely alliance of nationalists, Liberals and Tories forced a vote of no confidence. The Labour Group in the Assembly knew that there was no support within the party so Michael resigned before the vote could be taken!

The Welsh Assembly has proven to be a big disappointment because the Objective One funding was portrayed by the party leadership as the panacea for Welsh problems of high unemployment, low pay, and poor services. But this has been exacerbated by the Millbank 'reform' of local government.

The new cabinet form of council organisation has produced less democracy. When Cardiff Labour Group met after winning the election in 1999, they pushed through the new system, abolishing committees, minutes and public access to the cabinet meetings. The new Mayor was Russell Goodway, the leader of the Group, but he was not elected. Negotiating committees with unions were abolished, then hundreds of staff had their jobs disestablished, meaning that they had to apply for their own jobs! The rationale behind these draconian measures was that money saved would go to 'front line services'. Instead the councillors announced a rise in their own allowances, in some cases of over 200%, making Goodway the highest paid councillor in Britain. Union, party members and Labour voters anger had no effect on what Newport

MP Paul Flynn called "naked greed", and the councillors stubbornly defended the move.

Such was the pressure from below, however, that soon all Cardiff CLPs, and three out of the four MPs spoke out. Six councillors broke ranks and defied the whip over the issue. They were disciplined, but this only served to inflame opinion more. In an effort to avoid unseemly protests at the Wales Labour Party conference, the councillors were reinstated and the council reprimanded. Nonetheless the rebels were hailed as heroes at the conference, and Peter Law, the Labour local government secretary in the Welsh Assembly instructed the Cardiff councillors to take a pay cut or have it done for them.

The issue has put paid to Goodway's ambitions in Westminster (he failed to get on the shortlist for Aberavon), but more importantly there have been repercussions in the movement. As other Labour authorities play copy-cat - sacking staff and imposing cabinet structures - workers have forced their unions to take an openly hostile line. The tame Wales TUC has now taken a position against the cabinet structures. The Welsh Assembly fiasco has also turned unions and members against PR after the achievement of a Tory-free Wales was given away.

What is needed now is a coordinated campaign of opposition to New Labour inside the party, and a return to socialist policies, which would immediately have the support of the party and the class.

In an attempt to restore Labour's reputation in Wales, Rhodri Morgan has overseen a party 'makeover'. After a recent survey which placed Labour behind Plaid Cymru when asked who best represented poor and working class people, and the unheard of decimation of Labour councils, they have tried to rebrand the party as 'democratic socialist' rather than New Labour. But the reality is that, whilst not always 'on message', Rhodri Morgan is wedded to Blair's philosophy and cannot deliver what Welsh workers want. The new image must be turned into a concrete change in policies that deliver for workers, or the activists will continue to sit on their hands at the next election. ☆



Youth for Socialism

What is Youth for International Socialism?

Millions of youth worldwide are searching for a way out of the crisis that affects them. In a world dominated by war, hunger, unemployment, pollution and poverty, youth are looking for an alternative.

The "market economy" has presided over an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. In the USA, Bill Gates has an income greater than the combined wealth of 120 million Americans. In Britain, over half the wealth is owned by 10% of the population, while three million children are living BELOW the poverty line.

In the mid-1980s, the income ratio of the poorest to the richest 5% of the world's population was 1:78. Today it is 1:123. More than 1.2 billion people are living in poverty - more than ten years ago. And the situation is getting worse. On present trends, over the next decade there will be another 116 million Africans and 55 million Latin Americans living on less than one dollar a day.

At the same time, a handful of powerful corporations dominate the world, and voraciously exploit the world's resources and peoples for the benefit of their billionaire shareholders.

Hundreds of thousands have demonstrated their opposition to corporate greed and the rampage of the multinational companies. In Seattle tens of thousands of youth and trade unionists brought opposition to the policies IMF and World Bank to the attention of the world. It is the beginning of a sustained fightback, that has captured the imagination of youth every-

where.

Youth for International Socialism (YFIS) was established in the United States - the citadel of world capitalism - just over a year ago to offer a real socialist alternative to young people. Over that short period of time YFIS has become the world's fastest growing socialist youth organisation. Its membership has spread to numerous countries, including Britain, Ireland, Canada, Philippines and elsewhere.

In Britain, YFIS has been launched to win youth to the ideas of socialism, and to prepare the ground to build a mass socialist youth movement. We appeal to young people to join with us in this struggle. We have nothing to lose, and have a world to win. ☆

Join the Internet Revolution!
Join YFIS Now!

More and more young people are discovering the power of the internet. The capitalists are eager to use it to make money. YFIS members are using it to promote our ideas worldwide, and promote the struggle of the working class. It is an effective means of building solidarity. That is why capitalist governments are attempting to control the internet.

But it is a medium they can't ban. That is why we intend to use it to the full to get our socialist ideas out to a wider audience of millions. Check out our website at www.newyouth.com It is updated on a daily basis, commenting on events around the world and providing a socialist perspective.

Do you want a world free from exploitation, free from war, free from want? Then join us in our struggle to end the rule of big business. Fight for a socialist future where the needs and talents of people come before the profits of a few. Help us spread the message. Help organise YFIS events in your area. Help us build our forces in every continent. The future is in your hands - why not take it? ☆



Youth for International Socialism

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"The political correctness of market reform regards himself and other members of the Russian Marxist family. He is aware that he is also a member of the international family of Marxists."

— V. I. Lenin, *Russian Workers and the International*

Featured Image:
Quality of image: 6-15 May Day 2000 in Chicago





YFIS school

The YFIS school organised on the 6th of May by the youth supporters of *Socialist Appeal* was a great success. Eighteen comrades attended the school, including four people interested in the ideas of Marxism for the first time who are interested in further discussions about the ideas of *Socialist Appeal*.

The theme of the school was Trotsky on Britain. In the morning session we discussed "Where is Britain going," lessons of the 1926 general strike and in the afternoon "In the middle of the road", lessons of the ILP and centrism.

We also had a discussion on how to build support for the ideas of Marxism in which there were a lot of contributions and proposals by the comrades, showing the great enthusiasm of the school.

The most important decisions we took were:

- Organisation of three youth schools (Scotland, London and Midlands) on Marxist economics before the summer with a target of 10 people each in which we also prepare a national school for the beginning of November on Trotsky.

- To adopt June as a campaigning month in which we will put a special emphasis on public sales and stalls.

To finish the school we had a social to raise money for the Mexican Students. The admission charge went to them and profits at the bar to Socialist Appeal. In total we raised £52 for the comrades in Mexico and another £50 for the press fund. The book shop raised a further £32. ☆

by Espe Espigares

Labour attacks asylum seekers

Britain's population stands at almost 60 million. So why all the fuss about immigration and asylum? In this context even a few tens of thousands of asylum seekers would really make little difference. Since they want to work, if they were allowed to, they could contribute to the pool of wealth at our disposal. It is only capitalism that creates competition between workers for the jobs available, low paid ones at that. It is capitalism that is increasing the number of workers looking for jobs, by sacking thousands across industry, a quarter of a million in manufacturing since 1997, not a few thousand asylum seekers.

by Ted Grant

Disgracefully for a Labour government, Blair and Straw have succumbed to xenophobia. They apparently have to be careful with the national purse, and not dole out taxpayers money to foreigners. Unless those foreigners are the owners of BMW, or foreign banks, of course. Then, it seems, we can waste millions and millions on them. They are the only foreigners stealing our jobs, and in that they have equal partners in the shape of British bosses. The owners of big business are apparently welcome to come here and exploit us for a while then pull the plug on whole communities whenever they see fit, no matter what their nationality.

A genuinely socialist government would begin by tackling the real problem with our economy, by nationalising the main firms, the major industries and banks, under democratic workers control and management. Then we could welcome with open arms anyone who wanted to contribute to the pool of national wealth. On a socialist basis, more workers can only mean shorter working hours for everyone, without loss of pay, and more skills and talents at our disposal.

Scapegoats

Instead we have Labour leaders pandering to the vile xenophobia whipped up by the press who present a handful of asylum seekers as the root of all evil, as scapegoats for the millions without work or now losing their jobs thanks to the rigours of the market. They feature stories about lorry loads of illegal immigrants to give the impression of hordes of people flooding into the country to steal our jobs. They talk of

'bogus' asylum seekers when describing people escaping the worst ravages of war, dictatorship and economic devastation caused precisely by their beloved free market.

Even more shameful on the part of the government is the decision not to give them money but instead vouchers for food and so on, amounting to 70% of the DSS's minimum, plus £10 cash per week, in an attempt to make them pariahs. Retailers are being encouraged to accept these vouchers on the basis that they don't have to give change. This is a licence to rip off the poorest section of the community. In reality these people are more than willing, they are keen to work to support themselves and to contribute to society.

In any case there aren't waves of people flooding over our borders, it is all blown out of proportion by the press. Such hysteria is not unimportant however. It plays into the hands of the fascist thugs, rather than undermining them which a Labour government could easily do by eradicating unemployment, low pay and poor housing - the cause of much of the fear and despair that such scum feed off. That, however, would require that the Labour government changed course and adopted a socialist programme.

Low figures

Total immigration in Britain is actually quite low. Yet the exaggerated claims of the media stoke up racial hatred which is then taken out not only on asylum seekers but on the Black and Asian population, in particular, and increasingly too those from Eastern Europe.

The Tories vile nationalism and racism is an attempt to appeal to the lowest elements in society. Their comments about locking innocent people up are a frightening reminder of what we could look forward to if ever they got back into office. Their plan for detention centres (now universally described as 'concentration camps') is designed to deter as many as possible from seeking asylum here. Instead of denouncing such barbaric proposals, the Labour government is echoing them with similar plans of their own. If Blair continues down his current path the nightmare scenario of a Tory return could even become possible.

Despite all talk of globalisation, it seems that it is only the borders to making money that the capitalists want to pull down. The division of the world into competing nation



states is entirely reactionary, and has long ago outlived its usefulness. Competition between these capitalist states for markets, raw materials and spheres of influence leads to war, mass unemployment and the crushing of the peoples of the third world.

The struggle of workers everywhere for a better life is our struggle too. In the current atmosphere of job losses in Rover and Ford, workers in Britain must not fall into the trap so carefully laid for us of supporting our own bosses against our brothers and sisters, workers in other countries. Nor must we fall foul of the racist propaganda being spewed out against asylum seekers.

Internationalism and socialism go hand in hand, not out of sentiment, but because capitalism is a world system. The racist Asylum and immigration laws should be scrapped, as part of a change of direction by Labour, turning to much needed socialist measures to begin to tackle the crisis gnawing away at society.

Internationalism is a necessity for workers in a global economy. "Workers of the world unite," said Karl Marx, "you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win." ☆



Read as well

What future for higher education?
by Barbara Humphries

"Is education still a privilege not a right? What quality of life is there for students? Are they being sold short? Is our education still as class biased as it was in spite of expansion?"

at www.socialist.net

Britain: Class divisions grow

Britain is more class-ridden than ever. Despite all the propaganda that everyone is becoming increasingly middle class, the most up-to-date facts show a growing class polarisation in British society.

"Britain's super-rich have never had it so good", states *The Sunday Times* recently. "The collective wealth of the top 1,000 in this year's *Sunday Times Rich List* has reached almost £146 billion, a rise of more than £31 billion on last year's list, or 27%. This is the highest surge in the 12 years that we have been compiling the list." (19th March, 2000).

by Dave Simms

Soaring share prices, the privatisation robbery and rising company profits have all fuelled this unprecedented upsurge in wealth. While the ruling class has continued to amass phenomenal wealth into its hands, the poorest sections of society have been left far behind. The gap between rich and poor has never been so great. According to the new Office of National Statistics report on social inequality, the wealth divide in Britain continued to grow right through the 1990s.

The government report reveals that during the 1970s the income of households at the top, middle and bottom of the scale grew at roughly the same pace but during the 1980s income inequality began to take off. The top 10% saw their incomes grow by a massive 38% over the decade while the bottom 10% only saw incomes rise by around a mere 5%. The rich had never had it so good.

However, during the 1990s things got even better! The rate of

growth of the income of the top 10% continued to massively outstrip small improvements at the bottom. At the beginning of the 1970s the incomes of the richest 10% were three times higher than the poorest 10%. By the end of the 1990s they were four times higher.

The ONS report also shows that the distribution of wealth - as opposed to income - has altered very little in the past 20 years and is now more unevenly distributed. In 1996 1% of the population owned 20% of the wealth - about £388 billion. Over half the total wealth was owned by 10% of the population. In the same year, the wealthiest 50% owned almost all the wealth, 93%. However, over the last four years - according to *The Sunday Times* - just 1000 people (0.000016% of the population) have £146 billion in their hands! "We reckon that 10 new millionaires are being created each week with fortunes of £20 million or more", states the newspaper.

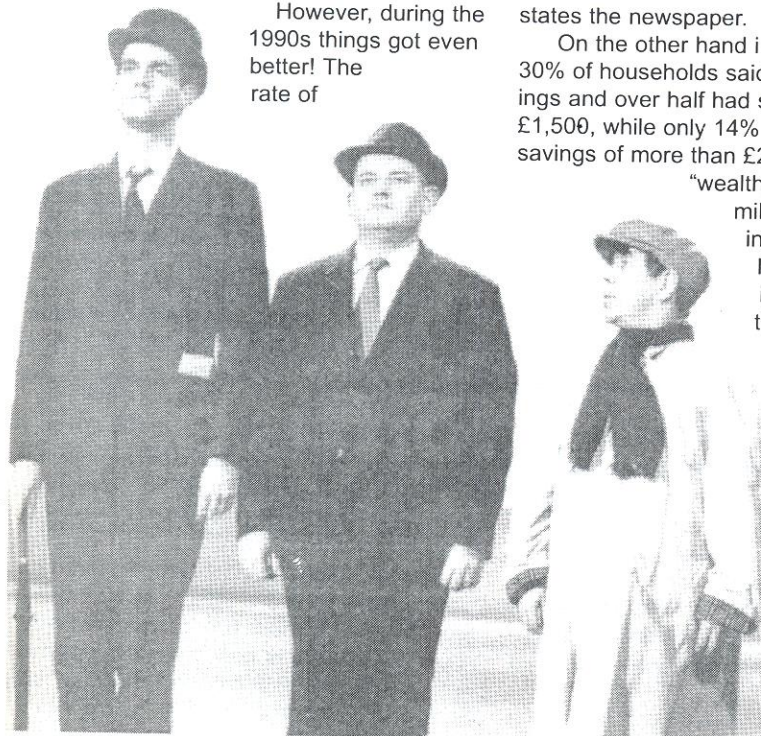
On the other hand in 1997-98 about 30% of households said they had no savings and over half had savings of less than £1,500, while only 14% of households had savings of more than £20,000. Today, in "wealthy" Britain, around 3 million children are living below the poverty line in families with incomes of less than 60% of medium income.

The wealthy elite have the means to enormously better themselves and their families. It allows them the access to privilege and influence. They are the ruling power in society, who, in their lust for

greater wealth, dictate the fate of millions of ordinary working people.

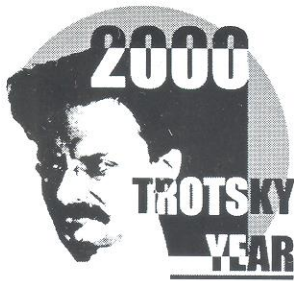
At the bottom end of the ladder, the working class is faced with the worst of all worlds. The words "equality of opportunity" do not correspond with the reality of life. In 1997 the infant mortality rate for children of unskilled workers was nearly double that of professionals. In the field of education, seen as a priority by the Labour government, the ONS report shows that poverty and class differences have an important influence on educational attainment. In 1998 only a fifth of those whose parents were in unskilled manual jobs achieved five GCSE passes at grades A to C. In contrast, more than two-thirds of children of the professional and managerial groups got five GCSEs at this standard.

While capitalism remains this situation will remain. It is not possible to abolish social classes until the social system that produces them is abolished. Only when the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies are nationalised under workers' control and management, allowing the economy to be planned, can class divisions be a thing of the past. There is no other road to social equality. ☆



Women's Pay Lags Behind

A government report by the Office of National Statistics has exposed the enormous pay gap between men and women in Britain. Average gross earnings of male employees last year was around £23,000, while for women the figure was only £16,000 - that is a 42% difference. If the trade unions took up the fight for equal pay for work of equal value with a real campaign they would get enormous support. Women must not be used as cheap labour - once again we see that a woman's place is in the union. ☆



Trotsky: Where

Together with Lenin, Leon Trotsky was one of the greatest Marxist thinkers of the Twentieth Century. Of particular interest to British Marxists was his extensive writings on Britain. His classic work, entitled 'Where is Britain Going?' was written in 1925, approximately one year before the British General Strike, which analysed the situation facing the working class and the young British Communist Party in particular. What strikes you about the book is how fresh and relevant it is today.

In the book Trotsky explained that "the religion of capitalist progress was stronger in Great Britain than anywhere else." This provided the basis for the conservative tendencies in the Labour movement. The figures of MacDonald and Snowden of that period mirror those of Blair and Brown today. "The right wingers have a system: they have behind them tradition, experience, routine; and most important of all, bourgeois society as a whole is thinking for them and thrusts ready-made decisions under their noses", noted Trotsky as if he was writing about today's Blairities. Fabianism has gone much further in its accommodation to bourgeois society than even in 1925 when Trotsky wrote 'Where is Britain Going?'

In the 1920s the crisis of British capitalism was reflected in a crisis of the coal industry. This was much the same as the crisis of manufacturing industry today. "Chronic unemployment", states Trotsky, "is the most crying expression of an unsatisfactory system; also, it is its Achilles' heel." The crisis led to an employers' offensive beginning with Black Friday in April 1921 and continued through the engineers' lockout the following year.

Trotsky wrote that "England is heading rapidly towards an era of great revolutionary upheavals."

In 1925, the Conservative government under Baldwin pre-

pared a showdown with the working class. Firstly they had to defeat the miners, the vanguard of the movement. A subsidy was granted to the coal owners for nine months from July of that year, in order to prepare the fight adequately. Trotsky remarked in March 1926, "Britain is entering on an entire historic phase of great upheavals. It is only the conservative British trade union leaders who can wait for an 'economic' solution of the problem."

The TUC sat with its arms folded, hoping a compromise would be reached right up until the last moment. On 3rd May, the coal owners locked out the miners who had refused wage cuts. The TUC stumbled into a General Strike, without plan or idea. As soon as it was called, the right wing worked to sell it out, and the 'lefts' followed along blindly.

On 12th May, the TUC called off the strike, without any guarantees, leaving the miners to fight on alone for the next nine months.

In the following article written by Trotsky on 6th May, during the General Strike, he produces a penetrating analysis of the situation. Above all, he explains that the General Strike poses the question of power in society and requires a conscious revolutionary leadership to bring about a fundamental reorganisation of society. Unfortunately, the British working class, states Trotsky, had been "kept in a state of terrible ideological backwardness by the bourgeoisie and its Fabian agents."

A new leadership was needed in the Labour and trade union movement. The purpose of Trotsky's work was to help prepare that leadership. His introduction stands as a brilliant analysis of the mechanics of the General Strike and will serve to draw out the real lessons for the present generation of workers and youth.

May 6, 1926

A year ago, the Conservative ministry was still only on its honeymoon. Baldwin was preaching social peace. As MacDonald had nothing to oppose to Conservatism, he competed with it in hatred for revolution, civil war, and the class struggle. The leaders of all three parties proclaimed that British institutions were quite sufficient to ensure peaceful class collaboration. It was quite natural that the revolutionary prediction for the immediate future of British imperialism made in this book should be described by the entire British press - from the *Morning Post* to *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* - as hopeless nonsense and Moscow phantasmagoria.

Now the situation has somewhat changed. England is convulsed by a huge mass strike. The Conservative government is carrying on a furious offensive policy. Everything is being done from above to provoke civil war. The contradiction between

basic social factors and the falsehood of an out-of-date parliamentarism has become manifest in England than ever before.

The mass strike arose from the contradiction between the present situation of British industry in the world market and the traditional conditions of production and relations between the classes within the country. Formally, the question at issue was a reduction of the miners' wages and longer hours of work, throwing onto the shoulders of the workers part of the sacrifices which are necessary for a real reorganisation of the coal industry. Formulated in this way, the question is insoluble. It is perfectly true that the coal industry, as indeed the whole of British industry, cannot be reorganised without sacrifices, even serious sacrifices, on the part of the British proletariat. No one but a miserable fool, however, can imagine for a moment that the British proletariat will consent to submit to this sacrifice on the old bases of capitalist property.

Capitalism has been pictured as a

regime of permanent progress and systematic improvement in the lot of the working masses. To a certain extent this was true for some countries in the course of the nineteenth century. The religion of capitalist progress was stronger in Great Britain than anywhere else. In fact it was this that formed the basis for the conservative tendencies in the labour movement itself, especially in the trade unions. In England, the war illusions (1914-18) were, more than in any other country, illusions of capitalist power and of social "progress."

Victory over Germany was to be the final crowning of these hopes. And now bourgeois society says to the miners: "If you want at least to ensure yourselves an existence such as you had before the war, you will have to accept for an indefinite time a reduction in your standard of living." Instead of the recently proclaimed prospect of steady social progress, it is now proposed that the workers should descend one step today so as to avoid tumbling down three or more

What is Britain Going?

steps all at once tomorrow.

This is as good as a declaration of bankruptcy of the part of British capitalism. The general strike is the answer of the proletariat, which will not and cannot admit that the bankruptcy of the British nation and of British culture.

This answer, however, is dictated far more by the logic of the situation than the logic of consciousness. The British working class had no other alternative. The struggle - no matter what was the mechanism behind the scenes - was forced on them by the mechanical pressure of the whole situation. The world situation of British industry could not offer any material basis for a compromise. The Thomases, MacDonalds, etc., are like windmills which turn their sails when there is a strong wind, but do not yield a single pound of flour since there is no grain for them to grind. The hopeless emptiness of present-day British reformism was revealed with such convincing force that nothing remained for the reformists to do but to join in the mass strike of the British proletariat. This revealed the strength of the strike - but also its weakness.

General strike

The general strike is one of the most acute forms of class war. It is only one step from armed insurrection. This is why the general strike, more than any other form of class war, demands a clear, resolute, firm (i.e., a revolutionary) leadership.

In the present strike there is no trace of such a leadership of the British proletariat, and it cannot be expected that it will suddenly rise in a perfected form as though conjured up out of the ground. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress started out with the ridiculous declaration that the present general strike was in no way a political struggle, still less an attack on the state power of the bankers, the manufacturers, and the landowners, or on the sacred British Parliament. This most respectful and submissive declaration of war does not seem at all convincing, however, to a government which feels that through the effect of the strike the real instruments of power are slipping from its hands.

State power is not an "idea" but a material apparatus. If the apparatus of administration and suppression is paralysed, the power of the state will also be paralysed. In modern society, no one can rule without controlling the railways, shipping, post and telegraph,



electric power, coal, etc. The fact that MacDonald and Thomas deny on oath that they have any political aims characterises them as individuals, but by no means indicates the nature of the general strike which, if carried on to the end, will confront the revolutionary class with the task of organising a new state power.

Those, however, who in the course of events have been placed "at the head" of the general strike, are fighting against this with all their strength. And herein lies the chief danger: men who did not want the general strike, who deny the political character of the general strike, who fear nothing so much as the consequences of a victorious strike, must inevitably direct all their efforts to keeping the strike within the scope of a semi-polit-

paralysing the bourgeois state by means of the strike, but towards paralysing the general strike with the aid of the bourgeois state. The government, through its most diehard conservatives, undoubtedly wants to provoke a civil war on a small scale so as to be in a position to resort to measures of terror even before the struggle develops, and thus suppress the movement.

By robbing the strike of its political program, by disintegrating the revolutionary will of the proletariat and driving the movement into a blind alley, the reformists force individual groups of workers onto the path of isolated revolts. In this sense, the reformists find themselves on the same ground as the fascist elements of the Conservative Party. Herein lies the chief danger of the fight which

By robbing the strike of its political program, by disintegrating the revolutionary will of the proletariat and driving the movement into a blind alley, the reformists force individual groups of workers onto the path of isolated revolts.

ical semi-strike, i.e., to deprive it of its power.

We must face matters, the main efforts of the official leaders of the Labour Party and of a considerable number of the official trade union leaders will not be directed towards

has begun.

If would be inopportune at this moment to make prophecies as to the duration of the fight and its development, to say nothing of its outcome. Everything must be done from

the international point of view to help the fighters. We must, however, clearly recognise that success is only possible in accordance with the degree to which the British working class, in the process of the development and intensification of the general strike, realises the necessity for changing its leaders and succeeds in so doing. The American proverb says that one should not swap horses when crossing a stream. This practical wisdom is only true within certain limits. It has never yet been possible to cross the stream of revolution on the horse of reformism, and the class which has entered the battle under opportunist leaders is compelled to change horses under fire.

Treachery

In this way, the position of the really revolutionary elements of the British proletariat, particularly of the Communists, is predetermined. They will support the unity of mass action in every way, but they cannot permit any appearance of unity with the opportunist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions. The most important piece of work for the truly revolutionary participants in the general strike will be to fight relentlessly against every trade or act or treachery, and mercilessly expose reformist illusions. In so doing, they will not only help forward the chief and permanent task of developing revolutionary cadres, without which the victory of the British proletariat is altogether impossible, but they will also contribute directly to the success of the present strike by intensifying it, revealing its revolutionary implications, pushing aside the opportunists and strengthening the position of the revolutionaries. The result of the strike - both the immediate results and those further ahead - will be all the more important the more decisively the revolutionary will of the masses breaks down the barriers and obstacles of the counterrevolutionary leadership.

The strike in itself cannot alter the position of British capitalism, especially of the coal industry, in the world market. This requires the reorganisation of the entire British economic system. The strike is only an emphatic expression of this necessity. The programme of the reorganisation of British industry is a programme for a new power, a new state, a new class. Herein lies the fundamental significance of the general strike; it brings the question of power sharply to the forefront. A real victory for the general strike can only be found in the conquest of power by the proletariat and in the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship.

In view of the hopeless situa-

tion of British capitalism, the general strike should now less than ever be regarded as an instrument of reform or partial conquest. To put it more exactly, if the mine owners or the government were to make this or that concession under the pressure of the strike, these concessions would, in view of the whole situation, have neither a deep nor a permanent significance. This by no means implies that the present strike is faced with the alternative of all or nothing. Had the British proletariat been under a leadership which to some extent was in keeping with its class strength and the maturity of the conditions, power would have passed from the hands of the Conservatives into the hands of the proletariat in the course of a few weeks. As it is, we can hardly reckon with an outcome of this kind. This, however, does not mean that the strike is hopeless. The more widely it develops, the more completely it rejects the treacherous and opportunist leaders, the more difficult will it be for bourgeois reaction to take up a counteroffensive, the less the proletarian organisations will suffer, the sooner the next decisive stage of the fight will come.

The present class conflict will be a tremendous lesson and have vast consequences, quite irrespective of its immediate results. It will be clear to every worker in England that Parliament is incapable of solving the fundamental and vital tasks of the country. The question of the economic salvation of Britain will now present itself to the proletariat as a question of the conquest of power. A death blow will be given to all mediating, conciliatory, compromising and pseudopacifist tendencies. The Liberal Party, no matter how much its leaders may turn and twist, will emerge from this test

even more humiliated than before it entered the fight. Within the Conservative Party, the die-hard elements will gain predominance. Within the Labour Party, the revolutionary wing will increase in influence and will find more complete expression. The Communist will push forward resolutely. The revolutionary development of Great Britain will make great strides forward.

Seen in the light of the mighty strike now developing, the questions of evolution and revolution, of peaceful development and the use of force, of reforms and of class dictatorship will, in their full intensity, occupy the consciousness of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of British workers. Of this there can be no doubt. The British proletariat, which has been kept in a state of terrible ideological backwardness by the bourgeoisie and its Fabian agents, will now spring forward like a lion.

Material conditions in England have long been ripe for socialism. The strike has made the substitution of a proletarian state for the bourgeois one a question of the day. If the strike itself does not bring about this change, it will at least greatly hasten its approach, though in what period of time we cannot of course say. We should be prepared, however, for the possibility of an early date.

May 13, 1926

The defeat of the general strike at the present stage is "according to the law of things", i. e., arises from all the conditions of the origin and development of the strike. This defeat could be foreseen. There is nothing discouraging in it. But we will speak of the lessons of this defeat and of the lessons of the strike itself later. ☆

Evans' view



The end of Boo at the Last Minute

The great high-tech bubble in world stock markets is bursting in a big way. Since the beginning of this millennium year, the US index of the value of high-tech companies, the NASDAQ, has fallen 33%. But this is just the start. That's because the NASDAQ is still 40% higher than it was this time last year. That shows how fast and how high it has risen over the last few years as investors piled in to buy internet start-up companies in a lemming-like rush to get rich quick. Over the last two years, \$100bn has been invested into start-up companies in the US alone.

by Michael Roberts

And some did get rich, as we know, at least on paper. The owners of these small companies (like the well-publicised Lastminute.com) suddenly had millions to spend as the value of their companies on the stock market went through the stratosphere. And the somewhat larger companies that converted themselves into high-tech operations by clever PR and hype also became huge. Earlier this year in the UK stock market an established company, Whitbread, which employs thousands of people in its breweries, pubs, hotels and catering operations, was removed from the list of the top 100 companies (measured by stock market value) by such household names as THUS (???) and Baltimore Technology (???) and Kingston Communications (???)

The last name is none other than the old Hull Telephone company, which was the only telephone system not run by BT in the UK but owned by the ratepayers of Hull. Just a few years ago it was privatised and converted itself into an internet provider. Overnight it has become one of the biggest companies in the UK. But of course I mean big in terms of how it is valued by investors, not in terms of its contribution to the real economy in production, employment or even in profit.

The absurdity of the valuations of these 'new economy' companies can be measured by comparing a small Indian company called Satyam Infoway. It employs 500 people in Madras, India. It provides an internet service to just 120,000 customers in India and makes \$16m in revenue a year (and a small profit). The company is worth \$7.3bn. But take Grosvenor Estate, the property company owned by the Duke of Westminster. Grosvenor owns 100 acres of

prime sites in Mayfair and another 200 acres in Belgravia - the poshest bits of London property. It also has extensive land and buildings in North America and the Far East. It's worth less than Satyam - \$5.9bn on the stock market. But which is really the more valuable and secure company?

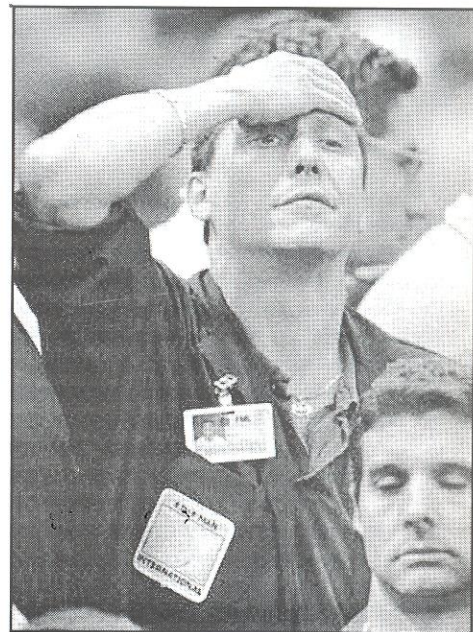
Well the bubble has burst. The stock market values of the likes of Kingston, THUS and Baltimore are plummeting. They will be removed from the top 100 stock index almost as soon as they have joined it. And now smaller start-up companies are going under. Boo.com is the first bigish one to lose its investors over £80m when it collapsed. And a recent survey suggested that 80% of existing internet start-ups in the UK would go bankrupt before this millennium year is out.

Why? It's simple. Far too much money has been ploughed in compared to potential profit. Indeed, most of these companies won't ever make a profit for their investors. As the Polish Marxist economist of the 1960s, Oscar Lange, once pointed out (echoing Karl Marx): "the system of 'free competition' is a rather peculiar one. Its mechanism is one of fooling entrepreneurs. It requires the pursuit of the maximum profit in order to function, but it destroys profits when they are pursued by a larger and larger number of people".

As we have argued before in this column, this internet bubble is nothing new. Between 1900 and 1908, 485 companies entered the great automobile business in the US. By the end of 1908, 262 of them had shut down.

The question on the lips of the followers of capitalism's roller coaster ride, is whether the bursting of the high-tech bubble will be followed by a general fall in stock prices and then a world recession or slump in the real economy. The jury may still be out, but the majority of jurors still seem convinced that there will not be a hard fall, but just a nice soft landing for world capitalism. The scenario is that the stock market will sell off some more and then settle down and start rising slowly later this year. The increases in interest rates being imposed by the US Federal Reserve Bank and others around the world will do the trick of slowing down the US economy from a breakneck pace of 5% a year to say 2.5-3.0%, but no more. That will ensure that the rest of the world grows reasonably as well.

But will it be so easy to engineer a slower rate of growth with such precision?



After all, this is capitalism we are dealing with! So far, the Federal Reserve has increased interest rates to 6.5%, with inflation at around 3%. So the real rate of interest is 3.5%. And yet there is little sign that American households have stopped their spending spree. And, most importantly, American businesses have not stopped borrowing huge amounts of money to invest in buying other companies or in keeping up the value of their stock prices, or investing in high-tech equipment. American companies have never borrowed so much in relation to their cash flow in the history of capitalism! Between November 1999 and February 2000, 'margin debt' as it is called increased by \$83bn, or over 130%! The Federal Reserve is going to have to raise interest rates even more to stem this borrowing binge.

But in so doing, it is going to squeeze US industry to death. It is bound to overdo it. Suddenly investors will stop borrowing because it is getting too expensive to do so. Then they won't go on propping up these internet operations that make no money. They will go under, and with them, will go the confidence of other American businesses and households that the boom can continue. Then the great house of cards will tumble. Far from the US heading for inflation, as the financial experts worry, the opposite will be the case. Deflation is the real banner of this epoch. Prices are at 40-year average lows around the G7 world. Higher interest rates coupled with narrowing profits will crush the G7 economies. Profitless prosperity will turn into deflating depression. ☆

USA: Calm Before the Storm

"Times they are a-changing", the song made famous by Bob Dylan in the mid-1960s, certainly captured the changing mood in the United States, caught in the upheavals of the Vietnam war and the civil rights struggle.

Today, more than 30 years later, a new mood of change is sweeping America. This new mood has gripped the minds of the youth in particular - a sure barometer for the rest of society - and was epitomised by the anti-capitalist/anti-corporate demonstrations of Seattle and Washington.

by Rob Sewell



The growing alienation of large layers of workers and youth in the most powerful capitalist power on earth, is a reaction to the years of downsizing and blatant money-grabbing of the giant corporations. The riches of American capitalism are far from the reach of the bulk of the population, which has witnessed a massive widening of wealth between rich and poor.

The "land of the free" has currently two million of its citizens behind bars - a 30% increase since 1980.

Nearly one third of black males aged between 20 and 30 are under the control of the criminal justice system.

California spends more on locking up its young people than educating them in universities.

Despite the Wall Street boom and the talk of the American Dream, there is a malaise gnawing at the bowels of American society. Kate Rhee, director of the Prison Moratorium Project, that wants to drastically reduce prison numbers, makes a telling point about the prevailing mood when she says the campaign concentrates on private prisons as "anything that is anti-corporate gets people going these days."

This is certainly the case amongst American youth, especially on the campuses. Sit-ins, boycotts, demonstrations and the like are back on the agenda.

The big issue today is cheap labour and exploitation by multinational corporations like Nike, McDonalds, Coke and Monsanto. This is part of the growing anti-corporate movement that is sweeping the USA.

The revolt of the youth is causing growing alarm amongst sections of the ruling class. They thought such radicalisation was dead and buried. They are haunted by the huge youth movement in the 1960s, where the revolt over the Vietnam war was fusing

with the militant black struggle, epitomised by the Black Panthers. The average age of the soldiers who went to Vietnam was 19. The army was demoralised in an unwinnable war. It was in a worse condition than the Russian army in 1917. This was a very explosive crisis for American capitalism.

The disintegration of the US army at that time and the anti-war movement at home were movements led by the youth. Had there been a revolutionary party in the United States, a pre-revolutionary or even a revolutionary situation could have resulted. As it was, Nixon was sacrificed as a scapegoat, the war was brought to an end and the movement tailed off.

Change of image

Today's big corporations - eager to adapt and cash in on every trend - have changed their image to embrace the so-called political correctness of yesterday's liberal radicals. The advertising department at Virgin Cola will happily show a gay wedding, just as Nike will put up PC posters of Tiger Woods declaring "there are still courses in the US where I am not allowed to play because of the colour of my skin", and of apparent feminists protesting that "high heels are a conspiracy against women."

However, the pumps Woods and the liberated sports-women were promoting were made, according to the American National Labour Committee, by Chinese sub-contractors whose women workers earned \$0.16 per hour in factories where discipline was maintained with corporal punishment.

The revolt against third world sweatshops has exploded across the campuses. Anti-corporate demonstrations have forced multinational companies - especially athlete equipment producers - to withdraw funding

from some universities. But this has not stopped the movement. On the contrary, it has given it greater impetus.

There is a growing realisation that "corporate greed" is destroying tens of millions of lives in the third world. "Globalisation", far from helping the underdeveloped world, is a prison house for two-thirds of humanity. Today, 1.2 billion people are living in poverty - more than in 1990. In Latin America, the region that has integrated most rapidly into global markets, those in poverty have risen by 5 million. If the trend continues, World Bank projections point to an increase in global poverty over the next decade, with another 116 million Africans and 55 million Latin Americans living on less than one dollar a day. Mexico boasts some of the lowest tax rates and trade barriers in Latin America, along with the fastest growing poverty rates.

But this growing revulsion against capitalism is not just about the US corporations' exploitation of the third world. It is also about the actions of multinational companies at home. They have actively destroyed the environment, destroyed communities, trampled on workers' rights, and generally pursued their pursuit of profits without regard to neither man nor beast.

About five years ago, the economist Stephen Roach - the chief exponent of downsizing - said things had gone too far and that corporations through their squeeze on workers were in danger of creating a "worker backlash".

There have been many labour struggles and flash points since then: UPS, General Motors, Boeing, to name a few. However, the recent successful strike of janitors in LA has been heralded as a turning point in labour militancy.

The three-week dispute produced the largest settlement for 20 years, and is regarded as a sign of new industrial muscle from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which has concentrated on recruiting low-paid Latino workers.

Strikers brought the centre of LA to a standstill. They won overwhelming public support - which has been a feature of recent years. According to Mike Garcia, the president of the local union: "This is the beginning of a new era from organised labour. This fight wasn't about us. That's why we got such tremendous community and political support. We were at the right place at the right time. People were looking for an underdog to root for."

The economic boom in the US has lasted an astonishing nine years. It has been extended because of the super exploitation of the third world, and the intensified exploitation of the working class of the west. US corporate and personal debt has reached record levels on the back of a stock market bubble. But as with all bubbles, they have a tendency to burst at their height. This one will be no exception.

Instability

In the 1930s Leon Trotsky once remarked that the global role of the United States means that it has dynamite built into its foundations. This new phase of globalisation, led by America, has made sure that this is the case. Microsoft, Compaq, Intel, Boeing, Disney and McDonalds have carried the flag for the American way of life into every corner of the globe.

The very instability in its own back yard - Latin America - will have a major impact on the Latino population within the US. The events in Equador, Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia are looked upon with dread by the American imperialists. The military advisers being poured into Colombia can very easily escalate into a full blown military intervention, raising the prospect of a new Vietnam.

The United States now stands at the crossroads. Seventy years ago the first phase of globalisation ended in the Great Depression. This current phase can end in a similar fashion, with far reaching consequences, serving to bring millions into political activity for the first time.

But even now, subterranean moods of discontent are affecting increasing layers of society. The janitors' strike is a harbinger of what is to come generally. It is a reflection of the changing mood in America. It represents a loss of fear amongst the most exploited sections who in the past feared the sack and replacement by the job-hungry unemployed.

The relative calm of the past few decades in being superseded by a period of profound instability. In the past period all the contradictions of US capitalism were intensifying below the surface, preparing

enormous convulsions in the period opening up. Once the American working class - over 100 million strong - gets on the move, it will have earth-shattering effects.

Political implications

This in its turn will have profound political implications. The stability of the two party system of Democrats and Republicans was based largely upon the upswing of world capitalism and the strength of the United States. The trade unions cling to the coat tails of the Democrats in the same way as the British trade unions clung to the Liberal Party more than one hundred years ago. Now that relationship is starting to be undermined. Fewer and fewer people now vote. There is profound disillusionment with the two party system, as is shown by the complete lack of enthusiasm for the contest between Gore and Bush for President.

The collapse of the USSR has meant that the workers and youth are far more open to genuine socialist ideas. For youth in particular, the ideas of socialism, communism and Marxism have a new attraction. This attraction increases as more and more are repelled by the selfish greed of corporate America.

The scene is being set for a turn towards independent class politics. On the basis of the events which impend, the trade unions will be forced to construct a mass party of labour. Such a party, given the nature of the period, will adopt a very radical anti-big business programme. Very quickly on the basis of the crisis of American capitalism, it will move in a revolutionary direction. The youth will be in the forefront of this movement, as was the case in the mass radicalisation of the 1960s.

Ironically, the LA strike of janitors came as the British film director Ken Loach is set to complete a film of a previous janitors' strike. It took place under the slogan "Si, se puede" (Yes, it is possible).

This sums up the new radicalised mood now beginning to take a grip on workers and youth in the United States.

A period of revolutionary upheaval is not only possible, but inevitable in the decade that lies ahead. The new mood in the States is a symptom of the coming American revolution, which will transform the globe overnight, and lay the basis for a real new world order based upon solidarity and co-operation. ☆

www.newyouth.com

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

In 1982 Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black journalist from Philadelphia, was framed for shooting a policeman. His trial was a farce, based on the evidence of coerced witnesses, fake confessions and a disregard for several key pieces of forensic evidence.

As an ex-member of the Black Panther Party and a radical, Mumia was always a target of the authorities.

Murder, assassination, lynchings and frame-ups have long been weapons of the ruling class and its state machine. Police brutality continues to predominate amongst the ghettos of Detroit, Harlem and LA. Racism, discrimination and violence is part of everyday life for the blacks, especially the black youth. Those who offer resistance are targeted for elimination. Mumia was one such victim.

After 18 years on death row, the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is at its most critical stage. Federal judge William Yohn is reviewing Mumia's petition for habeas corpus relief based on allegations of 29 constitutional violations. His ruling is expected towards the end of May. This is Mumia's final legal avenue and if the decision is not to grant an evidentiary hearing - to introduce new evidence omitted from the original trial in 1982 - the result could be a new execution date before the end of this year.

Mumia Abu-Jamal has become a powerful symbol for death penalty opponents world-wide. His case has the support of Amnesty International. In Britain, Mumia was made an honorary member of the National Union of Journalists in 1995, and his case has been raised in the Commons.

Dockers on the US West Coast and teachers in California and Brazil have taken strike action in his support.

Still writing from death row, Mumia is an inspiration to all those fighting injustice: "I see this battle as only growing in strength, as it broadens and deepens its reach; and as it challenges capital's lust for death; and as it supports the cause of life, of freedom, and of justice." ☆

As much as half of South Africa's workforce participated in a 24-hour nationwide general strike called by the 1.8 million strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) on May 10th.

South Africa: General strike against ANC policies



According to COSATU's own estimates four million workers followed the call to strike. Support for the strike was stronger in the highly industrial region of Witwatersrand (which includes Johannesburg) with 90% of the workers participating and 150,000 marching through the streets of Johannesburg.

by Jordi Martorell

Western and Eastern Cape registered between 70 and 75% of the workers following the strike, and in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Province and Northern Cape the level of support was around 50%. In areas like Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Durban and Empangeni and in companies like the South African Motor Company, DaimlerChrysler, half of the mines, Coca-Cola, etc. the support for the strike was almost total (90-100%). There were numerous marches all over the country with 50,000 in Pretoria and Cape Town, 20,000 in Port Elizabeth, 10,000 in Nelspruit, 5,000 in East London and Queenstown.

The main reason for the strike was to protest against the massive destruction of jobs which in the last 10 years has totalled 1 million, half of them since the ANC government came to power in 1994. COSATU demanded "the amendment of the Labour Relations Act to make retrenchments a mandatory issue for negotiations with the union", the "change of the Insolvency Act to protect workers in cases of company liquidations", to "halt the unilateral restructuring (i.e. privatisation) of government or state-owned companies", and to "put an end to the accelerated tariff reduction programme to bring South Africa in line with our WTO commitments". Finally COSATU also called

for a "thoroughgoing discussion amongst the key stakeholders in the economy in order to find long-term solutions to the structural problems which continue to bewild our economy".

This strike is the culmination of a programme of mass action and demonstrations organised by COSATU since January this year to highlight the problem of job losses. Unemployment is now running at 40% (up from 35% in 1994), and 50% of the population are below the 301 Rand poverty line.

But while jobs were the main issue for the general strike, this reflects a deeper and increasing anger and frustration at the policies of the ANC government and especially with GEAR, the mis-named Growth Employment and Redistribution programme which amounts to a policy of cuts in state expenditure, privatisation of state-owned companies and the lowering of tariff barriers.

Government Opposition

As we already warned in July 1999 after the victory of the ANC in the general elections: "In the next few years the ANC government will increasingly enter into conflict with the trade unions and the ANC's social base on issues like budget cuts, privatisation, housing, labour rights, etc. The opposition which has already developed during the first ANC term will be nothing compared with the clashes in the next period" (ANC Victory, masses expect action, *Socialist Appeal* 70, July 1999).

Shortly after these lines were written we saw the mass mobilisation of public sector workers for a decent wage increase. The privatisation of council services in particular has generated a lot of opposition. The South African Municipal Workers Union has mobilised thousands against Igoli 2002, the

"restructuring plan" for Johannesburg council.

In fact, despite certain limited achievements by the ANC government, the general trend has been one of job losses, increased crime and above all a more unequal distribution of income. For instance, the top earning 20% of households account for 65% of the total income, while the poorest 20% represent only 3%. This makes South Africa one of the most unequal societies on earth, and the gap between rich and poor is actually increasing. According to a recent study on income distribution the poorest 40% of black households saw a drop of 21% in income between 1991 and 1996, meanwhile the richest 10% of households saw their income increase by 17% (and the proportion of black households amongst this 10% at the top increased from 9% to 22%).

Such is the opposition against the ANC government's policies that ANC general secretary Kgalema Motlanthe went as far as to express his support for the general strike at the May Day rally in Johannesburg. But this was seen as a purely electoralist move as the ANC leadership is worried about the results of the forthcoming council elections. This is why the main emphasis of Motlanthe's speech in front of a hostile crowd was on "the need for COSATU's and the South African Communist Party's (SACP) continued support for the Alliance". However, the government, including ministers who are members of the SACP like public service and administration minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, firmly condemned the strike.

So, despite the efforts of leading ANC figures to try to present the strike as aimed only at businesses and not the government, COSATU president Willie Madisha was clear in saying that "we are unhappy with

GEAR and its disastrous impact on workers. So how can the strike be aimed at business only? The government is responsible for the acts [Labour Relations Act and Insolvency Act] and GEAR so we are also targeting it".

There is a growing understanding of the fact that capitalism is unable to solve any of the acute problems facing South Africa, and instead is worsening the situation. This is the case not only amongst working class activists but even amongst the most intelligent bourgeois commentators. Thus the editorial of the *Financial Mail* (12.5.00) gave a very gloomy account of the situation: "South Africa is drifting. The conventional market economics adopted by the ANC when it dumped nationalisation have not delivered more jobs or more investment, and the party is vulnerable to anti-capitalist agitation among its core, poor constituency. The free market is not to be taken for granted in South Africa." The editorial then goes on to review the situation in Zimbabwe "rapidly disintegrating economically" and concludes that "we are also in trouble in this country unless the wealth gap closes". The solution advocated by the *Financial Mail* is "the social democratic systems that propelled Germany and Japan to such great economic heights". Thus we have the irony of the mouthpiece of capital advocating Keynesian policies and a "wide and efficient welfare net", worried about the potentially revolutionary consequences of the economic crisis, while the ANC leaders in government are the most staunch defenders of the policies of the IMF and the World Bank!

Cause of the jobs crisis

SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande, is quite right in saying that "the fundamental cause of job losses is capitalism. Capitalism aims for maximum profits and not a living wage. Companies cut costs and retrench workers to make profit ... In 1999, the government decreased company tax by 5% from 35% to 30%. This cut gave R8 billion back to the bosses. This money has not been used for job creation. Instead, big companies are taking their money to Western countries for easy and quick profits. In July 1999, South African industry is producing only 78% of what it could produce. Our country has a huge 'demand' for more of everything - housing, medicines, school textbooks, jobs, etc. But for the bosses this 'demand' does not count because this 'demand' does not have

money" (Daily Dispatch, May 1st, 2000).

In the same way, COSATU president Willie Madisha in his May Day speech in Johannesburg explained how "in the long term, the system based on exploitation of the majority by a small powerful minority has no future. Development based on this brutal system is unsustainable as it only serves to widen the gap between rich and poor. The challenge we face is not just to put a human face to capitalism but to uproot and replace it with a human system based on social ownership of the means of production - socialism!"

The problem is that despite all the references to socialism and the harsh criticisms of the capitalist system, the leaders of COSATU and the SACP do not have a worked out alternative to the policies of the ANC government and they do not distance themselves enough from it.

Socialist programme

This arises from a wrong appraisal of the current situation in South Africa. What we have is the leadership of the ANC in government pursuing openly capitalist policies and basing themselves on that very small layer of the black population which has benefited from the end of apartheid by becoming black capitalists themselves. This government has not started some "national democratic revolution" which has to be deepened and strengthened as a first step towards the socialist transformation. On the contrary, the ANC government policies only benefit big business and international capitalism and they are designed precisely with that aim in mind.

Therefore the task of COSATU and SACP leaders should be not the "strengthening of the revolutionary tripartite alliance" but rather breaking with the capitalist wing of the ANC and coming out clearly in favour of an alternative socialist programme. Instead of this we have SACP and COSATU leaders sitting in a government which is carrying through an open capitalist policy against the working class.

The most recent SACP documents pro-

duced for discussion at the forthcoming Strategy Conference say that "the state can discipline, manage, encourage, and promote capital, the allocation of capital and the distribution of surplus". This is a utopian dream. On the one hand the ANC government has clearly adopted the view that "capital must be encouraged", that "favourable conditions must be created", in order for investment to take place. And there is actually a certain truth in this. Capitalists do not invest in order to create jobs, not even in order to produce goods, but above all in order to make profits. If they can make more profits by investing abroad they will do it, and if they can make more profits by speculating in the stock exchange why bother with productive investment. And there is nothing the state can do about this. As the old saying goes "you cannot control what you do not own".

The current offensive of capital all over the world which goes under the name of "neo-liberalism" is not the result of the viciousness of big business but rather the result of the crisis of capitalism. In order to maintain the same level of profits they must force down tariff barriers in third world countries, privatise their public utilities, deregulate their market etc. The only alternative to this is not some sort of state intervention in the economy, but the wholesale nationalisation of the main sectors of the economy to put them under a democratic plan of production aimed at solving the pressing needs of the majority of society rather than the profits of a few.

In fact the policies of "state intervention in the economy" and a "mixed economy" basically amount to a social democratic solution, which has already been ditched by capitalism in the West as it led to massive state debt and budget deficits and as a result, high levels of inflation.

The implementation of a socialist programme of nationalisation would be made relatively easy by the enormous concentration of capital which characterises South Africa where a dozen capitalist groups dom-

inate most of the economy. Such a programme would not be popular with the new black bourgeoisie and would attract hysterical attacks from big business, but it would definitely be extremely popular with the millions of workers and youth who went on the streets on May 10th and with the millions who voted for the ANC in the hope that they would achieve economic liberation as well as democratic rights. ☆





May Day 2000, London

Marxism and direct action

The recent anti-capitalist demonstrations have brought together many different groups protesting against the destruction of the environment, racism, the exploitation of the third world, and also many ordinary young people protesting at the state of things in general. They have certainly shattered the myth that everyone is happy and that the capitalist system is accepted as the only possible form of society.

All around us we see the misery this system causes. Famine, war, unemployment, homelessness and despair, these are the violent acts that the system perpetrates against millions every day. Witnessing and experiencing this destruction and chaos, young people everywhere are driven to protest.

by Phil Mitchinson

However, the idea of getting involved in a political organisation is a turn off for many, who understandably want to do something, and do something now. In reality, the attempt to juxtapose organisation, discussion, and debate with 'direct action' is pure sophistry. The ideas of Marxism are not the subject of academic study, they are precisely a guide to action. We are all in favour of action, but it must be clearly thought out, with definite aims and objectives if it is to succeed. Otherwise we end up with directionless action. Furthermore without political organisation who decides what action is to be taken, when and where?

There can be no greater direct action than the seizing of control over our own lives by the vast majority of society. In that act lies the essence of revolution. Not just an aimless 'direct action' but mass, democratic and conscious action, the struggle not just against capitalism, but for a new form of society, socialism.

The most recent demonstration, on May day, was used by the bosses mouthpieces in the press to whip up their usual hysterical garbage. They made great play of the graffiti on the cenotaph and the daubing of Churchill's statue. However, their party was somewhat spoilt by the news that the culprit was not some 'yob', but a former Royal Marine, now studying at Anglia University in Cambridge. Appearing before magistrates he made a speech condemning imperialism and Churchill's anti-semitism. It had an impact on the magistrate, who demonstrated his own class position by mocking the young ex-soldier because of his dependence on a student loan, "you see, you can't survive without capitalism" he said.

It also appears that an Eton schoolboy participated in the smashing of a MacDonalds window. This is not an accident. It is a symptom of the impasse of

society that not only working class and middle class youth but even these privileged layers rebel.

So, what comes next? The organisers of the demo tell us this was not a protest in order to secure changes, reforms apparently are a waste of time. No, simply by participating in what they call the 'carnival' we become better people, and eventually more and more people will participate, until a critical mass is reached and we all ignore capitalism, don't pay our bills, until they go away. What an infantile flight of fancy! The genuine intentions of those protesting is not open to question. However, the way to hell is paved with many such good intentions. Are we really to believe that whilst we all 'place ourselves outside of capitalism', the bosses will do nothing to defend their system? This ostrich like tactic of burying our heads in the sand until they go away is not serious. Nor is it action. In reality, it is irresponsible, indirect inaction

"Self-organisations"

Anarchist organisations have always hidden behind a facade of 'self-organisation'. They claim to have no leaders, no policy etc. Yet who decides? If there was no leadership and no policy then there could be no action of any kind. The recent demonstrations have been highly organised and coordinated on an international scale. Good, so it should be. However, without organisation and democracy no-one, except a clique at the top, has any say in why, where and when. Such a movement will never bring international capital trembling to its knees.

One of the best known anarchist groups in Britain, Reclaim the Streets, save the game away in their spoof Mayday publication, 'Maybe'. Incidentally, who wrote these articles, who decided what went in and what didn't, who edited it, where did the money come from? Our intention here is

not to accuse them of dodgy financing - simply to point out that this "no leaders" stuff is a self-organised myth.

On page 20 they announce "Reclaim the streets is non-hierarchical, spontaneous and self organised. We have no leaders, no committee, no board of directors, no spokes people. There is no centralised unit for decision making, strategic planning and production of ideology. There is no membership and no formalised commitment. There is no master plan and no pre defined agenda."

There are two problems here. Firstly who is "we", who made the above statement, and who decided it. Secondly, if it were true, it would not be something of which to be proud. Whether you like it or not, there is no way the capitalist system will ever be overthrown by such a haphazard and slipshod method. There is no theory, no coherent analysis of society, no alternative programme. To brag of a lack of direction, a lack of purpose and a lack of coherence, in the face of such a highly organised and brutal enemy as international capital, is surely the height of irresponsibility.

In reality the leaders of these movements are not devoid of ideology, they are anarchists. Anarchism is not simply a term of abuse, it comes from the Greek word 'anarchos' meaning 'without government'. To anarchists the state - the institutions of government, the army, police, courts etc. - is the root cause of all that is wrong in the world. It must be destroyed and replaced not with any new form of government, but the immediate introduction of a stateless society.

This opposition to the state and authority leads to a rejection of participation in any form of parliamentary activity, belonging to a political party or fighting for any reforms,

that is political change through the state.

Of course, Marxism is opposed to the brutal domination of the capitalist state too. Marx saw a future society without a state but instead "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." That is a self-governing people. The question however is how can this be achieved?

Since anarchism sees in the state the root of all problems, it therefore believes these problems will be resolved by the destruction of the state. Marxism, meanwhile, sees the division of society into classes, a minority who own the means of producing wealth, and the majority of us whose labour is the source of that wealth, as the crux of the matter. It is this class division of society which gives rise to the state - because the minority need a special force to maintain their rule over the majority - which has evolved over thousands of years into the complicated structures we see today.

Abolition of the state

The modern capitalist state can wear many guises, monarchy, republic, dictatorship, but in the end its purpose remains the same, to maintain the minority rule of the capitalist class. Marxism's goal therefore is not simply to abolish the state, but to put an end to class society.

The state was born with the split of society into classes to defend private property. So long as there are classes there will be a state. So, how can class society be ended?

Not by its denial, but only by the victory of one of the contending classes. Triumph for capitalism spells ruin for millions. As Marx once explained the choice before us is not socialism or the status quo, but socialism or barbarism. The capitalists constant striving for profits will drive ever more millions into poverty and hunger. Their striving to control markets and raw materials will lead to endless war and destruction.

The victory of the working class can only mean the destruction of the capitalist state. Will the capitalists take defeat like sporting ladies and gentlemen, retiring quietly to the pavilion? No, all history suggests that they would not. The workers would need to create a new state, for the first time to defend the rule of the majority over the minority.

Lenin in his masterpiece *The State and Revolution* argues, "The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this

aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments resources and methods of state power against the exploiters."

Similarly Trotsky in *Stalinism and Bolshevism* explains, "Marxists are wholly in agreement with the anarchists in regard to the final goal: the liquidation of the state. Marxists are statist only to the extent that one cannot achieve the liquidation of the state simply by ignoring it."

From the very beginning this would be like no previous state machine. From day one it would be in effect a semi-state. The task of all previous revolutions was to seize state power. From the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 Marx and Engels concluded that it would not be possible for the workers to simply use the old state apparatus, they would instead have to replace it with an entirely new one, to serve the interests of the majority and lay the basis for a socialist society.

To ensure that the workers maintain control over this state, Lenin argued for the election of all officials who should be held accountable and subject to recall, and paid no more than the wage of a skilled worker. All bureaucratic tasks should be rotated. There should be no special armed force standing apart from the people, and we would add, all political parties except fascists should be allowed to organise.

The task of this state would be to develop the economy to eradicate want. Less need, means less need to govern society, less need for a state. Class society and the state will begin to wither away as the government of people, the rule of one class over another, is replaced by the administration of things, the planned use of resources to meet society's needs

Anarchism's utopian calls to abolish the state overnight demonstrates neither the understanding of what the state is, nor the programme of action necessary to achieve the goal it sets itself.

As a modern philosophy anarchism developed in the 19th century alongside the

explosive growth of capitalism and its state machine. It represented a rebellion by a section of the petty bourgeoisie at the loss of their position in society, driven to the wall by the growth of monopoly.

Their case was argued by Mikhail Bakunin and his supporters in the First International. At an anarchist conference in 1872 they argued "The aspirations of the proletariat can have no other aim than the creation of an absolutely free economic organisation and federation based on work and equality and wholly independent of any political government, and such an organisation can only come into being through the spontaneous action of the proletariat itself...no political organisation can be anything but the organisation of rule in the interests of a class and to the detriment of the masses...the proletariat, should it seize power, would become a ruling, and exploiting, class..."

Conquest of power

Although this sounds radical enough it nonetheless amounts to a recipe for inaction and disaster. As Trotsky explained, "To renounce the conquest of power is voluntarily to leave the power with those who wield it, the exploiters. The essence of every revolution consisted and consists in putting a new class in power, thus enabling it to realise its own programme in life. It is impossible to wage war and to reject victory. It is impossible to lead the masses towards insurrection without preparing for the conquest of power."

Anarchists see in the degeneration of the Soviet Union into a totalitarian dictatorship proof that Bakunin was right. In reality, only Leon Trotsky and Marxism have been able to explain the causes of that degeneration, finding its roots not in men's heads or personalities, but in the real life conditions of civil war, armies of foreign intervention, and the defeat of revolution in Europe. The position of anarchism only serves to endorse the bourgeois slander that

Stalinism was inherent in Bolshevism.

In its early days, this modern anarchism found a certain support amongst the workers. However, through the course of struggle workers learned the need for organisation in the shape of the trade unions, and also for political organisation which led to the building of the mass workers parties. Bakunin and co. denounced participation in parliament, or the fight for reforms as a betrayal of the revolution, they "rejected all political action not having as its immediate and direct objective the triumph of the work-



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ers over capitalism, and as a consequence, the abolition of the state."

Marxism fights for the conquest of political power by the working class and the building of a socialist society, under which the state will wither away. Until then should workers refrain from political activity? Should they reject all reforms that might improve their existence? Nothing would please Blair or the bosses more. Of course not, we must advocate the struggle for every gain no matter how minor, and use any and every field open to us. Only the dilettante can reject better wages or a health care system. Precisely through these struggles, and the struggles to transform the workers organisations the unions and the parties, we learn and become more powerful and bring closer the day when it will be possible to transform society for good.

Reforms under capitalism

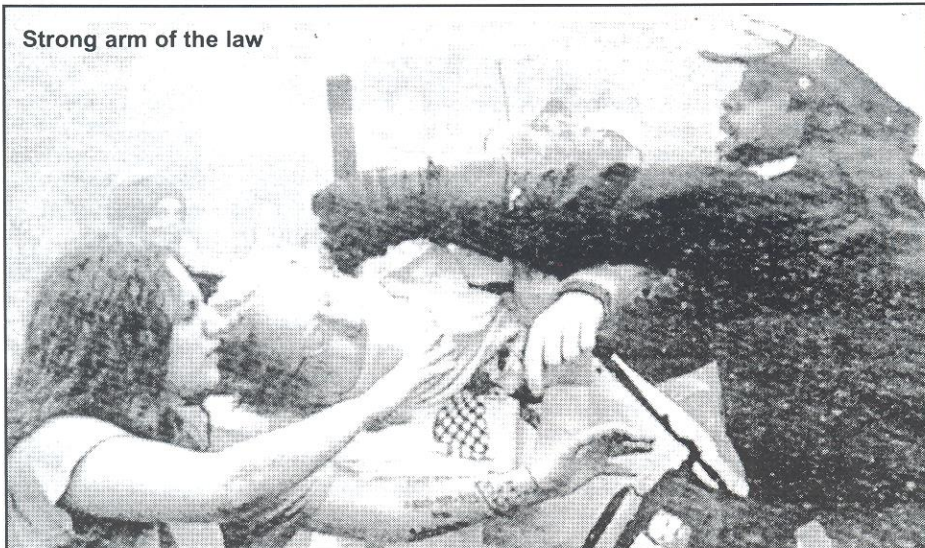
Marxists fight for every reform, whilst at the same time explaining that while capitalism continues none of these advances are safe. Only socialism can really solve the problems of society.

Our modern day anarchists, Reclaim the Streets and others, have no support in Britain amongst the organised workers. Some radicalised youth however are attracted to their 'direct action' stance. There is a vacuum left by the absence of a mass Labour youth organisation which, fighting for a socialist programme, could attract these young workers and students. With no lead being given by the tops of the unions, and Labour in government attacking young people, that vacuum can be temporarily and partly filled by groups like Reclaim the Streets.

What action do they propose though? In their press statement (2/5/00) they explain, "We were not protesting. Under the shadow of an irrelevant parliament we were planting the seeds of a society where ordinary people are in control of their land, their resources, their food and their decision making. The garden symbolised an urge to be self-reliant rather than dependent on capitalism."

The fact that parliament appears powerless to prevent job losses or the destruction of the environment, only demonstrates that it serves the interests of capitalism. However, under pressure from below it is possible to introduce reforms through par-

Strong arm of the law



liament that are in the interests of ordinary people. It is no use declaring parliament to be irrelevant, and turning your back on it when the majority do not agree, and still look to government to make their lives better. This is the mirror image of the sects attitude to the Labour Party. Any and every avenue which can be used to improve our lives must be used.

"Self-reliance"

In any case this 'self-reliance' is no alternative. Self-reliance won't get electricity into your house, educate your children or treat you when you are ill. We have the resources to cater for all of society's needs, the only problem is that we do not own them. Individualism (self-reliance) cannot be an alternative to socialism, where all the resources of society are at all of our disposal, and equally we all contribute what we can to society.

Guerrilla gardening and its related varieties that have sprung up in various places, is nothing more than an offshoot of the old utopian idea of changing society by example. The roots of this scheme lie in idealist philosophy. Philosophical idealism refers to the notion that people's actions are a consequence of their thoughts, that ideas and not our conditions of life determine our outlook. When, through a long process of accumulation, we change people's minds, then they will live differently, capitalism will simply be redundant. The capitalist class themselves will presumably sit idly by and watch their system fall apart.

Whilst believing in a revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism, anarchists argue that it must be replaced by...nothing. Yet with no central apparatus, no organisation, how would the trains run on time, how could organ transplants be organised, how could the world's resources be channelled into permanently overcoming famine.

In their paper, 'Maybe', Reclaim the Streets tell us "The radical social move-

ments that are increasingly coming together don't want to seize power but to dissolve it. They are dreaming up many autonomous alternative forms of social organisation, forms that are directly linked to the specific needs of locality. What might be an alternative to capitalism for people living currently in a housing estate in Croydon is completely different to what might be suitable for the inhabitants of the

slums of Delhi."

It cannot be of no concern to us what form a new society will take in different countries or even different regions. The economic power we have created over centuries can and must be used in a planned, rational way to eradicate hunger, disease and illiteracy. It must be used in the interests of the whole of society. That can only be achieved by the democratic planning of society where the power at our fingertips could be used with due respect for the future of the planet, the conservation of its resources, our own working conditions, and living standards. Whether we like it or not, growing a few carrots on empty plots of land will not eradicate hunger and famine.

We have the power to do just that, but only if we combine new technology, industry and the talents and active participation of millions.

The economic power we have created can be compared to the destructive force of lightning, untamed and anarchic under the market, yet organised into cables and wires electricity transforms our lives. Industry is not the enemy, nor are machines. The state is, but it is a symptom not the disease. It is capitalism and its ownership of the economy, its stewardship of society that we have to replace.

The task of our time is to combine the strength and experience of the working class and its mighty organisations with the power and energy of the youth internationally, on the basis of a clear understanding of what capitalism is, what the state is, and a programme for changing society. That requires a combination of theory and action. In that combination lies the strength of Marxism.

If you want to fight against capitalism, do so fully armed with a socialist programme and perspective. Join with us in the struggle for the socialist transformation of the planet. ☆

Russia's Frozen Spring

Socialist Appeal editor Alan Woods has just returned from Russia, where he addressed meetings organised by the Russian Marxist paper Rabochaya Demokratiya (Workers' Democracy) in Moscow, Leningrad and Perm. He also addressed the May Day rally in the mining town of Solyikansk in the Urals.

On Sunday May 7, Vladimir Putin was inaugurated as President of Russia with all the pomp and ceremony of a tsar. Nothing was missing: twenty-one gun salute, goose-stepping soldiers with uniforms that seemed to have been borrowed from a Hollywood musical, and even the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In his speech, Putin laid heavy stress on the need for a strong state. As an ex-KGB bureaucrat, Putin's idea of a strong state is fairly clear. In the very short time he has been in office, there has been a stepping up of the brutal war in Chechnya, increased pressure by the secret police (now renamed the FSB) on left wing and dissident organisations, and even a clumsy attempt to muzzle what little remains of the "free press".

Two years ago, after the economic collapse of August 1998, the situation in Russia was grim indeed. The high hopes of the market reformers were dashed. The extreme unpopularity of capitalism was partially reflected in a big increase in support for the CPRF. But the pro-capitalist policies of Zyuganov and the CPRF leaders rapidly led to disenchantment. The initiative once again passed to the right wing, which also benefited from the effects of devaluation and the steep rise in prices of oil and other raw materials.

Over the past twelve months the economic situation has partially stabilised, and the government claims that the economy grew seven percent in the last quarter. This claim is clearly exaggerated. Nevertheless, some improvement has taken place: wage arrears have been reduced, and some industries (mainly those linked to oil and raw materials) have experienced growth. But the majority of the population still live in dire

poverty. The economic recovery has an extremely weak and unstable character, and can be snuffed out by a new fall in commodity prices that will be the inevitable consequence of any major economic slowdown in the West.

So far, Putin has tried to be all things to all men. His policies are shrouded in a calculatedly nebulous ambiguity. This has been one of the key elements in his success. Here is something for everybody! A few hints to the reformers, a few hints to the Stalinists, a nod and a wink to the nationalists, and so on and so forth.



The trouble is that all these are merely so many promissory notes that sooner or later must be cashed in.

And Putin has not taken very long to emerge in his true colours. He has announced a programme of tax-cutting and slashing of state expenditure on social subsidies, including public transport and housing. This is meant as a gesture to the IMF at a time when Russia has to pay off a huge foreign debt. True, Russia's public finances have improved, mainly as a result of the high price of oil. But a large slice of this money has been spent on the war in Chechnya. The West, while quietly backing Putin (for fear of worse to come), is not prepared to write off Russia's debts. The IMF has decided that Russia must pay "only" eleven billion dollars of the total of over 17 billion in the next three years. Since Putin and the generals are determined to continue the war in Chechnya, the burden will be put on the shoulders of the working class. This will lay the basis for a new explosion of the class struggle in Russia

in the coming period.

However, the present situation in Russia, on the surface, seems to point in the opposite direction. Putin seems to enjoy absolute control, the workers have their heads down. The strikes and demonstrations that shook the government in the first half of 1998 have given way to a sullen acquiescence. After Putin's electoral victory the mood of the left is sceptical and despondent. Attendance on the May Day demonstrations was well down on last year: in Moscow, from about 100,000 to 15,000 or so.

The mood of the Russian workers is not difficult to understand. They have repeatedly shown that they are willing to fight, but lack the necessary leadership. The so-called Communist Party (CPRF) has done everything possible to prevent a serious struggle, and has even done a deal with Putin to carve up the committees in the Duma. This has led to widespread disillusionment and a sharp fall in support for the CPRF, although Zyuganov still managed to get 32 percent of the vote in the presidential election.

The main factor, however, that conditions the mood of Russian society at present is the war. With the aid of the mass media, Putin has used the Chechen question demagogically to whip up nationalist sentiment. In the short run this has worked, since the war has been "successful". The Russian army has taken Grozny and the other cities. But the brutal use of indiscriminate air and artillery bombardment (imitating Nato tactics in Kosovo), and the clumsy and heavy-handed treatment of the population, has played into the hands of the rebels, who are engaged in a guerrilla war that can go on for a long time and is claiming an increasing number of Russian victims. It is far from certain that Putin will be able to do a deal with the "moderate" Chechen leaders, or, even if they do, that this will resolve matters. Thus, at a certain stage, the public perception of the war can turn into its opposite.

The Russian Marxists who publish *Rabochaya Demokratiya* have maintained a principled position of opposition to the war, and as a result have suffered intimidation from the FSB which raided their Moscow centre in the Autumn. But the comrades are continuing their work, and the paper is now distributed in over 50 different towns and cities in Russia and the Ukraine and is getting an ever-increasing echo. ☆

Visit the web site of the Russian Marxist paper *Rabochaya Demokratiya* at www.1917.com/ru

Middle East: "Days of Rage"

Once again, the Middle East "peace process" hangs by a thread. The recent riots and gun battles throughout the West Bank and Gaza, which left hundreds wounded and a number dead, reveal the enormous frustration at the results of the "peace process" and the failure to end years of Israeli occupation.

by John Roberts

Thousands of Palestinians took to the streets to confront Israeli troops, amid tear gas, rubber bullets and stones. The focus for the demonstrations was the Palestinian demand for the release of 230 men held in Israeli jails.

In Ramallah, Palestinians shot at Israeli soldiers, the first exchange of gun fire between the two sides in three and a half years. Even Palestinian police were engaged in a shoot out. At the same time, Ehud Barak delayed a decision to transfer an Arab suburb of Jerusalem to the control of Yasser Arafat's fledgling Palestinian Authority. He is now insisting that the hand-over must wait until peace is restored in the West Bank and Gaza.

The peace talks are again in crisis, with Arafat's chief negotiator pulling out of the talks. Meanwhile the nationalists are threatening to break with Barak's coalition government. The meagre concessions made by the Israeli government to the Palestinians were due to the enormous pressure exerted by American imperialism. The United States, which used Israel as a bulwark against the Arab Revolution in the Middle East, now wants to broaden its base to include some of the Arab powers. This can only be achieved by forcing Israel to make concessions. But these "peace process" concessions are too little to satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinians, and too great to

satisfy the Israeli establishment. The question of Jerusalem, the borders of a Palestinian state, the fate of the refugees, etc., are enormous obstacles that they are unable to resolve.

The real feeling of the Israeli ruling class were revealed when Brigadier General Shlomo Oren, head of Israeli security in the West Bank, said that he would use Cobra attack helicopters to bomb Arafat's fortified compound if he did not take immediate action to end the protests.

On a capitalist basis, there is no way out for the masses of the Middle East. Even the ordinary Israelis are caught in a trap. The foundation of the state of Israel was supposed to guarantee peace, security and prosperity. This has proved an illusion as the events of the last 50 years have demonstrated. They are no nearer peace and security.

The present situation brings this home. The results of the "peace process" on the ground have been negligible, and have served to fuel the mass protests sweeping the occupied areas. Despite pleas from Arafat for an end to the violence, the demonstrations continue. "Down with the olive branch, long live the rifle," chanted the protesters.

There is growing disillusionment with Arafat, who has failed the masses, and has set up a corrupt and incompetent authority. He is desperate for a compromise with the Israelis, but any such deal will never satisfy the needs and wishes of the Palestinian people. In a telling comment, Kanaan al-Jamal, who works for the negotiations department, stated "These people believe they should start a new intifada."

Feelings are running extremely high. There is no mood to compromise. "We don't follow orders from anyone," said Ali Abu Khader, 19. "Mr Arafat wants to protect people but he doesn't understand that this is a popular revolution."

However, the only road to peace in the Middle East is one that is based on the unity of the Arab and Jewish working class. The ruling cliques that dominate the reactionary regimes of the area, which are fostered by imperialism, can offer no solution. Only by the workers overthrow of the reactionary Arab regimes and the coming to power of the working class in Israel, can a socialist federation of the Middle East be formed where the rights of all national groups would be respected. On a capitalist basis there can only be war, violence and insecurity. ☆



Ben Barka Solidarity Appeal

Bachir Ben Barka, the son of Mehdi Ben Barka, the assassinated founder of the Moroccan Socialist Party (USFP), has carried out a long and largely fruitless struggle, along with his family, to obtain access to the files of the French secret services. There is a possibility that the files may at last be opened by the Jospin government. However, whilst certain files have in fact been opened, the most important information about who killed Mehdi Ben Barka - on whose orders and in what circumstances, and how the body was disposed of - has been once again withheld from the family under the state secrecy laws.

We appeal to all labour movement activists for letters of protest, demanding that the French government immediately open all the secret service files on the Ben Barka Affair, and any other material presently covered by the state secrecy laws covering collaboration between the French State and the Moroccan secret services in relation to victims of assassination, and the torture or imprisonment of opponents of the Hassan II regime.

Letters of protest should be sent to the French Embassy in London:

**58 Knightsbridge SW1X
London**

And to the French Prime Minister:

**Lionel Jospin
Hotel Matignon
3, rue Ronthieu
75008 Paris
France**

With copies to:

**La Riposte,
BP 8
94201 Ivry-Sur-Seine
France.**

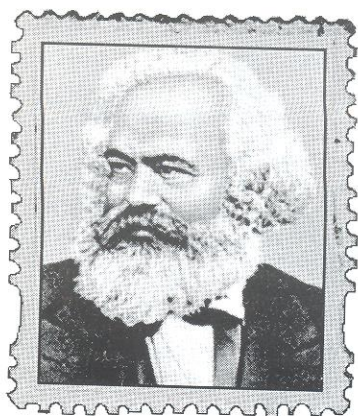
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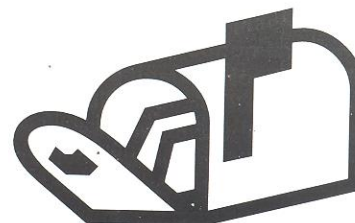
**Interview with Ben Barka's
son about the affair and
article on the situation in
Morocco today at
www.marxist.com**



MAIL

CORRESPONDENCE

Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ.
e-mail: socialist_appeal@mail.com



Dear comrade,

I have just come from a march where 3000 youth and workers reclaimed the day for international workers' solidarity. May Day is not an official holiday in North America, so we are fighting to make it one! This year was different; people were resolved to follow on the fight of Seattle against the WTO, World Bank, and IMF. Many marchers were at the WTO demonstrations, which were just across the US border. All of the speakers, even Jim Sinclair, the new head of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, spoke of taking this movement on to create a society built on justice for workers. 29 copies of the Canadian Marxist paper *L'Humanite* were sold on the demo. It is clear that in the coming years we will have an incredible fight on our hands. On the one side we have the crushing corporate agenda and the likely election of a right-wing Liberal government. On the other side we have a movement of youth from Seattle and one of the strongest Labour movements in North America. The Marxists will be at the forefront of this battle - we will see if our leaders remain true to their speeches when it really matters.

Yours in international workers' solidarity,

Alex Grant (from Canada)



Comrades,

The Socialist Appeal has been very enlightening for me. I am on the list serve and always check to see when the next article has arrived. I try to distribute them as widely as possible. I am sending this e-mail in solidarity of May Day. I give you my thanks for all your efforts. Because of them the Workers of the World will one day Unite.

Comradely

Daniel R. Vogt



Dear comrades,

Let us celebrate First of May the International Worker Day. Let's not forget that the workers all around the world are still exploited and divided. It's been little more than a year since I first read your pages on the net. I, myself, am learning a lot from it, and I think others too. Despite I haven't got a lot of time for reading, I give the highest mark to Woods and Grant's Reason in Revolt. It's a good starting book or good recapitulation. (for somebody like me). The only objection is that there should be more pictures, diagrams, tables illustrating (much more than only illustrating) the text. Probable you have heard this but illustration are also major part of a publications concerning science, for example, there are beautiful pictures about the origin of man or geology etc. Enjoy the holidays,

Comradely

Alek (from Macedonia)



Dear comrades,

Thanks for the good news about works of Marxism online. I just returned last night from Yerevan, the former capital of the Armenian SSR. You might be interested to know that, a few days ago, thousands of demonstrators--many of them young--packed a city square, holding aloft red banners, and portraits of Lenin and Stepan Shahumyan. One of the banners read: "The cup of our patience has been filled to overflowing." The monument to Stepan Shahumyan--which a few years ago had been the repeated target of vandalism, and had been slated for destruction--has been restored by volunteers and was festooned with red carnations on May day. The population of Armenia today is about one-half of what it was ten years ago. Well over half the workforce is either unemployed or underemployed. Poverty is



Dear comrade,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your excellent and important, both politically and scientifically, work.

Best wishes,
M. M.

Kudos!

Jacek Tittenbrun (from Poland)



Comrades,

Revolutionary greetings from Kerala, India. Long live marxism. The new millenium is ours,

Manoj (from Kerala, India)

What do our readers think?

What is your opinion about the articles in *Socialist Appeal* and www.socialist.net?

Send your comments to:
PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ
or socialist_appeal@mail.com

Summer Drive Needed



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Anyone who has seen the film *Rogue Trader* (now out on video) recently would have been hard pressed to suppress a laugh when the Nick Leeson character describes the stock market as a huge casino. Stock prices go up and they go down and the lucky punters make a mint, in theory anyway. People who have been following the progress of the so-called dot.coms will certainly be reflecting on this. Some of these virtual companies have seen their share values rise by hundreds of millions and then collapse to nothing. Some investors make out of this and some do not. Naturally for the staff employed there is just the prospect of redundancy. A casino indeed - except in this game the workers never win.

We have entered the 21st Century with exploitation and greed alive and well. That is why we need socialism and it is *Socialist Appeal's* job to fight for it.

This issue will be on sale during the Euro2000 football championships. Why not mark this event by scoring a goal for socialism by sending us a donation to help us keep *Socialist Appeal* up and running. As at the middle of May we have raised £6858.88 towards our £13,000 target. This breaks down as £5993.62 raised over the last 6 months and £565.26 raised during the first part of May. To stay on target we need to get another £2,500 by the end of July. You can

help us by sending what you can. Special thanks to: Jim Brookshaw (£20), Linda Cartwright (£10), Stuart Knox (£40), Ron Graves (£20), Juliana Grant (£100), over £50 raised at a London youth school, West London readers (£50), over £200 from Glasgow readers and a further £300 send it by Scottish supporters. All those others who chipped in this month. Keep it up! Donations (made payable to *Socialist Appeal*) should be sent to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

Steve Jones

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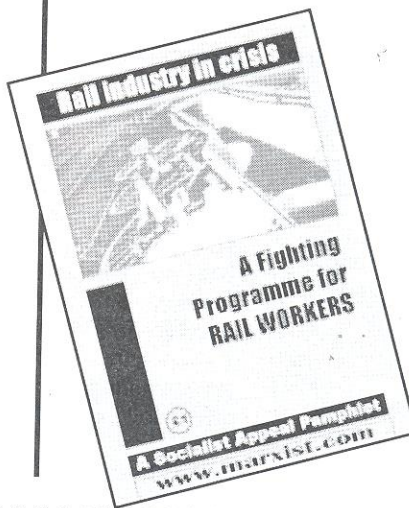
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Socialist Appeal supporters are at the forefront of the fight to commit the Labour government to introduce bold socialist measures. We are campaigning on the above programme as the only solution for working people. Why not join us in this fight? For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

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