

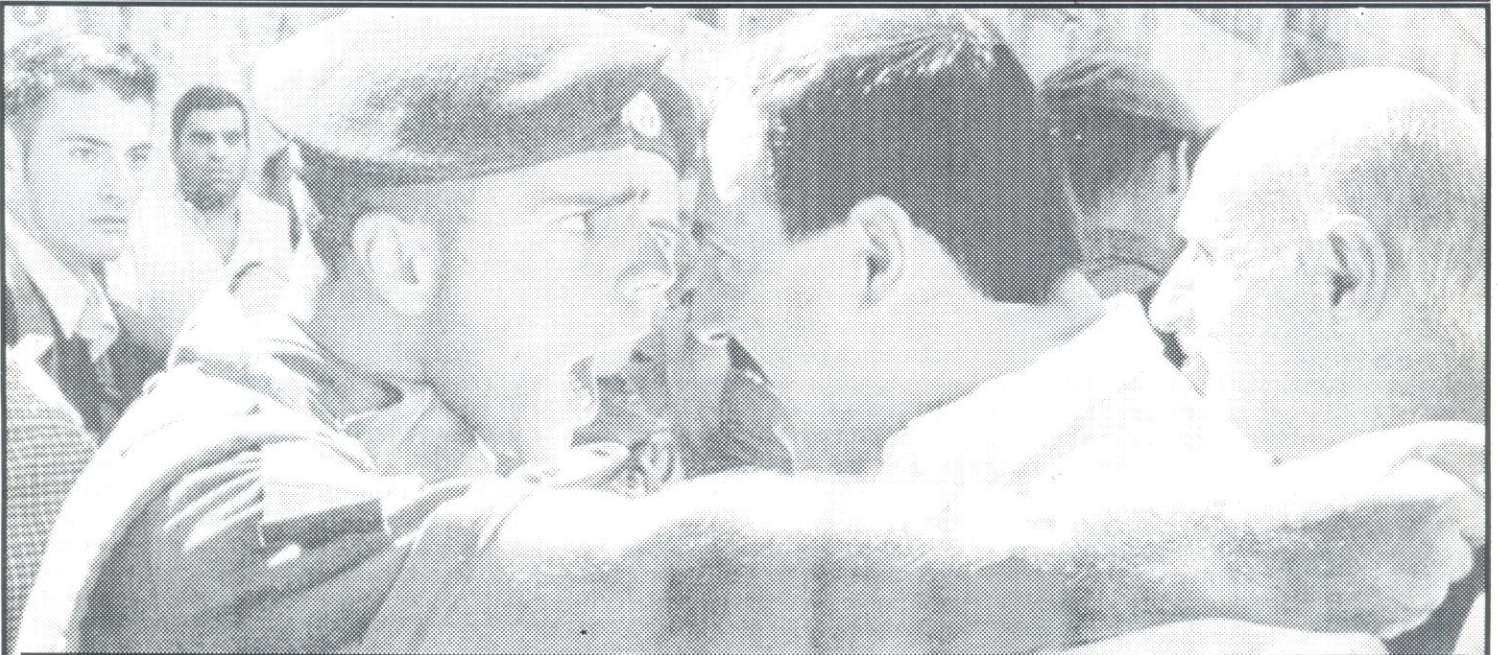
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Socialist Appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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Middle East in flames:



Socialist revolution the only way out

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Middle East in flames:

Socialist revolution the only way out

The brutality of the Israeli armed forces against the Palestinian people has aroused general indignation and condemnation throughout the world. The Israeli government persists in acting as if the Palestinians were somehow responsible! The fact of the matter is that it is the Palestinian people who have been denied a homeland and have had to suffer for years under Israeli military occupation.

Even if we look at it in military terms it is an entirely unequal contest. Israel's armed forces total more than 173,000 with an additional 425,000 reservists. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has a military force of just 35,000. This is the "war" which Barak says the Palestinians have launched against Israel!

The present uprising, or Intifada, was provoked by the Israeli right-wing leader of the Likud party, Ariel Sharon when he visited the Al-Aqsa hilltop in Jerusalem, the third most holy place in Islam. The aim was to underline Israeli domination over the whole site and over the whole of Jerusalem. But of course, the real reasons for the uprising lie elsewhere.

The Palestinian people aspire to their own homeland. They have the right to decide their own destiny. But the achievement of self-determination for the masses is a step towards bettering their living conditions. The root cause of the crisis is the deteriorating economic and social conditions of the Palestinian masses.

The economy of Israel is also in crisis and is destabilising Israeli society. That explains why sections of the Israeli ruling class wanted to reach an accommodation and expand trade with their Arab neighbours, who are also keen to trade with Israel, and are eager for a deal over Palestine. US imperialism would also like to get stability in the Middle East so that its strategic and economic interests should not be placed in danger. But all these plans do not take into account the real conditions facing the Palestinian masses.

The truth is always concrete. The Palestinian masses have begun to understand that they can have no confidence in the PLO leaders and the PA. The people of Palestine, and in the first place the workers and the youth, have understood that their emancipation can only be won through their

own efforts and sacrifices, just as in the previous Intifada of the 1980s. Then, as today, Arafat and the PLO leadership were incapable of understanding that the only way to solve the Palestinian problem is by revolutionary means - through the socialist transformation of Israel/Palestine as part of the general struggle of the workers throughout the Middle East to overthrow their oppressors - not only the Israeli ruling class, but also the despotic Arab rulers, and take the power into their own hands.

Once the revolutionary socialist perspective was rejected, the only alternative was betrayal and capitulation to Israeli imperialism. The aim of Tel Aviv was to set up a puppet "statelet", completely dependent on Israel and controlled by a toothless "government" that would effectively police Gaza and the West Bank on their behalf. The PA was used to silence dissidents and to allow the development of a Palestinian minority elite on the backs of the Palestinian people. The interests of the administrators of the PA and of the people who live within its borders are diametrically opposed. All this explains why Arafat and the PLO leaders have lost enormous authority among the Palestinian masses.

The situation inside Israel is also one of growing social and economic tension. Precisely to divert attention from this, the right-wing Likud provoked the Palestinians in Jerusalem. Their aim is to whip up anti-Arab chauvinism in Israel.

Gone are the days of the early founders of Israel who hid behind "socialist" rhetoric. Now the differences between the Labour Party and the Likud have become smaller and smaller. The same privatisation, the same attacks on living standards have been carried out as in every other capitalist country. In addition, there is the crushing burden of militarism which is made necessary by the constant state of war or semi-war with all of Israel's neighbours.

The argument advanced by Tel Aviv that Barak has made big concessions which Arafat refused to accept, thus causing the present crisis, is entirely false. Barak's "concessions" were really no concessions at all. Arafat could not have accepted them, even if he had wanted to. He would have been immediately overthrown, or worse. Above all, there is no possibility of solving the issue of Jerusalem on the current basis.

The present situation has, for now, tilted the whole balance of forces in Israel to the



Demonstrators demanding revolution

right. The formation of a "government of national unity" including the arch-reactionary Sharon, would signify the victory of the War Party in Tel Aviv - that section of the Israeli ruling circle that believes that the present peace deal has solved nothing, that war is inevitable, and that the sooner it comes the better.

Thus there is a logic in the situation which could lead to an outright war. This would involve terrible massacre and destruction. It would not be to the benefit either of the Palestinian masses or of the Israeli workers. Of course, the last thing imperialism wants is a war in the Middle East. A war would have an impact on the price of oil, and a further increase could be the final element that would put an end to the present economic upturn. Thus what is happening in the Middle East could have disastrous consequences for the West. But that does not mean that war in the Middle East is impossible. Far from it.

The sympathy of the Arab peoples towards the Palestinians is based on the fact that they share a common culture, language and literature, but also similar social and economic conditions. The aspirations of the Arab masses are not those of the cliques that govern over them. In reality the movement of the masses in these countries is seen as a threat by these despotic regimes. In order to divert the anger of the masses from themselves, the Arab regimes might decide that a military conflict with Israel

would be a lesser evil. The stage would be set for enormous social and political instability throughout the Middle East. Not one regime is safe from overthrow - not Egypt, not even Saudi Arabia. If there were a genuine revolutionary party and leadership the conditions would be present for socialist revolution throughout the Middle East.

The method of the Intifada is that of the class struggle. The general strike is one of its expressions. Therefore the Palestinian workers and youth are a key element in this equation. The workers of Palestine should place no confidence in the Arafat leadership. The Palestinian masses have not fought all these years just in order to create a Palestinian privileged elite. What advantage would there be for the workers and the poor? In order to achieve their own emancipation, the Palestinian workers must break with these bourgeois leaders. They must build their own workplace committees - committees of peasants, students, unemployed, and link up a national representative body. This body would become the genuine expression of the will of the Palestinian workers and youth.

But it would not be enough for the Palestinian workers to attempt to take power in their own territories. Most of the Palestinian working class is actually employed in Israeli industries. Thus they would have to include in their programme the call for unity with the Israeli workers against their own bosses. Without working class unity the masses face an impasse.

The attempt to solve the problems of the Palestinian people on a capitalist and nationalist basis has led only to a bloody impasse. It is necessary to strike out on a new road - the road of socialist revolution. A call should be sent out to the workers of the whole Middle East to organise themselves with the aim of overthrowing the various bourgeois and despotic regimes in the area. Only by removing these puppets of imperialism and expropriating the wealth of the capitalists can the resources be made available to solve all the social and economic problems.

The Israeli workers must also wake up to the task of transforming society. If the workers in Israel were to move decisively against their own ruling class this would break down the national barriers and open the possibility of an international struggle for socialism in the area.

The economic situation in Israel is placing a lot of pressure on the working class. The government has been cutting spending on such things as health and education. Back in 1998, 200,000 students in Israeli universities took part in a strike to stop the increase in university fees. They received massive support, with up to 91% of the population declaring they sympathised with the students' demands. In the spring of 1999, the accumulated anger of the working class culminated in a series of strikes against the Netanyahu government and in a general strike in the public sector in April which

involved 400,000 workers. Under this pressure, and with growing levels of inflation, the Histradut (the main Israeli Trade Union federation) has been forced to refuse the government's offer of a 3.1% increase in wages and has demanded increases of 14%. Widespread privatisation of Israel's large publicly-owned industrial sector, has meant job losses. Unemployment has reached the level of 10%. This is a new phenomenon for Israeli workers, who were used to practically full employment for decades.

What is taking place is a huge differentiation between rich and poor. Zionism has always been based on the idea of "one-nation", but as in all capitalist countries there is no common interest between workers and bosses, and Israel is no exception.

Thus, either the workers of Israel take on their bosses in a struggle for their own rights or the initiative passes to the reactionary elements. Karl Marx explained long ago, a working class that does not oppose the oppression of another people can never achieve its own freedom. The solution of the problem can only come about through the overthrow of the Israeli state - that is, through a revolutionary policy that is capable of uniting the Jewish and Arab working class against their common enemy.

So long as the wealth and resources of this region are in the hands, on the one hand of Israeli imperialism, and on the other of a series of despotic semi-feudal Arab regimes, poverty will not be eradicated. There will not be enough jobs, houses, clean water, hospitals and schools for everybody. In this situation the ruling elites always tend to play the national card, that is they will play one nation off against another.

However, on the basis of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East, within which each nation would have both the fullest autonomy and the right to self-determination, a homeland could be guaranteed both to Jews and Palestinians. Instead of spending huge resources on military spending the wealth produced by the workers of the region could be used to solve all the problems that capitalism has not been able to solve. On the basis of jobs, decent housing, clean water, health care, pensions for all, it would be possible to work towards the solving of the national question and the harmonious collaboration and co-operation between all the peoples of the Middle East. ☆



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On the brink of
the abyss**
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Blair's Lib-Lab Conspiracy

The serialisation of Paddy Ashdown's Diaries in *The Times* newspaper (23/24/25th October) has revealed much about Blair's secret plan to stab the Labour Party in the back and form a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The extracts reveal the sordid behind-the-scenes manoeuvres and intrigues of the Blairite clique that at present control the Labour Party.

by Rob Sewell

The extracts reveal a full-blown conspiracy involving Blair and his coterie against the ranks of the Labour movement. Behind closed doors, the conspirators plotted to promote capitalist policies and create a Lib-Lab coalition. These great "democrats" totally ignored the wishes of Labour's rank and file as well as the electorate. "Two Cabinet seats minimum," states Roy Jenkins to Ashdown, "but we should go for three plus some changes in policy."

The Diaries reveal that even before John Smith was dead, Blair entered into secret discussions with Ashdown as early as December 1993. When Blair, who was backed by the capitalist press, was elected leader of the party, Ashdown sent him a note: "this was an excellent thing for Labour and our plans." After this they decided to widen their plot by drawing in Robin Cook, Mandelson, Brown and Prescott, although the latter, under pressure, balked at going all the way.

On 19th October 1995, Ashdown outlined his plans to the six-member Jo Group: "If we were successful, we could look forward to the Tory party breaking up and perhaps the Left of the Labour Party splitting off too." This was the realignment that he and Blair wanted, leading to the destruction of the Labour Party.

Using code words Blair told Ashdown: "I strongly favour the second option - the 'big thing'." Blair told Jenkins a week later: "I would prefer to have a government in which Liberal Democrats were present than a government entirely made up of the Labour Party - and that applies whether I get a majority or not."

Ashdown saw the move as a step towards the creation of a new party with the One-Nation Tories being brought on board. "The Tories are, in fact, two parties and Labour ditto", he states. "...if it appears, I have more in common with Blair than he has with his left wing, surely the logical thing for

us is to create a new, powerful alternative force that would be unified around a broadly liberal agenda.

"And the sooner we do that, the sooner we will stimulate the break-up of the Tories into pro-European, one-nation Tories like Kenneth Clarke and the anti-European xenophobes who have taken control of the party under Major." (9th April 1996).

This was - and remains - Blair's 'project' as well. However, although the Blairites control the Labour Party machine and dominate the PLP, there is major resistance to this 'project' from the rank and file - especially the trade unionists. As Robin Cook, feeling the pressures from below, explained to Ashdown: "The party won't accept winning a majority in an election and then having a coalition with you. Tony has vastly overextended what he can do with the party already. I never cease to be amazed at just how far he has been able to go. But after a general election in which we won a clear majority, he could not have a coalition with you without breaking the party up." (25th April).

A few months later Cook again talked to Ashdown about the situation within the Labour Party and the tensions created by the Blairites. Ashdown wrote in his diary: "he [Cook] described his party as being stretched tight like a rubber band. The only issue is when it will break.

"He is very fed up; he believes they no longer offer anything to 'their people, the working class, the poor unfortunates, the Ds and Es'. He believes that could break the party into two pieces.

"The timing of this event may be two years into the next Parliament, involving a reshuffle and co-opting us and the Tory Left into filling the gap left by the departing comrades." (17th July).

Blair's alliance with the Liberals meant a great deal to him. His hope was - and remains - to turn the Labour Party into a capitalist party. "I recognise the prizes that are on offer", Blair said. "At the end of the day, who knows, the two parties may combine again and we can mend the divisions on the left which have done so much damage in the early part of this century." Blair view is the creation of the Labour Party as an independent voice of the working class should never have happened!

On the day of the 1997 general election, when Labour had just won a landslide 179 majority, Blair telephoned Ashdown. "I do want you to know that I am determined to



mend the schism that occurred in the progressive forces in British politics at the start of this century. It is just a question of finding a workable framework. But we are now in a position of strength and I intend to use that."

However, the massive majority undermined Blair's intention to create at that stage a Lib-Lab coalition government. Instead, he created on Ashdown's initiative a Cabinet committee with the Liberal Democrats to discuss constitutional change. The Liberals were pushing hard for proportional representation as part of this political realignment, which has met with big opposition within Labour's ranks. Blair, nevertheless, continued to meet Ashdown and promote the 'project' at every stage.

Although the Ashdown Diaries come from an opponent of the Labour movement, they must be treated seriously as a stark warning to Labour's rank and file. The Blairites, who are largely Tory-SDP infiltrators, are planning to wreck the party. Despite being temporarily blocked, it still remains a key part of their strategy.

Labour's ranks must energetically expose this conspiracy and oppose all kinds of pacts or coalitions with the Liberal Democrats. The coalition deals in Scotland and Wales will play into the hands of the nationalists and undermine the cause of Labour.

The only method of opposing coalition politics is the fight for socialist policies. All attempts to work within the confines of capitalism are doomed to failure. We must return to our socialist heritage which means a real Labour government taking over the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control and management and ending the rule of the market. Only in this way can the aspirations of working people be fulfilled and Lib-Lab politics remain in the dustbin of history where they belong. ☆

The unthinkable: Could the Tories win?

Although it only lasted a few days, one by-product of the Oil crisis in September was the temporary Tory lead in the opinion polls. Even though Labour has now regained the lead many are now openly thinking the unthinkable, and asking: could the Tories win the next election?

by Steve Jones

For years now to raise this possibility would have seemed ridiculous. After all Labour seemed to be enjoying an historically massive poll lead and had been in that position since 1993. All the papers were forever telling us how loved the Great Helmsman Tony Blair was and equally how much a figure of fun William Hague was. Of course it is very easy to make fun of the Tories. They deserve it after what they did to ordinary people during their time in office and *Socialist Appeal* has not hesitated to join in. But at the same time we have constantly warned of the danger they still represent. The old rule about the Tories being the 1st Eleven and Labour the 2nd still applies as far as big business is concerned. They are quite happy to see Labour do the job for them in office but at the same time they do not really trust Labour. They know that however accommodating the government might be, Labour as a party is still tied to the organisations of the working class by a thousand and one threads. The perceived failure of the modernisers' project to break the links with the unions and team up with the Lib-Dems and the "one-nation" Tories, will not have inspired confidence in the boardrooms of the City of London. They will inevitably prove fair-weather friends to New Labour and, when the time is right, return their support to the Tories, who they still see as their natural representatives.

But should any of this matter? After all it is elections which determine governments and in any case Labour is now back in the lead. Certainly the Tories did not have the best of conferences. Ann Widdecombe made her bid for the leadership by announcing new reforms on drug laws only to discover that most of the shadow cabinet appeared to have had former jobs as roadies for Jefferson Airplane, such was their "intake" of substances!. Portillo's effort to reposition himself as a more caring person fell between two stools, between those who did not believe him and those, mainly in the audience, who did not want him to be more user-friendly. Hague's speech at

the end of conference was so meaningless that it was a relief to the assembled press that events in Yugoslavia meant that they did not have to bother giving much space to it.

Yet for the last few years we have been faced with a strange contradiction. On the one hand the Tories were, until recently, struggling in the opinion polls. Yet at the same time the Tories have been doing not too badly at all in the various local and regional elections. How is this possible?

The answer lies with the demoralisation that has set in amongst Labour's core vote. In election after election there has been clear evidence of solid Labour voters staying at home and simply not voting. This has been particularly noticeable in Labour's heartlands, the industrial regions of Britain. In Wales we saw seats which were held by Labour for decade after decade being lost. Ditto for areas such as Oldham and the Midlands. At the same time there has been a drifting back towards the Tories on the part of the middle classes. So much for the efforts of the Blairites to seize the so-called middle ground.

Even the most recent opinion polls, which in the case of the Mori poll released on October 25th shows Labour's lead up by 8 points, contains a serious warning. The poll notes that 43% of those polled think that the government is out of touch with ordinary voters, an increase of 23% in just 12 months. Only 23% think that Labour understands the problems facing Britain and only 6% think

that the government keeps its promises. Tony Blair's personal rating remains at minus 18%. The only saving grace of all this is that the Tory ratings are even worse. People are still saying that they will vote Labour rather than Tory at the next election, but they are saying it without much conviction, as if it was a choice between lesser evils.

The signs are there for all to see. There is clearly a growing and deep discontent with the government and its failure to address the problems of working class people - a discontent which is looking for ways to express itself. The negative ratings in the specialist questions in the opinion polls is one way, the deliberate abstentions in the various local and assembly elections another. So long as the Tories remain unpopular then the most likely result of the next general election will still be some sort of Labour victory. But what about the election after that? Also what effect would a sharp fall in the economy's fortunes have on the electorate's voting intentions even now? Nothing can now be taken for granted. A slump in Labour voting would let the Tories in by default, since who ever gets the most votes wins, however low that vote might be.

The truth is that we should not be in this position. The political upheaval that was the 1997 general election should have spelt the end of the Tories forever. There should be no way back for them. However New Labour's pandering to big business and Tory-Lite policies is preparing the ground for just such a disaster sooner or later. The alternative is clear. Labour should change course and start acting in the interests of those people who actually elected them, the working class. Ironically by doing this Labour would be able to win over those sections of the middle class who have been badly affected by the ravages of capitalism over the last period. Adoption of a clear socialist programme would transform the situation. However we know that the Labour leaders are not going to do this, whatever the final cost, so the role of Labour and trade union activists should be to fight to reclaim the party from the SDP infiltrators and rearm it with socialist policies and those prepared to lead and fight for them. The sooner that occurs the sooner we can finally eradicate the Tories as a political force forever. ☆



Judge Mental



Sunday 29 October 2000

I must give my old friend Donald Findlay QC a call. The boys at the Mustn't Judge Club asked me to find a speaker for the Annual General Meeting and I think Donald would go down a storm. He could do with some moral support after that unfortunate incident last June where he was caught on video singing the "Sash", "Billy Boys" and "Derry's Walls" after Glasgow Rangers won the Scottish Cup. The Daily Record really went for him for singing those notoriously anti-Catholic songs. I hope no one ever manages to smuggle a video camera into any of our private clubs! He had to resign from his position as Vice Chairman of the club but I'm sure he'll be back in eventually when all the hoo-ha has died down. Some of my Scottish colleagues tell me he's got over all that Referendum nonsense by now. His "Think Twice" campaign which stood out against devolution had a very heavy defeat in the end. He takes the knocks and keeps bouncing back. I'm told that he is even more popular on the after dinner speaking circuit just now. It looks like notoriety pays. I might try it myself! ☆

PO Counter Workers Take Action

Last month London postal workers took spontaneous action over management's imposition of agency staff. More walkouts are threatened.

Around 1,000 counter staff from 90 sites in London struck. From October 2, new workers employed by Post Office Network, which runs the counters, face a 20% cut in pay, reduced benefits and promotional opportunities. The Post Office bosses are trying to reduce staff costs by £30 million.

by **Andy Blake**
acting CWU branch secretary, London 7
(personal capacity)

Rather than employ workers directly on decent wages, the management is drafting in 250 staff from the personnel agency Blue Arrow until the end of the year. Agency staff only get two-and-a-half days training and are paid a mere £5.50 per hour, with unpaid breaks.

This dilution of staff and the introduction of agency labour is part and parcel of the reorganisation of the Post Office. Under the Tories, the Post Office was split up into four businesses ready for privatisation. They intended to sell it off bit by bit. However, the victory of Labour, after the campaign by our union, halted this process.

After the closure of 1,000 Crown Offices, Labour has agreed to maintain a "core" number of 600, the Labour government granted the Post Office greater "commercial freedom" and has threatened to reduce the Post Office's mail monopoly down to 50p.

Now the Post Office has been split into 21 businesses, with the Service Group sector divided further into 17 groups! The process has been christened "Shaping for Competitive Success", ready for 2003 when the whole of the European postal service is opened up for competition.

Already the catering section, Quadrant, has been partially privatised through a joint venture with Granada. This has resulted in poorer quality all round.

Another sector, RoMEC, which covers cleaning, engineering and office services, is now looking to the private sector for a deal. Two other businesses, Transaction Services and Customer Management, who are mainly concerned with call centres, are proposing to undermine terms and conditions. They want to bring in new entrants on lower pay and worse conditions of employment.

These changes have led to falling morale amongst postal workers. Without doubt it is at

an all-time low. On counters we are moving towards a situation where most workers will be part-time employees.

This whole background has resulted in a breakdown of relations between union and management. The Post Office bosses have continually ignored the union in carrying through these changes. We don't get agreement any more. "We agree to disagree" is the formulation. There are no negotiations, simply management imposition. It was this Victorian management style that provoked our members. We were simply told that agency staff were being brought in. There was no offer to current full-time or part-time staff to work extra hours over Christmas.

On the Royal Mail side, there also exists the threat of industrial action. They are now voting on a Christmas arrangements agreement. Although recommended by the national union, there is big opposition amongst the rank and file. Many branches are opposed as it will mean the end of two deliveries. The management want a single delivery with no breaks as before. So the ballot for this deal could easily be lost.

Other struggles in London surround management's attempt to take work outside of the capital to cut costs. They want to relocate work from the Mount Pleasant mail centre in Farringdon to Langley, near Slough, threatening the livelihoods of 1,700 staff. They also want to transfer the work of 850 postal coders and 112 clerical staff. Post Office Counters intend to reduce their London staff by 200. Many existing staff live within the London Postal Districts, mainly in Islington, or within the greater London area. Over two years ParcelForce aim to transfer 160 West London and 360 East London jobs out of London.

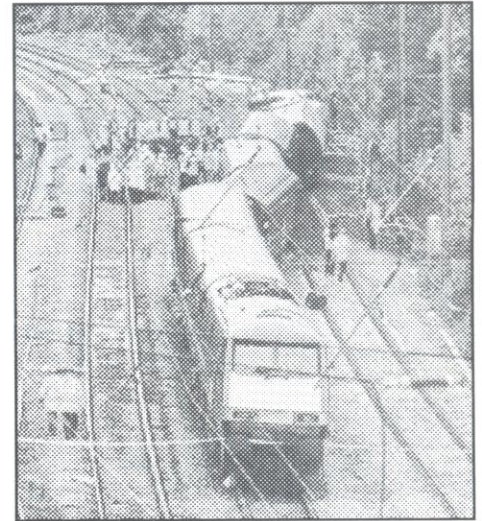
Approximately 7,000 jobs have already been lost from the Post Office here in the last five years alone. Although some of these jobs have gone as a result of new technology, many have gone as a direct result of deliberate Post Office policy to transfer work out of London or, in the case of Post Office Counters, franchising out Counter Services.

The Post Office bosses are testing the ground with one attack after another on postal workers. This heavy-handed approach has resulted in a wave of unofficial action in the past five years. After last month's unofficial walkouts, the union is balloting for strike action over agency staff. Strikes are likely from early December. Only by militant action can the Post Office management be forced to back down. ☆

Privatisation kills again

Just one year after the appalling tragedy at Ladbroke Grove rail privatisation has claimed yet more lives in the derailment at Hatfield. The Leeds train from Kings Cross departed from track already known to be in need of repair killing 4 and injuring more than 30 others. At Ladbroke Grove, the familiar refrain was trotted out 'this must never be allowed to happen again,' and an investigation was launched. The report is not due out for another 18 months. We had heard all this before. The same was said at Southall, the report on that disaster is still not due for release for another year. To add insult to injury, Railtrack has been awarded £4.7b from the government.

by Phil Mitchinson



However unpleasant, we can predict that there will be more derailments, more collisions and more deaths.

This time the Fat Controller himself, Gerald Corbett, tendered his resignation. In itself, of course, this would solve nothing. There is no doubt a great deal of poor, yet overpaid management involved in the rail industry, but simply to replace this crew with another, leaving the railways broken up into different companies, privately owned, with profits inevitably coming before both safety and service is not a solution. Railtrack bosses' assure us that for them safety comes first. We all know, however, that they are referring to the safety of their investments, and their bonuses, not the safety of passengers and railworkers. The board meeting discussing Corbett's resignation even had the bare faced temerity to suggest delaying an announcement so as not to adversely affect their share price, making an announcement to the stock exchange instead!

One crash may well be described as an accident. Several may be blamed on varied and different causes. Yet when signals constantly fail, train companies fail to install safety equipment, and track disintegration causes such frequent derailments, it is clear for all to see that the whole operation is in need of repair. There are too many boards, and committees (worse than old style nationalisation, in fact), too little investment, too many fatcats, and too little planning and coordination. The workforce has no say in the running of the industry and nor do the passengers who use it.

Even the Fat Controller himself blames privatisation. On BBC 2's *Newsnight* he admitted "The railway was ripped apart at privatisation and the structure that was put in place was a structure designed, if we are honest, to maximise the proceeds to the treasury." We would add to maximise the profits of the privateers.

Railtrack claim to have already increased investment. Since privatisation they have made a profit of £1.5 billion. Much of their investment has gone on tarding up

stations, encouraging new shops and restaurants to open on their land. Anyone who travels by train regularly will have seen this kind of investment. Trains are late or cancelled, the rolling stock is decrepit, the track is unsafe, but you can enjoy a nice cappuccino while you wait.

Another derailment followed just two days after this latest disaster between Birmingham and Manchester. Speed limits are now imposed on 1000 miles of track at 81 sites. This can add up to half an hour to many train journeys. The problems won't end there. With many stations not able to cope with the number of trains running at present, such a slowdown could result in gridlock and chaos. Clearly, just slowing trains down will not repair broken track. It will require a massive programme of investment. Such investment however will not come out of the pockets of the privatisation-made millionaires. Any investment under the current system will come out of our pockets, through increased fares, and from our taxes

"We cannot realistically expect at the same time huge improvements in punctuality and reductions in cost. Safety and investment are the priority." claims £400,000 a year Corbett. What he really means is you can't spend on safety, improve the service and cut prices whilst maintaining profit levels and fatcat pay.

None of the current bosses of Railtrack, the train operating companies or any other component of the railways can be trusted with their management. Safety, planning, investment and coordination must be taken out of the hands of profiteers and controlled instead by railway workers and passengers at a local and national level. But you cannot control what you don't own. In the end this rail crisis can be reduced to a question of ownership. Everyone knows that the privatisation of the railways has been a catastrophe. It is time that catastrophe was ended. The longer the delay the more tragically inevitable nightmares await, and the worse the service in general becomes. No matter which individual sits in the fat controllers

chair, unless the railways are reunified, with enormous investment, and democratic control and management, one does not require a crystal ball to predict the consequences. Even under the old style of nationalisation, a bureaucratic board where the workforce had no say and nor did passengers, at least the network was not broken up into a hundred different companies chasing a quick buck. Most people now believe that a return to that system would be better than trying to continue with the current fiasco.

Labour must live up to its long standing pledge to bring the railways fully back into public ownership. There should be no return to the bureaucratic boards of past nationalisations, however, where currently serving private bosses would be given cushy posts because of their so-called knowledge and experience. The knowledge and experience we need to harness is that of the passengers and above all the people who work on the railways. These are the people who know what should be done and how to do it, not the bosses who have allowed the railways to run to rack and ruin, more interested in making money than safe and efficient services.

Corbett must go, so too must all the bosses of Railtrack, and the train operating companies. A unified, publicly owned railway, democratically controlled and managed could then form the core of a fully integrated transport system, serving the needs of passengers, defending the conditions of the workforce, creating new jobs and at the same time helping to protect the environment.

- ◆ Nationalise the railways
- ◆ No compensation for fatcats, only those in genuine need
- ◆ For democratic management and accountability. Rail boards to be made up of representatives elected one third by railworkers, one third by passenger bodies, plus one third representing the government
- ◆ For a fully integrated, publicly owned transport service. ☆

PCS Election: Support left candidate



Letter from a reader

Dear editor

As a famous socialist once wrote we have to deal with how things are and not how we might like them to be. The article "PCS general secretary election" in the October edition accuses Left Unity of "a short sighted hatred" of Barry Reamsbottom and the misnamed Moderate faction. This is a pretty amazing accusation in view of the record and nature of a secretly funded clique with links to the state who are fanatically pro Nato, pro business and aim to purge socialists from the union and civil service. As their key organiser, Reamsbottom's defeat would be an important advance for union members and have a significance for the wider movement.

The decision not to stand a candidate is based on a realistic assessment of our own prospects, important differences between Lanning and Reamsbottom (based on experience in the new union and policy commitments made by Lanning) and an appraisal of the potential damage to union members of a Reamsbottom victory. The election of Lanning will allow us to work in a more democratic union

with greater freedom to organise in union branches and groups, challenge New Labour policies and extend the influence of socialist ideas at rank and file level. To suggest, as does the article, that there is no difference between the candidates is at best misleading. We have no illusions in either Lanning or his faction but this a tactical decision for a particular election that will help create a more favourable political environment for socialist ideas.

Unfortunately some elements who appear oblivious to the effect of Reamsbottom's re-election now hope to run a candidate who has no chance of winning. This gamble may well assist his electoral prospects and I am surprised the article was silent on this point. As Trotsky made clear in his timeless advice to US union activists in the thirties, we must avoid an "ultra leftist evaluation of the given situation" or subordinating ourselves to "disguised conservative cliques". There are no absolute certainties in electoral tactics but in what is admittedly a difficult tactical decision we start from the position that the overall interests of union members and the working class in general take precedence over any individual or factional interests. Our decision to give qualified support to Lanning is based on this important principle.

Comradely,
Chris Baugh

Our reply

The battle for the new general secretary of the civil service union PCS is certainly hotting up. On the 20th October, the deadline for nominations, Barry Reamsbottom, the present joint general secretary of PCS, announced he would not be standing.

by **Rachel Heemsker**
PCS Branch Secretary South Essex ES
(personal capacity)

Two candidates have received sufficient nominations to contest the general secretary election: Hugh Lanning, the union's assistant general secretary, who is supported by the right-wing, and Mark Serwotka, a Sheffield-based activist who works in the Department of Social Security benefits division. He put himself forward as the independent left candidate after the narrow decision by Left Unity to back Lanning against Reamsbottom.

As we said in our last article, this election "should have been the perfect opportunity for Left Unity within PCS to take the fight to the members and show that there is a credible alternative to the right wing within the union." Unfortunately, Left Unity

chose to back a right winger against another right winger. It was for them a question of the lesser evil, with the defeat of Reamsbottom the over-riding priority.

With Reamsbottom dropping out of the race, no doubt to take up a career in business, Left Unity has been left holding the baby. To get themselves out of this mess, they have been forced to drop their support for Lanning, who is now described as the "right wing candidate", and belatedly come behind Serwotka as the only left alternative.

The leaders of Left Unity, to cover up this mistake, have said that it was their initial support for Lanning that caused Reamsbottom to resign. Their stance has been vindicated! "You pays your money and you takes your choice".

Members of the so-called Socialist Party grouping have also been caught with their pants down. They withdrew their candidate in favour of Lanning, but now want Lanning and Serwotka to withdraw their nominations and re-run the election! It is a bit like the child who wants his ball back when the game is not going his way.

The reality is that if Left Unity's position had been adhered to, then the only name on the ballot paper at this time would have been Hugh Lanning. He would have become the new general secretary by default - with the endorsement of Left Unity.

Left Unity has now switched candidates and come out for Serwotka. This must be confusing for PCS members. Originally Serwotka was denounced by LU officials, while Lanning was heralded as a real step forward. As Chris Baugh stated in his letter: "The election of Lanning will allow us to work in a more democratic union with greater freedom to organise in union branches and groups, challenge New Labour policies and extend the influence of socialist ideas at rank and file level."

To portray Lanning now as the "right wing" enemy can only be described, at best, as switching horses in mid stream.

Trotsky was correctly against "ultra leftist evaluations", but he was also in favour of fighting for clear ideas and distinguishing between right and left. In apt advice to an American trade union official he stated: "Above all, one must tell the masses what's what. It's inadmissible to play hide-and-seek." We hope the lessons will be learned from this unfortunate episode.

The left in PCS have no alternative but to support Mark Serwotka in the election for PCS general secretary. He is the left candidate. Left Unity should have had their own candidate from the start. By now we could have been in a strong position to challenge the right wing for the leadership of the union. ☆

Wales: Break the Coalition

On Thursday October 5 the Labour Party in Wales was stunned to hear, via the media, that the minority Labour administration in the Welsh Assembly had done a deal with the Liberal Democrats to 'provide stability' in the Assembly. In a power sharing pact, Labour can rely on support in exchange for Liberals being given Cabinet positions. With dismay, already demoralised Labour members heard that the least that had been given away to the smallest party in Wales is two cabinet posts (which will mean the sacking of one Labour minister and the

creation of one new post). Following the 'Scottish model' the Deputy First Secretary office is to be given to Mike German, the Liberal leader in Wales (who is currently being accused of running up huge credit card accounts in his previous job with the quango, the Welsh Development Agency).

by Mark Turner
Cardiff County UNISON/Labour Link Officer
(personal capacity)

Rank and file members of the party, the trade unions and the massive majority of Labour voters in Wales made their feelings known on the Blair/New Labour leadership and its policies when Alun Michael was parachuted in to replace Ron Davies as leader of the Welsh party. They rallied behind Rhodri Morgan in the mistaken belief that because he was sometimes 'off-message', he was somehow a left winger. On the contrary, we pointed out that there is no political divide between Morgan and New Labour, and since the unseating of Alun Michael this has been plain for all to see.

True, the Wales Labour Party has dropped the 'New' from its campaigning, in response to the widespread disillusionment with the Tory policies still being imposed on us by Blair. But there has been no change in direction in policy. Alun Michael had been vulnerable from the start but did not enter into a Lib-Lab pact. In reality, he was even more vulnerable inside his own party than in the Assembly. Michael could never have gotten away with this new sell out. It seems that the only reason for this move is to ensure policies such as the council housing stock transfer to private ownership are pushed through. Ironically Morgan is only in a position to push through this Blairism because of his anti-Blairite image.

There is profound anger in the party at this latest sell out. The Liberals had a conference on the matter to confirm or reject their leadership's deal, but Labour has no say in the antics of its leader. The Welsh Assembly members were informed of the decision at a meeting called late on the night before the announcement. The MPs were not consulted, and it was only put to a meeting of the Welsh Executive after the announcement, so that they had little choice but to back the leadership. Many branches and constituency meetings have been in uproar over this. In addition, part of the price of the deal is the commissioning of a report on proportional representation for local authorities. This is a slap in the face for Labour activists, when the fiasco of the

Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament elections were the very things that discredited PR in their eyes and led to the outright rejection of it at this year's conference.

There was little enthusiasm for the Assembly at the time of the referendum, since Labour voters could see that it would have no power or ability to do much for the working class in Wales. This is the key to the whole issue. By the time the Assembly elections took place there was already disillusionment with Blair's policies and in protest many in Wales either did not vote or even voted for Plaid Cymru. This did not represent an upsurge in nationalism but a protest at the failure of Blair to introduce measures in the interests of working people. Consequently from the outset Labour failed to win a majority in Wales of all places. If they had stood boldly on a socialist programme they could easily have won such a majority. Instead of carrying out Tory policies with the backing of the Liberals, the Labour minority in the Assembly must put forward a bold socialist plan for creating jobs, for health and education and dare the others to vote against. If the nationalists, the Liberals or the Tories were to vote such measures down Welsh workers would know who not to vote for in a new Assembly election, and would have reason to give Labour enthusiastic backing. In the ensuing election Labour would win an outright majority for such measures.

Disillusionment of workers

The party must tackle the disillusionment of workers and members by fighting for more powers for the Assembly to be able to intervene in the economy on behalf of workers in Wales. When CORUS, Sony, or any other big business closes or makes hundreds of Welsh workers redundant, the Assembly needs the power to intervene. We need the ability to resolve our enormous transport problems by renationalising the railways and improving services, improving road links between north and south. The Assembly could reduce pollution in its capital, where

incidence of child asthma is increasing at alarming rates by improving public transport into and within the city. Unemployment, poverty and the associated ill-health (Wales is consistently one of the highest risk areas for heart disease and cancers) in the blackspots of the south Wales valleys, the west and the north could be tackled by massive public investment. Local government is still being starved of money, with one cash hungry council being robbed to pay those who are even more impoverished. What is needed is more investment in local government. We should be building more and better council housing, not selling it off. Investment in the building and maintenance of homes, schools and hospitals, libraries and day centres would provide employment and revive dying communities. The renationalising of the other public utilities would receive huge support from workers. They have seen electricity taken over by the water company Hyder, to become one monopoly, now owned by an American multinational. Jobs and services have been eroded whilst profits carry on growing and problems with the infrastructure still remain.

The nationalists will undoubtedly make more gains in the 'Labour heartlands' at the next general election if Blair and Morgan continue on their current course. The Labour leadership must not be allowed to throw away generations of hard won support in Wales. Working people in Wales want and need a Labour run Assembly with powers enough to implement socialist policies.

◆ **No to coalitions - End the Lib-Lab pact now**

◆ **No to Tory policies - break with big business and introduce measures in the interests of working people**

◆ **For a majority Labour administration with socialist policies**

◆ **For full economic powers so that the Assembly can act in the interests of the working class ☆**

Unity is Strength: Get Organised

A big change of mood is taking place in industrial relations. Employers, who wouldn't have had anything to do with unions in the past, are now sitting down and talking with them. At the same time, workers who previously lacked the confidence to organise themselves are becoming more confident - and doing something about it.

by Sheila Clark

Increased confidence may come partly from the relatively low level of unemployment, but the new mood is also a consequence of the far from perfect Employment Relations Act, which has been in force for a matter of months.

Legal Shortcomings

The new mood was amply demonstrated at a recent conference on union recognition, organised by the National Union of Journalists and attended by around 50 activists.

Sarah Veale, TUC Employment Rights Officer, hailed the NUJ as one of the great success stories on recognition - on a voluntary basis, which she thought was the best way. During the period when media unions were under attack and de-recognised, NUJ membership levels had been kept up - and even increased.

She stressed the importance of the new right to be "accompanied" as an absolute right, regardless of company size or union recognition. "It is a chance to demonstrate the union's service - and the CBI has called it the TUC's Trojan Horse."

Sarah Veale pointed out some of the law's weaknesses.

- It still allowed employers to discriminate against trade union members and offer personal contracts for better terms.

- It doesn't apply to firms with under 20 workers - although small businesses are often the worst employers and account for

most of the industrial tribunal cases.

- The need for 40% of workers to vote yes is not a requirement anywhere else such as local elections, for instance.

Power Talks

Tony Burke, Deputy General Secretary of the GPMU (Graphical, Paper & Media Union), stressed the partnership between the unions in the battle for recognition. He said that they were concentrating mainly on Greenfield sites where they had either few or no members.

He explained how at a Gosport Packaging Company, they started by getting the Staff Council Members into the union. They mapped the workplace and managed to put a rep into each department. The membership grew from 6 to 100. When they first approached management, they replied that the workers weren't interested. They then recruited, until they had 160 members and managed to obtain a meeting with the Chief Executive. When they had grown to 270 members, the company said that they wanted the shop stewards trained properly. Then they wanted time to train the managers! Then - they signed an agreement with the union.

NUJ National Organiser, Jeremy Dear, said that the news was positive. More than nine new agreements had been signed and a further 22 were under discussion. When the Big Issue had insisted on a consultative

ballot, 100% had voted for the union to represent them.

He believed the turnaround had come from a lot of work by lay officials and a long period of building.

Union Busters

Warnings were raised about potential 'union-busting' tactics and the need to 'inoculate' members against them. One daily newspaper had already produced a management leaflet masquerading as one from the GPMU.

Tony Burke warned: "The company tactics begin with bribery, like better toilet paper, free tea and an 'open door'. Then there are activist promotions, before they start to take a harder line with redundancies etc."

Martin Levitt, who now works for the American Teamsters Union, has written a book, "Confessions of a Union Buster" describing tactics which include planting drugs!

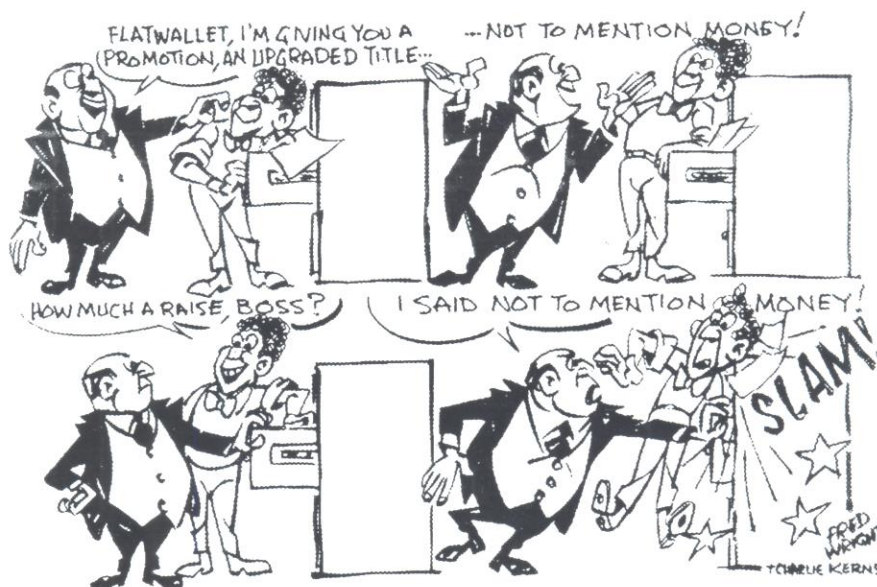
The people who make billions of dollars trying to destroy unions in the US are starting work over here. Anthony Barnett writes in *The Observer*, 24 January 1999, "They earn their lucrative fees by specialising in helping management to defeat ballots for union recognition, which often result in the sacking of pro-union employees."

"Examples of their tactics include engineering one-to-one meetings between individual employees and management where workers are pressurised not to join a union because they risk bankrupting the firm and losing their job or benefits."

The most famous union-busters are the American law firm, Jackson Lewis Schnitzler & Krugman, which already advises a number of US companies in Britain on how to keep unions out of the workplace.

American commentator, Tim Lally, says that Jackson Lewis: "is a national 'labor and employment law firm' which

is a national 'labor and employment law firm' which



represents management exclusively. With 20 offices in 11 states, more than 300 lawyers and annual revenues of nearly \$40 million, they are formidable indeed."

They have written a book on the subject. But they won't even sell the book, "Winning NLRB Elections: Avoiding Unionization Through Preventative Employee Relations Programs" now in its fourth edition, to individuals, let alone to unions, says Lally.

According to *The Observer*, Jackson Lewis was planning to bring its 'how to stay union-free' seminars here last year.

The article quotes Martin Payson, senior partner of the firm's New York office, who said: 'UK companies have a lot to learn. Recognition ballots can be battles for the heart and soul of a company.'

One of Jackson Lewis' confidential clients is "Borders, the US owner of fashionable new book superstores in Britain, including the Books etc chain. Borders markets itself on a laid-back atmosphere in its giant bookstores, with cafes and music shops.

"But the company's attitude to trade unions is far from laid back. Internal management documents seen by *The Observer* reveal a 'vigorous' anti-union philosophy."

The article goes on: "In America, Borders - using Jackson Lewis - has fought bitter campaigns to smash unions, including sacking union activists and threatening to close stores if workers join unions.

"Richard Bensinger, a union adviser in the US, said: 'Stop these guys at your shores. They are the lowest in the food

chain. They drive wedges between reasonable employers and unions, and start wars which they make millions from. They stoop to almost anything to stop unions winning ballots and it's immensely damaging.' (*Observer*, 24 January 1999)

Cry for Help

A personal account of one worker's experience and need for the union is given on the GPMU website (www.gpmu.org.uk): "Living in a long dark tunnel with no light at the end, is how one contract news driver describes his work.

"The member, who does not wish to be named for fear of losing his job, works for a major news wholesalers. He wrote pledging his support for the union's campaign to win improvements to the working life of contract drivers.

"If you worked seven nights a week with double shifts every weekend you would understand how we feel! Like one long dark tunnel with no light at the end. "I joined the union because I and other contract drivers just do not have the time or energy left to fight management. Which is, of course, what they want! I have now found someone to do my round for two weeks, so that I can have a holiday. The only trouble is, I will have to pay him so much that I am faced with the option now of paying my tax bill at the end of the year or having a holiday!"

"The driver catalogues a series of miseries faced daily by contract drivers - consistent late delivery of papers to depots, drivers

expected to break all speed limits and use more expensive diesel to make up for the publishers' inefficiency and overloaded vans.

"If everyone stood up to them they couldn't carry on," he says.

"Unfortunately people are frightened of losing their contracts, so they put up with it. Our only hope is you, the GPMU! This must be one of your most difficult challenges."

There are still employers who will only negotiate with workers when they are forced to - and a few who threaten to close their operation rather than allow the union in. But their numbers are falling.

Rupert Murdoch is so anxious to keep out the NUJ, that he has given £250,000 to his tame 'staff association' and is trying to have it recognised as an independent union. The union is opposing the move.

Experience shows that we cannot rely on the law to build our unions.

In his book, "Confessions of a Union Buster", Martin Levitt, gives some advice on how to fight back. He says:

- Ask questions
- Ask for information in writing
- Protect and support each other
- 'You are not alone' is the message being taken up throughout the trade union movement.

As Levitt says: "A union buster can only be effective in creating fear if the employees let him. . . You can beat a union buster at his own game by sticking together!" ☆

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The twenty four hour society = **Twenty four hour exploitation**

More and more students are working their way through college, many of them working nights to attend lectures in the day. In any case it is often the youngest employees who get the worst deal on shifts. Below a health worker (who has asked for his name to be withheld) outlines some of the worst effects of shift working on our health.

by a health worker

THE MOVE TOWARDS a 24 hour society seven days a week is progressing unabated. The phrase '24/7' is now in common use. It is sold to us as consumers as an increased convenience. We can now buy fish fingers, pay the gas bill or even get beauty advice at any hour of the day or night. Yet this move has not been driven by consumer demand so much as the need to constantly extend the market and potential for maximal profits. The ever increasing demands of capitalism for us to produce and consume have resulted in the 24 hour society. The position now is one where the bosses are able to 'appropriate the living blood of labour' far beyond the traditional working day. New markets need to be found in the cut-throat world of capitalism. So let the shops stay open later and let the workers produce goods around the clock to fill them all in the name of profit.

Shift work is nothing new; its emergence can be clearly linked to the industrial revolution. Indeed shifts and capitalism go hand in hand. Until industrialisation the majority of the workforce had toiled on the land with their hours dictated by the seasons. Often enduring long hours in summer and shorter ones during the dark days of winter. The development of technology coupled with an unprecedented demand for goods saw the emergence of factories, mills and mines, many of which ran around the clock. However it is really only in the past decade that we have witnessed the extension of shift working far beyond its traditional location. Now it is the call centre workers, shop staff and bank employees rather than miners and factory hands that emerge red eyed into the dawn.

The author of the seminal 'Twenty Four Hour Society', Leon Kreitzman applauds this move to longer hours on the premise that it is a panacea for capitalist society's ills. He argues that old ways are restrictive and less competitive and that to get ahead and stay ahead companies need to drag their workforces, kicking and screaming into the twenty four hour world.

The move towards a 24 hour working day is a classic example of how the needs of the capitalist economy are privileged over those of working people. Human beings have a gamut of internal timed mechanisms. The body clock, situated in the hypothalamus in the brain, works by timing our bodily processes, such as metabolism, mood, hormone secretions and behaviour. These functions peak and trough in a regular, predictable cycle over 24 hours. In general terms they reach a low ebb around the early hours of the morning. (as many of us night workers may already know!) with another slight dip between 2 and 4 pm. Without the influence of external time cues, the body clock tends to run over 25 hour cycles. However environmental factors such as the day-night cycle, social activity and even our knowledge of clock time entrain us to a 'natural' 24 hour cycle. This 'clock' is generally referred to as a 'circadian' or 'bio' rhythm.

Biorhythms can be of immense importance to workers, particularly those working at irregular times and during the night. This is because we may be working when our internal cycle is at its lowest ebb. Academic studies are now showing what many of us have known for years - that working contrary to our body clock may have serious implications for our physical, psychological and social health.

Compromised safety

Studies now seem to be proving that the risk and incidence of occupational injury is heightened amongst certain periods of working. Safety can be compromised if a person is carrying out tasks that are potentially dangerous at a time when their biorhythms are not correctly synchronised with the pattern of work. Research at Leeds University identified a 20% increase in work related injury risk between night and morning shifts. A study undertaken at Stanford University USA showed decreases in Doctors' reaction time, vigilance and performance during night working.

A review by the Department of Occupational Medicine in Denmark indicated that seventeen independent studies had shown a clear link between shift work and a 40% increase in risk of heart disease. A study at the University of Verona in Italy has identified that a range of physical health problems are concomitant with shift work and in particular night working. These include sleep disorders, jet lag syndrome, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular and female

reproductive disorders.

The social stresses of shift work can also not be ignored. Parents may constantly need to change child care, leisure and domestic arrangements to fit in with changing shift patterns. Alcohol and tobacco consumption may also be used to cope with these pressures with further health risks. Women shift workers frequently are forced to get by on little sleep as they continue to attempt to meet the demands of their families who continue to maintain normal hours. But it is not only the workers themselves but also their families who suffer. Research is now suggesting that there is an emotional impact on children, particular daughters, within 'shift working homes.' Children may be more prone to mood disorders and poorer academic performance than their peers, whose parents still have the comparative luxury of daytime working.

Leon Kreitzman and others of his ilk pay scant attention to these potentially harmful effects of shift work on human beings, preferring instead to make vague references to the social and medical advances that may enable us to adapt to a life of extended toil. Yet we cannot and should not be infinitely adaptable to the pressures placed upon us. Dr Lawrence Smith, a researcher at the University of Leeds into the human effects of shift working questions why "technology is treated far better than the brains and bodies of people using them, which are routinely pushed beyond design limits." The answer is simple - that to the bosses we are no different to machines and in many cases may be less valuable and consequently less deserving of care. Despite the humanistic preoccupations of Dr Smith, workers' needs are given short shrift within a capitalist economic system.

Only within a socialist plan of production can the problems of shift working be properly addressed. A massive reduction in the working week and the harnessing of technology would erode the spectre of endless toil. Discrimination could be made between shift work on the basis of clear need and that induced purely by the profit motive. For example medical staff, emergency and power workers need to provide constant cover and therefore shift or night work cannot practically be avoided. In such circumstances efforts would be made to ensure that shifts are 'worker and family friendly' and also that workers receive appropriate remuneration to compensate for the deleterious effects of shift work on their lives. ☆



Youth for Socialism

Every year, the beginning of the university term is, for young supporters of *Socialist Appeal*, a very important time. It is an opportunity to share our ideas with other young people, who are joining the academic world with a thirst for answers and an alternative to the chaos and anarchy of the system we live in.

This year has been no exception, and we have organised interventions at a number of Freshers' Fairs with the aim of forming YFIS discussions groups in which we can discuss and spread the ideas of Marxism. Our intervention consisted of leafletting and organising stalls with our publications inside the Fairs or outside the universities. And of course, the most important bit: We have organised meetings with the people that have shown an interest in our ideas. Meetings have been held in Glasgow where more than a dozen joined the YFIS society. In St. Andrews 30 signed up at the freshers fair, and several meetings have already been held. Things look very promising in Scotland with six students from St. Andrews alone attending the school in London. In Brighton YFIS has been very successful.

The first meeting, on the Middle East, attracted 14 students and more meetings are planned. In UCL, again on the Middle East, 15 students attended the meeting. A new YFIS group is being established in Hull by a student there who is a new member of YFIS, and we are hoping to have our first meeting in Oxford University soon.

The topics for discussion at our most recent meetings have been - The importance of Marxism today, The Crisis in the Middle East, amongst others. The events in the Middle East in particular need to be discussed by everyone.

The situation in Palestine has reached the attention of workers and youth on a world scale. The media has tried to convince us that this is a war, in which violence is an impediment to negotiations and there cannot be negotiations if the violence carries on. In reality battles are raging between a heavily armed and trained professional outfit on the one side and youth armed with sticks and stones on the other.

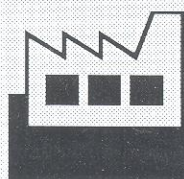
For many decades the Palestinians have suffered from oppression and military occupation. They are fed up with the situation and

have discovered that only their own struggle can bring them freedom. Arafat and the PLO leaders have capitulated time and again to Israeli imperialism rather than being willing to fight to the end for their just demand of their own state, joining together with the Arab workers and masses of the whole region in struggling against their own reactionary regimes, and uniting with the Israeli workers with whom the Arab masses have more in common than the rulers of their neighbouring states.

Young Marxists in Palestine have shown their agreement with the ideas found at www.marxist.com. The only solution to the present impasse is on the basis of a revolutionary movement of the workers and youth fighting for a socialist federation of the Middle East.

Their struggle deserves our support. It is the responsibility of YFIS, of every socialist and every trade unionist to take up this campaign in Britain and to organise the solidarity movement. ☆

by Espe Espigares



Socialist Appeal

A Moving Appeal from the editors

In the immediate future Socialist Appeal will have to move to new offices. One of the side effects of the current boom has been a further rise in London property prices, and as you are aware we have no rich backers, we are supported by your pounds and pennies.

We want to ensure that our move does not cause any disruption to our defence of Marxist ideas, or the publication of this journal. On the contrary we would like this to be an opportunity for us to take a step forward, towards a more frequent publication, and the growth of support for our ideas.

However, we won't be able to do anything without your help. Therefore Socialist Appeal is taking the unusual step of asking you to invest in property! Remember, every penny you give is destined to build more than just bricks and mortar. It is an investment in the construction of a better future.

Yes! I want to contribute! I enclose a donation of

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Stock Markets: From bulls to bears

In the last month or so, the world's stock markets have taken a huge tumble, down about 20% on average. Of course, prices of shares in most markets are still way above where they were five years ago and even still above levels of 18 months ago. After the excitement of the US stock market index, the Dow, going over 10,000, it seemed there was no stopping the boom. The Dow hit 11,500 and the NASDAQ index, which combines the

prices of all the new high-technology and internet company shares (like Yahoo, Cisco, Microsoft and Amazon), rose to an amazing 4,500 from just 1,000 only two years ago. There was even talk of the Dow going to 36,000 within a few years!

by Michael Roberts

But the trend now is clearly downwards. The Dow has fallen back to just above 10,000 as I write and the NADAQ is back to 3,000. The casino capitalism of the stock market is in what they call a bear market.

It's not too difficult to see why the previous super-optimism about the prospects for capitalism has turned sour. In the last month, the big US companies have been reporting their profits to their shareholders. And all is not well. The growth in profits is slowing in nearly all cases and is certainly less than the investors in the stock market boom are hoping for. Profits are not actually declining yet and the big companies are not suffering losses, but the trend is downwards.

And much more to the point, the rate of profit is falling. By that I mean, the return on each dollar of investment in new technology and more labour is falling from say 12c to under 9c. That means the gains from making such huge investments in the Internet and computers are not producing the extra profit at the same rate.

Marx explained how this would happen under capitalism. Capitalism is a system of production that only produces more if the private owners of the means of production (land, plant, equipment and employers of labour) make more money than they invest. But each individual capitalist is in competition with others to buy labour and equipment at its cheapest and to gain the biggest share of the market for products and services at the highest bearable price. Competition tends to drive up the cost of inputs into production and drive down the price of sale of what is produced. The way to maximise profits is to invest in better technology that undercuts rivals.

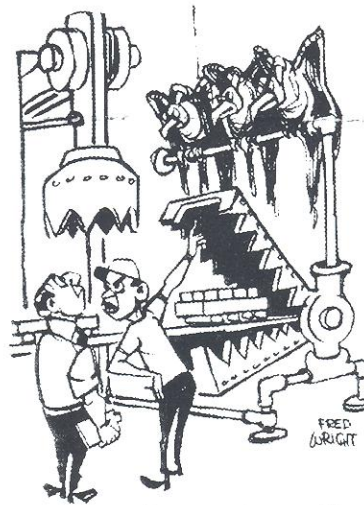
Since 1995, US capitalists have been engaged in the most competitive struggle to increase productivity through new technology and the internet economy. There has been a huge growth in investment in new equipment at an unparalleled rate of 8% a year, not matched since 1965. At the same time the growth in extra labour has been kept to a minimum, just 1% a year. That has boosted output per worker dramatically, from

just 1.4% a year between 1973 and 1995 to 3% a year now. No wonder profits have rocketed.

But as Marx explained, this cannot continue indefinitely under competitive capitalism. More and more companies have been trying to get into the new technology/internet sector. Start-up firms, as they are called, have been appearing by the day. Nearly all of capitalist investment went into the new technology sector, with investment rising at 25% a year, while investment in the old traditional companies like chemicals, motor cars etc rose at only 3% a year.

"Productivity"

Now there is a great debate among the capitalist economists about whether all this new technology investment is really raising the productivity of capitalism across the board or not. Professor Robert Gordon argues all the productivity gains are just in the computer sector itself as the cost of computers falls. There has been no real boost in productivity in the rest of industry. The Federal Reserve Bank is America's most important financial institution. Its economists have rejected Gordon's arguments, saying that new technology has indeed boosted the rest of the economy.



OKAY, SO IT'S SAFE... THEN WHAT ARE THEY WAITING FOR?"

Other economists say, even if it has, it's only because workers are slaves to their computers. They put in more hours outside of normal time (at home, at lunchtime etc) and in this way there is a boost to productivity.

Whoever is right, what is clear is that huge amounts of money capital were thrown at these new technology companies with the aim of making huge profits quickly. These companies ate more and more capital but most have not got huge sales or profits in return. The money has started to run out, these firms are going bust and the investors are losing their money.

And it's not just the small companies that are proving bad investments.

The big new technology companies are now saying that the prospects don't look so good. More interestingly, if you analyse the profits results of these companies you can see the seeds of disappointment ahead.

Cisco Systems is the worldwide leader in providing networks for the internet. This is a huge company that has appeared from nowhere in the last five years. It is the epitome of the new economy. It recently produced results that showed a jump in profits from just under \$1bn a quarter in 1999 to \$1.5bn in the quarter ending July 2000. Pretty impressive, so all is well? No, because these figures left out two important aspects. The first was the buying up of other new technology companies. When the cost of that is included, the net profits actually fell from \$850m to \$820m. In other words, Cisco had to keep buying up competitors or companies with important technologies to stay ahead. In doing so, its profits fell. Of course, Cisco made profits from these acquisitions worth \$344m. Adding that in boosted profits. But increasingly, Cisco's profits are not coming from its own businesses but from investment in the shares of others. If the stock market goes down, so will the profits of Cisco. And if the profits of Cisco go down, then investors in the stock market will sell everything. That's started to happen.

There has been a stupendous investment in computer technology. Production of semiconductors up 77% this year. This spells overcapacity, especially as each extra

bit of investment is producing less of a bit of profit - the rate of profit is falling. So far, that means a slower growth in overall profit. Soon it will mean an actual fall in profit. Then the crisis of over-investment will turn into a crisis of overproduction.

The US economy is slowing. Instead of racing ahead at 5% a year, it is slipping back to around a 3.55 rate. The big question is: will it fall even harder towards zero and thus drag down the rest of the capitalist world into recession or slump. There are several trends that suggest it will. First, if investment slackens off because the rate of profit is in decline, then the productivity growth in industry will also fall back.

Slower growth of productivity will mean production costs will rise squeezing profits further.

Second, the shock of high oil prices is beginning to drive up costs of production as well. And with petrol and heating costs rising, workers in America and Europe are demanding either relief or they will want higher wages. That will not mean higher prices so much because of the intense competition among capitalists for market share, particularly in the internet sectors. The result will be another squeeze on profits.

Third, the bear market in stocks and shares will hit the real economy too.

In 1998, shares were equivalent to over 20% of all the savings of American households. Sucked in by the huge boom in share prices since 1995, never have American middle class families' futures depended so much on the Dow and the NASDAQ. If share prices keep falling, households will feel poorer and stop spending. And capitalist markets will die because of the lack of consumption. And a falling stock market will also hit further investment by capitalists as their income that companies like Cisco get from stock market investments disappear.

This year the global capitalist economy will have grown by about 4% overall. That's the best result since before the Asian crisis. And it's a big improvement over 1999's 2.8% growth, when there was talk of a new recession. But without the US growing at a break-neck pace of 5%, world growth would have been a lot less. The US is not going to repeat that next year. Indeed, it is more likely to head into less than 2% growth.

Europe's growth already seems to be peaking as a weak Euro and rising oil prices bite into investor confidence. Japan remains weak and Asian economies seem to be slipping back into a pool of political strife (Indonesia), corruption (Philippines) and debt (Korea and Thailand).

Sub-2% growth is on the agenda next year and it could be worse.

Oil prices rising, a Middle East crisis, a falling rate of profit amid an apparent boom in the world economy - it all looks much like 1973, just a year before the most widespread slump in capitalism since 1929-30. ☆

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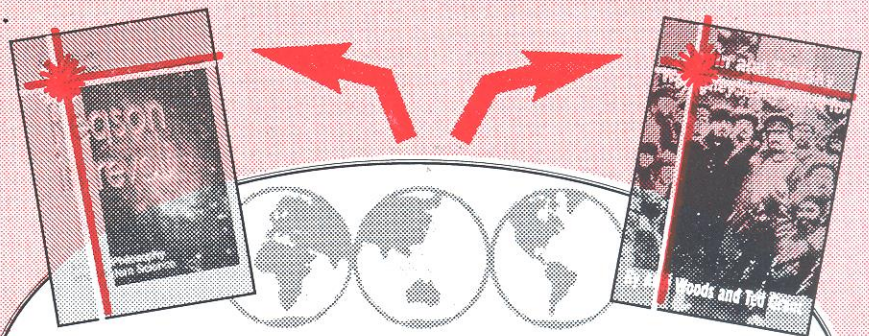
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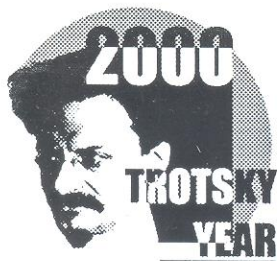
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The Case of Leon Trotsky

In early 1937 an Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials took place under the chairmanship of the famous American philosopher John Dewey. After a thorough examination of the facts surrounding the Trials, the Commission found that the charges against Trotsky and his son were totally false. The following is an extract from the verbal submission given by Trotsky during the inquiry.

BEALS: I would like to ask one question along these lines, since we are talking about it. I would like to ask one question since we are talking about the world war: the most imminent danger of war in Spain. Are you responsible for the Trotskyites in Spain?

TROTSKY: What is "Trotskyites in Spain"?

BEALS: Are you responsible for the various factions in Spain who use the name of "Trotskyites"?

TROTSKY: There are no Trotskyites. The situation is such that everybody who opposes the politics of the Comintern is named by the Comintern "Trotskyite." Because Trotskyite means fascism in the Comintern propaganda. It is a simple argument. The Trotskyites in Spain are not numerous—the genuine Trotskyites. I regret it, but I must confess, they are not numerous. There is a powerful party, the POUM, the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification. That party alone recognizes that I am not a fascist. The youth of that party has sympathy with our ideas. But the policy of that party is very opportunistic, and I openly criticize it.

BEALS: Who is the head of it?

TROTSKY: Nin. He is my friend. I know him very well. But I criticize him very sharply.

BEALS: One reason I bring this out is that the charge has been made that the faction of Trotskyites sabotage the loyalist movement in Spain.

TROTSKY: That we allegedly sabotage the loyalist movement. I believe that I have expressed it in many interviews and articles: The only way possible to assure victory in Spain is to say to the peasants: "The Spanish soil is your soil." To say to the workers: "The Spanish factories are your factories." That is the only possibility to assure victory. Stalin, in order not to frighten the French bourgeoisie, has become the guard of private property in Spain. The Spanish peasant is not very interested in fine definitions. He says: "With Franco and with Caballero, it is the same thing." Because the peasant is very realistic. During our Civil War—I do not believe that we were victorious principally because of our military science. It

is false. We were victorious because of our revolutionary program. We said to the peasant: "It is your soil." And the peasant, who at one time went away and then went to the Whites, compared the Bolsheviks with the White Guards and said, "The Bolsheviks are better." Then when the peasantry, the hundreds and millions of Russian peasantry, were of the conviction that the Bolsheviks were better, we were victorious.

BEALS: Would you expand a little further the statement that Stalin is guarding private property in Spain?

TROTSKY: He says, and the Comintern declared with regard to Spain, that the social reforms will come after the victory. "Now, it is war. Our job now is war. Social reforms will come after the victory." The peasant becomes indifferent. "It is not my war; I am not interested in the victory of the generals. The generals are fighting one another." That is his opinion. You know, in his primitive way, he is right. I am with this primitive Spanish peasant against the fine diplomats.

BEALS: Then you don't think it is of great importance which side wins the war in Spain? It does not make a great deal of difference which side wins the war?

TROTSKY: No, the workers must win the war. It is necessary that the workers win. But I assure you that by the policy of the Comintern and Stalin you have the surest way of losing the revolution. They lost the revolution in China, they lost the revolution in Germany, and now they are preparing the defeat in France and in Spain. We had only one victory of the proletarian revolution. That was the October Revolution, and it was made directly in opposition to the method of Stalin.

BEALS: Now, what steps would you take in the case of Spain today, if you were in Stalin's place?

TROTSKY: I could not be in his place.

BEALS: Say, if you were in Stalin's place—if you had the destiny of the Soviet Union in your hands, what would be your action in Spain?

TROTSKY: It is not a question of the

Soviet Union. It is a question of the revolutionary parties of the Comintern, it is a question of the parties. Naturally, I would remain in opposition to all the bourgeois parties.

STOLRERG: Mr. Trotsky, may I ask a question which relates to Carleton Beals' question? If you had been in power from 1923 on, in that case, from your point of view, the Chinese Revolution would have been either saved or would have gained additionally. There would have been no German fascism. I mean, if your position had been victorious back in 1923. There would have been the situation in Spain, but it could not have occurred exactly that way. But you lost. The Comintern politics in China and Germany brought about a defeat. Now we have the Spanish situation. I am merely presenting what I think is your position. Then I will ask the question. We have the Spanish situation on top of the mistakes made in the last fourteen years. We have a civil war in Spain. Surely a purely orthodox or puristic position does not answer the problem. With whom would you side at the present time in Spain?

TROTSKY: I gave the answer in many interviews and articles. Every Trotskyite in Spain must be a good soldier, on the side of the Left. Naturally, it is so elementary a question—you know it is not worth discussing. A leader or any other member in the Government of Caballero is a traitor. A leader of the working class cannot enter the bourgeois government. We did not enter the Government of Kerensky in Russia. While we defended Kerensky against Kornilov, we did not enter his Government. As I declared that I am ready to enter into an alliance with Stalin against the fascists, or an alliance with Jouhaux against the French fascists. It is an elementary question.

FINERTY: Mr. Trotsky, if you were in power in Russia today and your help was asked by the loyalists in Spain, you would condition your help on the basis that the land was given to the peasants and the factories to the workers?

TROTSKY: Not on the condition—not this question. The first question would be the attitude of the Spanish revolutionary party. I would say, "No political alliance with the bourgeoisie," as the first condition. The second, "You must be the best soldiers against the fascists." Third, "You must say to the soldiers, to the other soldiers and the peasants: "We must transform our country into a people's country. Then, when we win the mass-

Trotsky

es, we will throw the bourgeoisie out of office, and then we will be in power and we will make the social revolution."

FINERTY: Then, to make effective any help, you will have to have an alliance with the Marxist party in Spain?

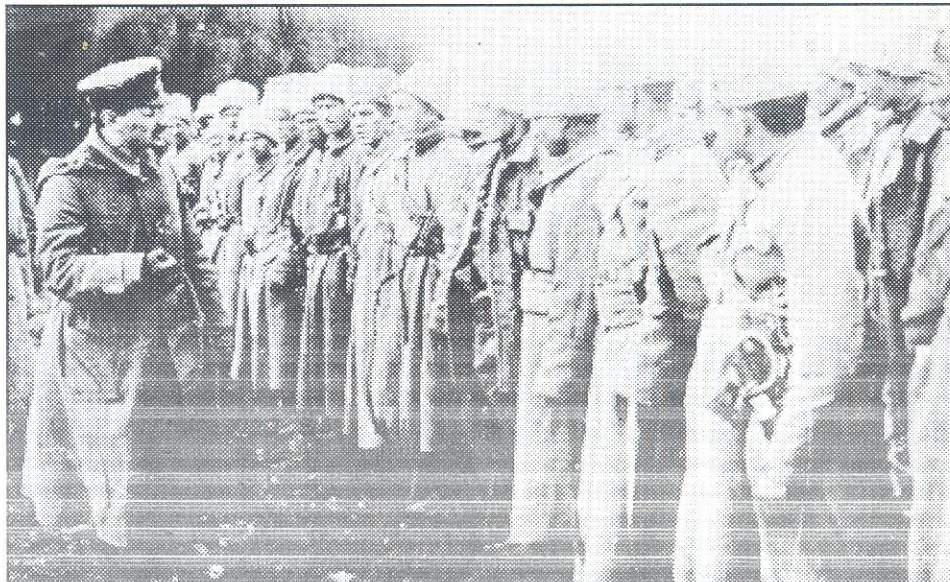
TROTSKY: Naturally, I would help Caballero with all the material means against fascism, but at the same time I would give the advice to the Communist Party not to enter into the Government, but to remain in a critical position against Caballero and to prepare the second chapter of the workers' revolution.

BEALS: Isn't that one of the reasons that the Mafia Government, when first in office, brought in the reaction, precisely because of that policy?

TROTSKY: Because of a conservative bourgeois policy: because he tried to make half a revolution, a third of a revolution. My opinion is that the revolution must be better not begin that way. If you begin the revolution, do it to the end. To the end signifies the social revolution.

BEALS: This would mean, by the policy you follow, the probable victory of Franco, would it not?

TROTSKY: The victory of Franco is assured by the present policy of the Comintern. The Spanish revolution, the Spanish proletariat and peasantry, by their efforts and energy and devotion during the past six years, could have assured five victories or six victories—every year a victory. But the ruling stratum of the working class did everything to hinder, sabotage and betray the revolutionary power of the masses. The revolution is based upon the elementary forces of the proletariat, and on the political direction of its leaders. It is a very important problem, and the leadership in Spain was miserable all the time. The Spanish proletariat shows that it is of the best material, the best revolutionary force we have seen for the last decade. In spite of that, it is not victorious. I accuse the C. I. and the Second International of hindering the victory by their perfidious policy, which is based on cowardice before the bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie and Franco. They remain in a Government with the bourgeoisie, which is the symbol of private property. And Caballero himself bows before the symbol of private property. The masses, however, do not see the difference between the two r-gimes.



GOLDMAN: Do you exclude the possibility of a victory, of a military victory of Caballero over Franco?

TROTSKY: It is very difficult to say—a military victory. It is possible that even by a military victory, the victorious regime can in a very short time be transformed into a fascist regime, if the masses remain dissatisfied and indifferent and the new military organization created by the victory is not a Socialist organization.

GOLDMAN: But the masses in Spain might be under the illusion that they are actually in the struggle against Franco and the fascists—they are actually struggling for their own proletarian interests.

TROTSKY: Unfortunately, the majority of the masses have lost all their illusions. And this explains the dragging character of the civil war, because the People's Front Government prepared an army for Franco. The new Government issued from the People's Front, from the victory, and protected the army and Franco, so that under the Government of the People's Front the army was prepared for the Insurrection. Then began the civil war, and the bourgeoisie said to the people: "You must await victory. Then we will be very generous, but after the victory."

GOLDMAN: Now, you didn't answer the question asked a half hour ago.

BEALS: I didn't quite finish. I don't yet see, Mr. Trotsky, how you or Mr. Stalin is going to save the situation in Spain. It seems to me that both of the policies you have indicated will have the most immediate results of winning the war for Franco. I can't see, personally, anything in favor of Franco at all. I don't quite clearly get your point. It seems to me that in the meantime Mr. Franco will have won the war.

TROTSKY: I can only repeat that I gave the key, a little key to my friends and everybody who is of the same conviction, and my

first advice is to be the best soldiers now in the camp of Caballero. That is the first thing. You know there is a group of the Fourth International, a company of our comrades in the trenches. It is so elementary that I will not dwell on it. It is necessary to fight. But, you know, it is not sufficient to fight with a gun. It is necessary to have ideas and give these same ideas to others, to prepare for the future. I can fight with the simple peasant, but he understands very little in the situation. I must give him an explanation. I must say: "You are right in fighting Franco. We must exterminate the fascists, but not in order to have the same Spain as before the civil war, because Franco issued from this Spain. We must exterminate the foundation of Franco, the social foundation of Franco, which is the social system of capitalism. Are you satisfied with my ideas?" you ask the peasant. He will say: "Yes, I believe so." Then explain the same thing to the workers.

BEALS: Why would you send the soldier to fight France and yet refuse to enter the Government of Caballero to assist in the same purpose?

TROTSKY: I explained it. We refused categorically to enter the Kerensky Government, but the Bolsheviks were the best fighters against Kornilov. Not only that, the best soldiers and sailors were Bolsheviks. During the insurrection of Kornilov, Kerensky must go to the sailors of the Baltic fleet and demand of them to defend them in the Winter Palace. I was at that time in prison. They took him to the guard, and sent a delegation to me to ask me what must be done: To arrest Kerensky or defend him? That is a historical fact. I said: "Yes, you must guard him very well now; tomorrow we will arrest him." (Laughter)

GOLDMAN: Are you through?

BEALS: Yes.

A Leninist Hero of our Times

In Memory of Valery Sablin:

The true story of Red October

by Alan Woods

Part One

On Thursday 7 September, Channel Four broadcast a fascinating programme as part of its series *Secret History*, entitled *Mutiny - the true story of Red October*. This remarkable documentary for the first time gave us the real story behind the 1990 Hollywood movie *The Hunt for Red October* (based on Tom Clancy's 1984 novel). Clancy's story of Marko Ramius, a defecting submarine captain who takes his ship on an epic voyage across the Atlantic, was inspired by real events. In the first of a two part article Alan Woods charts the remarkable life of a real Soviet hero.

Tom Clancy took as his starting point a mutiny led by Valery Sablin on the Soviet warship the *Sentry* (Storozhevoy, in Russian) in November 1975. As he explains in his book, 'On November 8, 1975, the *Storozhevoy*, a Soviet Krivak-class missile frigate, attempted to run from Riga, Latvia, to the Swedish island of Gotland. The political officer aboard, Valery Sablin, led a mutiny of the enlisted personnel. Sablin and 26 others were court-martialled and shot.' However, the real story of the Red October was hidden at the time by the Soviet government and only now has been revealed.

Until the end of the Cold War western intelligence believed that the crew was going to defect, and this was the basis of Clancy's book and the film. However, new evidence which emerged during the last days of the Soviet Union and which was revealed in the Channel Four programme shows that Sablin's intention was not to flee to the West, but to provoke a political revolution in the USSR with the aim of overthrowing the rule of the privileged Stalinist bureaucracy and restoring a genuine regime of Leninist soviet democracy.

This is a true-life story that is richer, more extraordinary and more moving than even the finest works of

fiction. It will undoubtedly inspire the workers and youth of Russia and the entire world.

Who was Valery Sablin?

Valery Mikhailovich Sablin was the son and grandson of naval officers, and followed in their footsteps by enlisting in the Frunze Naval Academy at the age of 16. His entire background instilled into him from an early age a profound love of the sea and the navy, a deep sense of duty, military discipline and Soviet patriotism. But Sablin was not only a military man, he was first and foremost a Communist and a child of the October Revolution. This is what gave the inner meaning to his life and his every action.

Valery was brought up in a naval base among the sons of naval officers. His general outlook was sternly moral, as Boris Sablin one of his brothers related, he was "incapable of lying". He detested hypocrisy in all its forms. He was also incapable of witnessing any act of injustice and remaining silent. From his earliest childhood he dreamed of going to sea. In 1955 at the age of only 16 Valery was accepted into the elite Frunze

Military Academy in Leningrad where he became a model student. Even then he was a devoted Communist. He was voted head of the Communist youth organisation. At school he was known, probably half-jokingly, as "the conscience of the class". One of his classmates recalled: "We were all educated to believe in socialist and communist ethics. We all believed in them. But Valery had such integrity he wanted to put these ideals into action."

Valery took his first political step at the age of 20, writing to the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev a letter denouncing the social inequalities which disfigured Soviet "socialism". This was a bold and courageous action, which could have meant, at the very least, ruining his career prospects, or even worse. Unsurprisingly, the authorities were not amused. Their response was a severe reprimand, as a result of which his graduation was delayed. It is an indication of Sablin's great personal ability and tenacity that despite this setback, he succeeded in completing his studies and qualifying from the military academy with honours.

In 1964, Khrushchev was deposed, and one of the top priorities of the new regime was expansion of the Soviet navy to match that of the United States. Within five years, Sablin was offered the command of a destroyer, an extraordinary accolade for a 30-year-old officer. To the surprise and dismay of his family, Valery turned down the offer of a commission in favour of completing his education by enlisting in the Lenin Political Academy: an elite institution open only to military officers. Valery Sablin's love of the navy came second to his devotion to the cause of the October revolution and the working class. His refusal to accept the offer of a naval commission initially shocked his family. But his brother Boris stated that much later he understood the reason. His brother wanted to understand how the system worked

The leaders of the Potemkin Mutiny



from inside, as a prior condition for overthrowing it.

With single-minded determination he immersed himself in the classics of Marxism: day and night he scoured the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin in an effort to understand the revolution. Above all the young naval officer was tormented with an inner doubt that continually grew and enveloped his soul. Everywhere he looked he saw privilege, inequality and corruption that was an abomination to a true Communist. His resolve quietly grew to act to change the system. How could it be that the October revolution, which was fought in order to destroy inequality and class oppression and to give power to the working class, had ended up as a monstrous caricature, a bureaucratic totalitarian regime which had nothing in common with the democratic ideals of Lenin's *State and Revolution*?

At the academy, Sablin found to his dismay that certain books were still off-limits. He knew that Trotsky had been one of the main leaders of the October revolution alongside Lenin. He also knew that after Lenin's death Trotsky had led the fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy, for workers' democracy, for proletarian internationalism. But where to get hold of the writings of Trotsky and the other leaders of the Opposition? He had hoped that by joining this elite Party school he would finally obtain access to the closed archives. But his hopes were soon dashed. Sablin confided bitterly to his brother his sense of disappointment that even here there was censorship.

Even without access to Trotsky's writings Valery was able to draw his own conclusions. The privileged caste of bureaucrats who ran the country would never give up their power without a struggle. Sablin had made a careful study of *State and Revolution* and realised then that "the armour of the State and Party is so thick that even direct hits won't make a dent". He concluded that: "This machine has to be broken from the inside." The meaning of these words was revealed in the startling events of November 1975.

The navy has always been the most revolutionary wing of the armed forces. This fact is connected with the more proletarian composition of the sailors, largely drawn from the industrial proletariat. The revolutionary traditions of the sailors were shown both in 1905, in the celebrated mutiny of the battleship *Potemkin* and again in 1917 when the Kronstadt sailors formed the backbone of the Bolshevik forces in the revolution and the civil war. This history was well known to Valery Sablin who imbibed it, as it were, with his mother's milk.

The Sentry was one of the most modern warships in the Soviet fleet. Sablin joined this submarine hunter in 1973 as second in command to its captain, Anatoly Putorny. Sablin was also the ship's chief political offi-

cer: responsible ultimately to the KGB - the dreaded secret police - he was in charge of delivering political briefings, maintaining morale and looking out for deviation from the Party line. His own "deviation" would lead to his death within just three years.

Preparations for revolt

In carrying out his duties as political officer, Sablin was obliged to deliver regular lectures on Marxism-Leninism - or rather the Stalinist caricature of Marxist-Leninism that was tailored to meet the needs of the Bureaucracy. Normally, such lectures were met by the

He concluded that: "This machine has to be broken from the inside." The meaning of these words was revealed in the startling events of November 1975.

men with an attitude of boredom and indifference, but Sablin's lectures were different. Sablin deliberately departed from the usual stilted Party texts and concentrated on other themes, particularly the October revolution, the 1905 revolution and the ideas of genuine Leninism. He often referred to the navy's long tradition of revolution, especially the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*. The navy had only just celebrated the seventieth anniversary of this famous event. Naval historian Nikolai Cherkashin points out that "Sablin was continuing Bolshevik revolutionary traditions, he was steeped in these traditions. He was the flesh and bone of the Party. So his calculations were simple. He must keep faith with the revolutionary traditions of the battleship *Potemkin*".

Before Sablin could carry out his plan he first had to find supporters. He chose Alexander (Sasha) Shein. This 20-year old rating had been delegated to assist Sablin in preparing his lectures. Sasha Shein later effectively became Sablin's second-in-command during the mutiny. "Those political courses were a complete mockery," he states with characteristic proletarian bluntness. "People only went to them for a kip. We realised that it was completely insincere and all put on for show." These words graphically express the workers' attitude to official "Communism" in the Soviet Union.

"I said to Sablin: what use is all this window-dressing?" Shein remembers, "If there is a war, who are we going to defend with all this meaningless rhetoric?" Such open cynicism was very widespread in the USSR. The only unusual thing about Shein's words are the fact that he felt able to express himself to his superior officer with such disarming frankness. Normally the political officer would be a much feared figure on board ship: a Party trustee and a KGB member, someone to spy on you and keep you under control. But the men soon found out that this political officer was something different. "The

crew thought very highly of him. As chief political officer you could confide in him", recalls Victor Borodai, a midshipman on the Sentry. Sablin's relations with the men were too close for his superior's liking. He was warned to change his methods but all warnings went unheeded. Sablin was following his own agenda. Sablin's lectures had a very serious purpose: that of preparing the hearts and minds of the crew for revolt. A number of sailors became very attached to this strange "commissar" so unlike all the others.

On 8 November 1975, the Sentry arrived in the Baltic port of Riga, in Latvia, to take

part in a military ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Sablin decided to seize the opportunity presented by this most symbolic date in the Soviet calendar to set his plan into motion.

That night, Sablin decided to act. First he called Sasha Shein into the lecture-hall and asked him an unexpected question: "Would you be prepared to work for the KGB?" Shein's reaction was a mixture of rage and disappointment. After everything this man had taught him, now he appeared to be trying to recruit him for the secret police as a spy, a vulgar KGB informer! Shein's instinctive reaction was to walk out in disgust, but he was halted by a reassuring voice: "No, wait, Sasha, calm down, don't be angry. I was only testing you. Sit down. We must have a serious conversation."

Sablin's plan was really astounding in its audacity. He explained that the Bureaucracy had betrayed the October revolution and the Soviet people; that the regime of privilege and inequality had nothing in common with the ideas of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, and that the only way out was a new October revolution. He explained that the Soviet working class had a revolutionary tradition and that, with a bold leadership, the workers would respond. In three days he wanted to seize control of the Sentry and sail to Leningrad. There they would issue a proclamation over the radio directed to the people of the Soviet Union to rise up against the Kremlin clique and introduce a genuine regime of Soviet democracy.

Mutiny on the Sentry

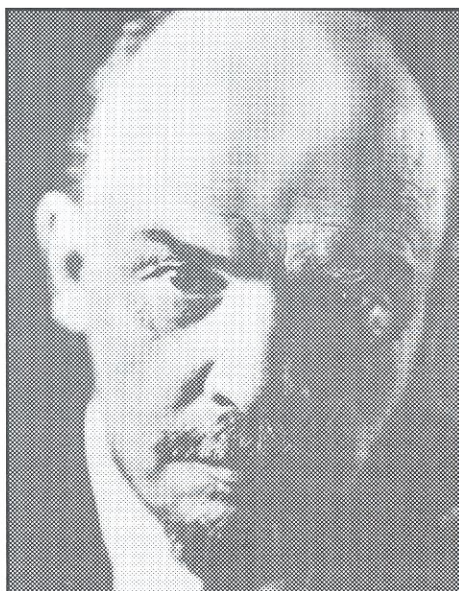
On the 8th of November, captain Putorny was informed that some of the men were drinking on board. An exceptionally diligent commander, Putorny decided to sort out the incident himself. He went below and was promptly locked in. Sablin then called the crew together and showed them a film: *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein's

inspiring account of the 1905 naval mutiny in Odessa. While the silent film played, Sablin explained his plan, exhorted the officers to support him. The officers were evenly split, eight in favour and eight against. Matters were much clearer with the ordinary sailors. The crewmen, rallied by Sablin's comrade, Alexander Shein, were unanimous in their support.

Sablin called together the officers and midshipmen and did his best to convince them. It should be remembered that at this point he did not know whether anyone would support him. The arrest of the captain shocked and scared some of them. The result was predictably mixed. Half of the ship's officers - honest and decent men who put their conscience before their personal interests - came out for the proposal. Others, like the ship's medical officer, Oleg Sadikov, refused point-blank. A typical specimen of a Soviet careerist and time-serving opportunist, Sadikov can now scarcely suppress a cynical sneer when he speaks of Sablin's revolutionary plans. He was particularly scathing about the latter's reference to Leningrad as "the cradle of the revolution". To philistines like this all revolutionary perspectives are "madness", "utopian" and "impractical". The wisdom of these clever people boils down to the philosophy of the lick-spittle and the slave who learns to love his own chains. Such people are the negation of all human progress. They exist in all countries in every historical period. If the Sablins of this world represent the face of humanity, the Sadikovs represent only its backside.

Undeterred, Sablin swept all resistance aside and demanded a vote. Here we see the crucial role of leadership. With no party and no apparatus behind him, by sheer determination, revolutionary elan and strength of character, he swept all before him. The vote for rebellion completely transformed the mood of the men. In the course of this struggle - as in every other struggle - the morale of the combatants experiences constant ebbs and flows. That is in the nature of things. The news that the crew had voted unanimously for action and that at least half of the officers had decided to back them has an immediate and electrifying effect: "From that moment on there was great enthusiasm," recalls Shein: "Everybody's spirits were lifted. We thought we would be such heroes!" he adds with a wry smile.

In fact, it is possible to say that there was an element of naivete in Sablin's plan. One can say, with the wisdom of hindsight, that it was almost certainly doomed to failure. But that would be an unfair and one-sided appraisal. Sablin was certainly no utopian. Although his plan was a risky one, it was based on a sober-minded understanding of the situation. That there was mass discontent with the bureaucratic regime is clear. It



had already been demonstrated a few years earlier by a workers' uprising in Novochoerkassk which had been brutally suppressed by the regime. The enthusiastic response to Sablin's proposal among the ship's crew and even a big section of the officers shows that it was based on an accurate appraisal of the mood of the masses. In order to have succeeded, an uprising would have required the unity in struggle of the sailors and workers. This Sablin understood perfectly, and that is why he developed a plan to proceed to Leningrad and try to issue an appeal on a radio frequency that could be picked up by civilians.

True, all this would have been greatly facilitated by the existence of a genuine Leninist party. But where was Sablin supposed to find such a Party? His personal experience of the so-called "Communist Party of the Soviet Union" convinced him that this was not a communist party at all, but just another arm of the bureaucratic state, a club for lackeys and careerists. Not by accident, his appeal was not to the "Communist" party but directly to the working people of the USSR. The totalitarian state, with its millions of spies and agents provocateurs had its tentacles in every factory, university and army barracks. Paradoxically, Sablin only succeeded in getting as far as he did because it was assumed that he himself, as the ship's political officer, was one of the regime's watchdogs. His position gave him a unique opportunity to organise and prepare in secret. This is probably what he meant when he said that the regime could only be destroyed from inside.

Should he have refrained from taking action until he had organised an underground Leninist organisation among the sailors and then linked up with the workers in the factories? In the abstract, maybe. But Sablin knew very well the colossal difficulties facing such an enterprise. At any moment it might be betrayed to the KGB. Here, on the

other hand, he had in his hands a unique opportunity to act. Sablin was no fool and certainly no madman. He took a calculated risk. It failed and he paid for it with his life. But how superior was this act of personal heroism than all the sneering of the Pharisees who merely saved their own skins and never lifted a finger in the cause of the Soviet people!

The possibility of a political revolution against the Bureaucracy was demonstrated by the events here described. The fact that even a big section of the officers on the Sentry immediately came over to the side of the rebellion is of great symptomatic importance. It shows in miniature the process that would have unfolded on an all-Soviet scale once the working class had begun to move. The Bureaucracy - as the Marxists had predicted - would have split down the middle, and a section would have gone over to the proletariat. That a section of the officers refused to back the revolt is hardly surprising. As in every strike there were some scabs. The incredible thing is that among the ratings there was not a single scab, and only a few of the officers - the most cowardly and despicable elements - actively opposed the uprising.

These elements naturally played a pernicious role in betraying the mutiny to the authorities. Before the Sentry could leave Riga, a junior officer jumped ship and raised the alarm. The fact that their plans had been thus betrayed to the authorities caused a momentary vacillation. Faced with the possibility of having to face overwhelming odds, Sablin hesitated, but then decided to go ahead. Significantly, what stiffened his resolve was the firm attitude of the ordinary sailors, most of them still only teenagers, who insisted on continuing the revolt: "We have started this; so we might as well see it through!" The attitude of the men settled the matter in favour of action. The ship left Riga at 1am on 9 November, heading for Leningrad.

Before leaving Riga, Valery wrote a letter to his wife, explaining why he had decided to risk everything. It is a most moving human document. For Valery Sablin was a man with a wife and young son, a naval officer, born into a privileged Soviet family and with a brilliant career in front of him. One can imagine with what difficulty any man would experience in such a situation. But Sablin was a revolutionary and showed no hesitation in placing his career, his family, his freedom and his life on the line for the cause in which he believed:

"Why am I doing this? The love of life. I mean not in the sense of the comfortable bourgeois, but a bright, truthful life which inspires a genuine joy in all honest people. I am convinced that in our nation, just as 58 years ago in 1917, a revolutionary consciousness will alight and we will achieve Communism in our society." ☆

Workers' tragedy in Vietnam

Strike at the Hue Phong shoe factory in Ho Chi Minh City

The Vietnamese regime is speeding up the process of so-called "equitisation" of state-owned enterprises, [another word for 'privatisation']. This year they allowed the sale of stocks of publicly owned companies and the setting up of joint-venture companies. They also auctioned off weak state-owned enterprises.

by Nguyen Kynan

As soon as the foreign capitalists came into Vietnam, they applied every measure possible to maximise the exploitation and ill-treatment of the workers. For some years now the bosses from Korea, Taiwan and many other countries have used brutal methods against the workers. The trade unions, from the national leadership right down to the local bodies have very often been too slow to act. Very few strikes have been reported, and most of them attracted very few workers. However the strike of over 4,000 workers at the Hue Phong company (a joint-venture producing shoes) on 12-13th September may represent an important turning point in the workers' struggle in Vietnam.

For a long time, the Hue Phong company has infringed labour laws, imposing its own ruthless rules on the workers, clearly violating their interests. "Investigations reveal that: the company has 3,200 workers (mostly migrant workers), but they are only allowed to sign temporary labour contracts. With this scheme the company eludes the responsibility of having to pay social insurance contributions and the minimum wage. It employs 130 children between the ages of 14 and 16. The workers did not possess any labour contracts after they were taken on." (*Lao Dong*, 16.10.00.)

"At the workers' compound, there are 20 workers living in each 36 square metre room, and the ceiling is only 3.3 metres high. Each worker only has 1.8 square metres. And the water is always insufficient," continues *Lao Dong*.

"After the strike on 12-13th September, the managers of the company promised to deal with 28 of the workers' grievances. But the company actually did very little. On the morning of 16th October over 500 workers of the Hue Phong company flooded on to the roads and blocked the traffic on Pham Van Chieu Road for hours.

"During this strike, for the first time, workers carrying many banners, asked for the Hue Phong company to be brought before the judge, demanded that the trade union be reorganised, and that the company be forced to improve wages, etc. Only when the

institutions, local authorities and the police intervened, did the workers return to work. However, there were still 12 workers who refused to go back to work and they marched to the people's committee of precinct 12 of Go Vap district to present their petition," reported *Lao Dong*. (17.10.00)

The tragedy began in the days immediately following these events. These 12 workers who had made a personal sacrifice, who had dared to struggle by themselves for the workers' interests and for justice, became the victims of the merciless and inhumane treatment of the Hue Phong company. And the question is where were the labour union leaders and what did they do to prevent the following tragedy?

After the strike on 16th October, the company managers refused to allow these 12 workers back to work and they were not even allowed to go to their accommodation in the workers' compound. They had no place to sleep that night and at about midnight of 16th October these workers called the *Lao Dong* journalists and told them: "we wanted to come back to the compound, but the company guards seized our worker cards, slammed the gate, and forced us out".

"If we were allowed to take up accommodation outside the compound, when the company fired us we would at least have a place to live. But the rules say that we have to live inside the compound. The bosses know the 12 of us very well. Most of us are from the North, and came here without any family. If we are not allowed into the compound we will have nowhere to live. That long night, we wandered around the streets, without money and luggage, without having a bath... They mercilessly threw us onto the streets and forgot about us as wanderers," female worker Huynh Thu Yen said indignantly.

Let me summarise here the details of the tragedy as reported in *Lao Dong* (19.10.00). Twelve workers exposed themselves under the sun and went on hunger strike asking to be given their jobs.

Hundreds of people crossing Pham Van Chieu Road, seeing the workers exposed under the sun, gathered to witness the

strike. Many were not able to hold back their tears when they witnessed male worker Dang Van Khoai becoming the first to become exhausted and faint. Some female workers, seeing their friend exhausted, embraced each other and cried out but continued to expose themselves under the sun. By 1pm that day, seven of them had fainted from hunger and heat exposure. And yet, still no one from the authorities had turned up. The company guards kept the gate closed and reacted to the mob who wanted to smash the gate down.

Although the company has two 12-seater cars, it did not offer to take the workers who had fainted to the hospital to save them. About 1.30pm the local police came to re-establish order and Nguyen thi Gai - a cadre of the Labour-Invalid-Social office in the district of Go Vap - called three taxis to take the workers to hospital.

At Go Vap hospital, doctor Bui Doan Tien said "after several days without food or sleep, and with the exposure to the heat of the sun, their condition has worsened".

Late on 19th October, the general manager of the company began to make concessions to these workers by giving them a small sum of money. On the night of 19th October these workers found their own accommodation, ending three nights of wandering.

Painfully and ironically, 20th October is Vietnamese women's day, but some of the victims of this tragedy are women. While other women celebrate their day, they may not be aware of these brave women who fought consistently for the interests of the workers.

For decades, Vietnam had never experienced a strike like this one. It had only experienced very small disputes. As I am writing this article on VTV1, the main government television channel, has not reported this strike. Perhaps this is because if millions of people have the chance to see this tragedy, the government fears waves of ferment that could lead to the destabilisation of society.

They have hidden many details of the ill-treatment of workers in joint-venture companies over many years, and long ago they mastered the art of dealing with all political dissidence, but these events may open up a new struggle of the workers against the age-old bureaucratism and corruption. ☆

Milosevic overthrown by masses

Slobodan Milosevic has gone, swept away by an inspirational uprising which has demonstrated, once again, the immense power of the masses once they move into action. It seems that sometimes elections do change things. Milosevic clearly miscalculated in going to the polls in the first place.

Evidently, he didn't expect to lose. Caught off guard he tried to play for time, by calling a second round, declaring the first vote inconclusive.

by Paul Matthews

Opposition leader Vojislav Kostunica announced that he would not participate and called instead for a movement of civil disobedience, even a general strike. The results stunned everyone, not least Kostunica himself. A human flood descended on Belgrade from all over the country. They stormed the parliament building and set it ablaze. Milosevic was overthrown not by US bombs, nor by Kostunica but by the unstoppable power of the masses.

The opposition leaders actually had little to do with it. They had called demos before. However, at that time the opposition's lack of support in the factories meant little participation by the workers.

According to newspaper reports their call for a strike by the workers initially met with little response this time too, at least in the main centres. The Guardian, for example, reported that "an opposition spokesman conceded that the day's showing was a disappointment, 'Today we particularly failed with this general strike...' the spokesman said" (3/10/00). The opposition clearly had little sway over the movement of workers that followed.

Two years ago the opposition had mobilised mass demonstrations composed mainly of students. However, such movements, no matter how massive, could not oust Milosevic. A show of force was enough then to end a movement of middle class oppositionists. This time though the mood of the workers had changed. Now that the smoke of war had dispersed, all the workers' frustrations and anger burst forth. This was the decisive factor in the overthrow of Milosevic. If it had not been for the actions of the workers, and the miners in particular, the whole movement would probably have collapsed.

Once the workers took action the entire mood of the masses was transformed, and this had a decisive impact on the police and the troops. In the past the security forces had been

prepared to use force against demonstrators but now everything had changed. Even the riot police sent to cordon off one of the striking mines stood aside in the face of workers taking action.

Events took a decisive turn on Thursday October 5. The opposition leaders had warned the government that Milosevic must resign by three p.m. that day. When the deadline came and went the opposition leaders clearly had no plan of what to do next. That decision was taken for them by the great mass of people who poured into the capital from all over the country. It has been reported that one of these nameless many demanded of an opposition leader "Look at the time! It's seven minutes past three, and no announcement has been made. What are you going to do?"

The reply came not from this 'leader' but from the crowd who surged forward up the steps and into the parliament building. The police lacked the will to stop them. The sheer size of the movement overwhelmed them. There were isolated attacks, tear gas was fired, but this only spurred the masses on. The security forces fell apart. The crowd occupied the parliament.

Riot police rushed in the opposite direction, out of the building, some joining the jubilant crowds. Despite all their apparent power the state apparatus, as we have seen many times before, becomes utterly powerless once the great mass of people move into action. The Serbian workers will no doubt have learned this lesson too. It will prove invaluable to them in the future when they are forced to fight against the bourgeois leaders who have scrambled to power on their backs.

The press internationally have claimed that Milosevic was one of the last "Communists" and the defeat of his regime represents the defeat of socialism. What nonsense. This journal pointed out a year ago that this was a bourgeois semi-bonapartist regime run largely by gangsters. What had failed in Yugoslavia was never socialism or communism, but a monstrous bureaucratic caricature which had already destroyed the basis of the planned economy and had been moving in the direction of capitalism long before the latest events. The only difference between the old regime and the opposition was who would get to share out the spoils of the raped Yugoslav economy.

Nevertheless the opposition coming to power means that the move to capitalism will be speeded up to the detriment of the working class and the people as a whole.

In reality, the opposition didn't conquer power, they found it lying in the streets. It was handed to them by the masses. Milosevic and co. had shown themselves incapable of addressing one of the problems facing the country. On the contrary they had brought the country to the brink of ruin. Output, incomes and living standards had collapsed. Milosevic stayed in power for thirteen years



Serbian workers take action

by a combination of manoeuvres and a policy that amounted to almost permanent war. Whereas Tito had maintained the unity of Yugoslavia through a delicate balance of autonomy for the republics, Milosevic, by destroying this autonomy, opened the door to the manipulations of the imperialists, and the break up of Yugoslavia which was utterly reactionary from any point of view. After a decade and more of stoking up Serb nationalism the result has been that Serbia has been the greatest loser of all. Hundreds of thousands of refugees, a practically destroyed economy and defeat in three wars.

Kosovo was his last desperate throw. As long as that war continued Milosevic was secure. The bourgeois opposition were undermined by the masses anger at the vicious bombing campaign unleashed on them by Nato.

Once the war was over the opposition got an echo from the middle class layers. Their weakness had always been their lack of support amongst the working class. Without them nothing could be done. Once they moved, however, the situation changed dramatically.

There is no doubt that what swept Milosevic from power was a revolutionary movement of the masses. Leon Trotsky explained in his *History of the Russian Revolution* that what defines a revolution is the "forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny."

However, that does not mean that this was a workers revolution. Whilst their intervention was decisive, still only a section of the workers were involved. Many remained passive. The press claimed up to the last moment that the workers supported Milosevic. It would be more accurate to say that they did not trust the opposition. In the end they simply decided that they couldn't be any worse. The opposition filled a vacuum.

A similar situation developed in Russia and eastern Europe a decade ago. The workers of Russia, Bulgaria and Romania have learned a painful lesson from their experience of the last ten years, now it is the turn of the Serbs. The opposition which has come to power is a bourgeois one. The Programme of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia has been published and is from first to last a programme of privatisation. 'Democracy' to these ladies and gentlemen means the same here as it did ten years ago in Russia. The freedom they proclaim is the freedom of the market, the freedom to exploit and oppress the working class.

With such a programme it is no surprise that the opposition leaders had little support in the working class.



Kostunica,
bourgeois opposition leader

From the beginning this opposition has been backed even funded by US imperialism. US opposition to Milosevic was nothing to do with his alleged 'socialism'. It was simply that Milosevic had refused to be their stooge. Their newfound joy for the freedom of the people of Yugoslavia grates with their actions in bombing the living daylights out of them, and then imposing crippling sanctions.

Washington has been busily tightening its grip around the neck of the Balkans in recent years. Albania is under their influence. Bulgaria and Romania likewise. Following the death of Tudjman, a new more pliable regime has been installed in Croatia. Only Serbia remained as a thorn in their side. How much under their sway the new Serb regime will be remains to be seen. They are keen to get the sanctions lifted and attract aid for now. However, they are chauvinists. They have their eyes on the construction of a Greater Serbia. Kostunica and co. in power does not guarantee a peaceful and stable Balkans. More importantly, the working class has begun to move. Ultimately it will be their actions that will decide the future of the whole of the Balkans.

Managers and directors

In the first days after Milosevic's fall, there were widespread reports of workers returning to the mines and factories to oust their managers and directors. This unnerved even the most experienced capitalist commentators. The *Financial Times*, for one commented, "With Milosevic's rule crumbling, the workers have taken the communist rhetoric literally and taken charge of their enterprises." Such actions took place unevenly and sporadically. They undoubtedly represent the elements of a workers revolution which if linked together across the country could be the basis of the working class coming to power. However in the absence of the subjective factor, that is a revolutionary party with a programme for transforming Yugoslavia and the Balkans, the movement remains disorganised and tragically likely to fizzle out. This serves to

demonstrate once again that a party capable of carrying out such a transformation to the end cannot simply be thrown up overnight. It must be prepared in advance. The masses learn quickly during revolutionary events. However, whilst they are back at the factories sacking their bosses and trying to work out what to do next, the new bourgeois ministers of the 'crisis committee' are busy at their desks appealing for order and a return to 'normality.' The masses have done their job, their partic-

ipation is no longer welcome. The new regime wants to get on with the important business of making money. Herein lies the tragedy of the remarkable events in Yugoslavia. Once the workers moved it proved so easy to topple an apparently all-powerful regime. Yet so difficult to prevent that power slipping into the hands of the class enemy. Were a genuine Marxist party present an appeal could be made for the establishment of democratic workers committees in every workplace, for these committees to be linked up regionally and nationally, and expanded to incorporate the students, the peasants and the soldiers. Power would peacefully pass into the hands of the working class. An appeal could be made to the workers of the Balkans as a whole for the building of a democratic socialist federation. The region, indeed the whole world could be transformed. Such a party does not yet exist, however. We remain confident that out of the coming struggles of the workers and the youth, who will now have to endure the painful school of capitalism being imposed on them by Kostunica and co. this party will be built.

The privatisation plans of the new bourgeois reactionary regime will be a nightmare for the workers and all the people of Yugoslavia. The only way out is on the basis of an independent class policy for the workers and the trade unions. No support for the bourgeois parties. The establishment of workers committees is the only real alternative to both Milosevic and the bourgeois opposition. For now the absence of a revolutionary party means this process will be drawn out. But such a party will be built, and on its banner will be inscribed,

● **No to Capitalism. For a Socialist Yugoslavia!**

● **For a Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, run democratically by the working people themselves!**

● **For a democratic Balkan Socialist Federation! ☆**

South Africa Communist Party's Red October Campaign

On Saturday October 21st, nearly 40,000 people participated in 14 marches and 5 pickets all over South Africa to protest against racist and discriminatory banking practices. The day of action, called the "Red Saturday", was organised by the South African Communist Party as part of their Red October Campaign. This was the first time in 45 years that the SACP had organised their own nationwide marches independently of other groups. The biggest marches took place in Durban (10,000), Johannesburg (5,000), Cape Town (5,000), Pietersburg (3,000), Klerksdorp (3,000) and Nelspruit (2,000).

by Jordi Martorell

The campaign addressed an issue which is very important for millions of South Africans who are denied access to banking services in the black townships and in rural areas where banks simply do not open offices. Very often banks also prevent people on low wages from opening accounts. For instance, some banks demand a minimum salary of 3000 Rand to open an account, this in a country where more than 2 million workers earn less than R1500 a month, and millions more are unemployed. Banks also charge their customers for withdrawing money from ATMs and charge them even more for doing over the counter operations. Interest rates are also very high, although the rich get preferential treatment and reduced rates. Millions of South African workers and poor living in townships and rural areas are effectively red-lined by the banks which consider these areas as "high-risk" and refuse to give them loans or mortgages to buy or improve their houses.

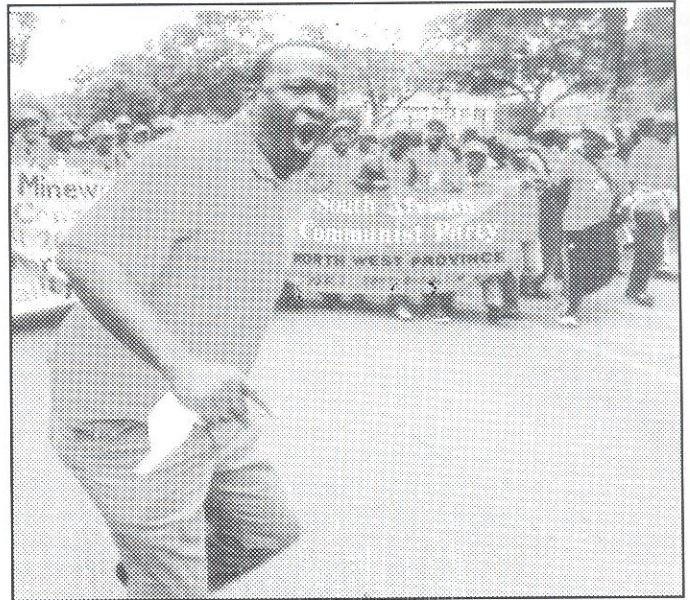
Basically "these commercial banks are nothing other than instruments of capitalist power, of capitalist economic oligarchies" as the SACP points out.

The memorandum which was submitted to the government and the Banking Council on Red Saturday raised the following main demands: "Government must take urgent steps ... to pass adequate legislation for the building and strengthening of cooperatives ... community reinvestment by banks", "the urgent convening of a summit of the financial sector", "an immediate moratorium on redlin-

ing and the classification of black residential areas ... as high-risk or non-creditworthy", "an immediate end to racism and sexism and discrimination against the working class in general in the practices of the banks" and "the regulation of the functioning of the Credit Bureaus".

While it is clear that these are just demands the problem that the SACP leadership does not seem to grasp is that these demands on their own will not solve the problems of workers and the poor gaining access to the banking system. The fundamental issue here is surely the fact that the banks are part of the capitalist system itself and therefore the obvious slogan which should be raised together with these reforms is the nationalisation of the banks rather than the creation of cooperative banks or "people's banks". How can you "make the banks serve the people" unless you take over the control of the banks? As long as the banks are in the hands of a few capitalist bankers they will always discriminate against poor people. Banks do not lend money for the fun of it or in order to fulfill a social mission. They operate on the basis of making the maximum profit in the shortest space of time. This is how capitalism works. In the same way that you cannot ask a tiger to become vegetarian, you cannot force the banks to be nice to people. As all experience shows "you cannot control what you do not own".

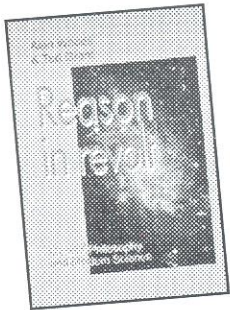
Even cooperative banks in and of themselves cannot be a solution to the problem as long as the fundamental levers of the finance sector are still in the hands of private capitalist bankers. If the SACP leadership really wants to advance the cause of socialism it should have used this particular campaign to directly challenge the power of big banks by complementing the demands of the Red October with the slogan of the nationalisation of the banks under workers control. This would be the only real way to



solve the problem of redlining and discrimination against working class people by the banks. Taking the banking sector into democratically controlled public ownership, combined with the nationalisation under workers control of the main monopolies would provide the necessary resources to deliver housing, water, electricity and jobs to the millions of South Africans who still don't have access to these basic facilities. By the way, even if the banking sector were to be reformed and working class and poor people had easier access to bank accounts and credit, this would still not put money in their bank accounts or give them houses or jobs.

Therefore, the struggle for reforms is a component part of the struggle for socialism, but only if there is a clear understanding of the limits of reforms under a crisis ridden capitalist system and if this struggle is clearly linked to the struggle for socialism, that is if the emphasis is put on the key question of the ownership of the means of production distribution and exchange. Otherwise instead of a Communist programme which helps raise the level of understanding of the masses about the real cause of their problems and the solution, what you have is merely a social democratic programme which creates the illusion that the capitalist system (in this case its banking sector) can be reformed to serve the people. ☆

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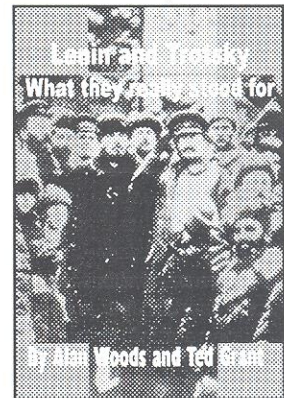
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This book was written as a reply to Monty Johnstone, who, at that time was a leading theoretician of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and who had published a reappraisal of Leon Trotsky in the Young Communist League journal *Cogito* at the end of 1968. Alan Woods and Ted Grant used the opportunity to write a detailed reply explaining the real relationship between the ideas of Lenin and Trotsky, which had been systematically falsified by the Stalinists ever since the invention of "Trotskyism" in 1924. This was no academic exercise. It was written as an appeal to the ranks of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League to rediscover the truth about Trotsky and return to the original revolutionary programme of Lenin.

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Letters from Palestinian Socialist Students in struggle

Below we are publishing some letters we have received from Palestinian Socialist Students who are in the thick of the present conflict. On the next page we publish a letter from an Israeli Marxist. The views expressed in these letters do not necessarily agree with the views of Socialist Appeal/In Defence of Marxism

From the Socialist Students in Palestine 13.10.00

Our dear comrades in IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM, We are so proud of your campaign that you started and we can't say anything else but KEEP ON !! and we hope we will do more and more work in the near future!

You can't imagine how Arafat's Palestinian Authority treats the people, can you believe that here there are 13 security systems!!!

Just a week ago three of our comrades were arrested by one of those security systems, and another was handed an application calling him to give information about our activities. All of them are only 17 years old!!

We are proud of you and in our last flyer we mentioned that our dear comrades from USA and UK are on our side !!

Lastly about the last news, we are sure that you have heard of the SHARM AL-SHEIKH summit, and now Arafat is going there. But it is so good that he did so, because now especially the people will know the truth about Arafat's authority, and how careless he is about the Palestinian blood. Two men were killed today. The total number of people killed from the beginning of our INTIFADA is about 125, and we would say here that this daily average (about 11 daily) is higher than the first INTIFADA in 1987 which was 2.5 daily!
KEEP IN TOUCH!!

Comradely,
Socialist Students - Intifada Palestine

From the Socialist Students in Palestine 15.10.00

Dear comrades,

We were so proud of all these letters we have received via your website. About our comments:

- 1- now it is so clear that the peace process went to her grave for ever.
- 2- we are so angry with the USA government's comments on the situation here by (Madeline Albright), our INTIFADA has been going on for 2 weeks. When does UNCLE SAM take an interest in all of this? Just when two Jewish soldiers were killed in Ramallah City, who were there in order to do some dirty job.
- 3- About the four member summit which is maybe to be held in Egypt: we refuse to consider all the Palestinian blood which has been shed up until now as cheap water. And from that point of view we refuse to recog-

nise the failed summit and if Mr Arafat attends it then he'll reach the highest point of humiliating our people.

4- You all have seen the Israeli troops (helicopters, tanks, navy...) launching LAO missiles on civilians and unarmed people. But we announce to all of you that if the Israeli troops want to enter our cities and villages then we say WELCOME ISRAELIS TO YOUR ENDLESS GRAVES!! We don't want to be so bloody, but if we are forced to choose then the fighting choice let it be!!

5-Lastly, our friends from all the world: WE ARE SUFFERING BLOCKADE HERE, SOON WE WILL LOSE WATER, OIL, LASTLY BREAD! BUT YOU ALL MUST KNOW THAT WE WON'T SURRENDER, IT'S OUR FAIR FIGHT, AND WE WILL NEVER GIVE UP. AND, AS CHE SAID "A CRIMINAL WHO DOESN'T FIGHT A WAR HE CAN'T AVOID" Note: we hope you publish this comment on your website, and please keep sending us e-mails!!!

Comradely
your comrades in
Socialist Students - INTIFADA-PALESTINE!
and all the good Marxists in PALESTINE.

From the Palestinian Socialist Students 18.10.00

DEAR COMRADES,

Your article (Middle East: on the brink of the abyss...) summarises the whole situation in good words, but we would add some points:

- 1- About socialist revolution, it is not a theory from now on. Just yesterday there was a protest in NABLUS city. FATIH movement (which is ARAFAT'S one) decided to protest inside the city but it doesn't fight against the Israelis at the entrance to the city. But all the people marched with the POPULAR FRONT FOR LIBERATION OF PALESTINE, (PFLP) which is a Leninist-Marxist party. This situation was repeated in many cities. So from that we see that the people are starting to believe in socialist and Marxist movements again, after they had lost that belief for years!!
- 2- About the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, although it succeeded for now, the Palestinian people here will not accept it in any way, whatever Arafat and Barak may imagine. Today the INTIFADA is still going on in the Streets and 4 people have been killed by the Israelis and the settlers!!

We are ready to translate your article. We will also send you some pictures and some eye-witness accounts!!!

Keep in touch comrades!!!!!!
comradely, Palestinian Socialist Students

From the Palestinian Socialist Students 18.10.00

Dear comrades,

Responding to your e-mail about letters which have reached you, we are stronger now.

Anything Arafat will do can't stop the people's movement now!!

As to the really interesting e-mails from the Israelis, we say:

- 1- We have very good relations with the mentioned movement, ABNA ELBALAD, THE SONS OF THE COUNTRY, and we would send our regards to them from here, from the INTIFADA-PALESTINE!
- 2- We think the situation in the Israeli community is so clear now from all its sharp internal differences, which are shown in their letter!!
- 3- We said before that the so called peace process is dead now, but we didn't say the whole peace is gone with the wind. WE REPEAT AGAIN: we want peace but not Barak's and Arafat's peace. We want a fair peace which is based on the UN decisions with the return of all the Palestinian refugees from all countries.

4- There is a letter mentioning the collapse of the PLO, and about our representative of the Palestinian people. It is the puppet of Arafat's Authority and is under the Zionist's hand.

Lastly dear comrades, we hope you make this e-mail reach our comrades in the sons of the country movement!!

KEEEEEEP IN TOUCH COMRADES, THE SITUATION HERE IS RUNNING TO A WAR OR A REVOLUTION!!! BUT ALL WHAT HAPPENS IS FOR THE GOOD OF MARXISM - THE REAL JUSTICE!

Comradely,
Palestinian Socialist Students -
Intifada Palestine

From the Palestinian Socialist Students 18.10.00

Dear comrades,

Responding to your letter about prisoners, the picture is like this:

Three of our comrades, in Ramallah city were released a week ago, one of us was held for two hours in Nablus city by the Palestinian Intelligence a month ago. All of this is because of our activities against the policies of Arafat's Authority.

Organizing a solidarity campaign, it is a good idea, but give us a few days in order to collect all the names from the all the regions in our country. As you know the blockade doesn't let us move freely.

KEEEEEEEEP IN TOUCH COMRADES!!!!
Palestinian Socialist Students

Letter from Israel:
An analysis of the situation from an Israeli Marxist

Dear Comrades,

The situation in Palestine is as follows: Israel is a racist state with theocratic characteristics (for instance, civil law is based on the "Halacha" or Jewish medieval religious law) which threatens to turn into a fundamentalist and bonapartist one. What here is called the "War of Independence" was in fact an ethnic cleansing of one million Palestinians, which in the meantime have turned into four million refugees to which the state denies the right of return - and they want Arafat to formally accept this situation. The Jewish and non-Jewish (especially the Arabic) population are separated by a regime of segregation very similar to the South-African apartheid: it is impossible for a Jew to marry a non-Jew, the police and the army are lily-white, etc. In fact, the state is in a situation of constant undeclared war with the Arabic population: for instance, many hundreds of Palestinian houses are systematically destroyed every year in order to force them to leave the country. "Arabic" parties (those whose voters are mostly Arabs, including the Communist Party) have never been allowed to take part in any government coalition. The motto of the Jewish "peace supporters" is "peaceful coexistence" - integration (intermarriage, living in the same building, etc.) being absolutely taboo.

The situation in the "territories" (West Bank and Gaza) is even worse. The Palestinian Authority is a puppet of Zionism and American imperialism and acts as a more "legitimate" apparatus of repression against the Palestinians. Their economic situation has worsened terribly since the signing of the "peace agreements" (Madrid and Oslo) because Palestinian workers haven't been allowed to enter Israel - something which never happened even during the height of the Intifada. In fact, they have been replaced by foreign workers from the Philippines, South America, Turkey, Romania, Thailand, etc. The policy of the Zionist state towards the Palestinians since 1948 has been one of "divide et impera": they separated between the Palestinian refugees, those living in the territories, those living in Israel, the Bedouins and the Druzes (who are conscripted to the army), etc. Now that is no longer true: during the last week the army and the police have carried out a massacre, firing live bullets at protesters in the territories and in Israel without any distinction. A recent opinion poll by a daily newspaper has shown that 60 per cent of the Jewish population supports a "transfer" (ethnic cleansing) of the Palestinians. During the last few days, Jewish mobs have carried out outright pogroms in the Arab neighborhoods and cities, as a result of which several Arab Israeli "citizens" have been killed with the

tacit support of the police and the army. Not a single one of the Jewish working class organizations, either political or trade-unionist, have condemned the massacres.

The only solution to this horrid situation is the establishment of a democratic secular republic in the whole territory of historic Palestine and the granting of the right of return to the Palestinian refugees. Unfortunately, no major party supports this elemental democratic demand. Within Israel there are only two very small organizations (the "Abna el Balad", "Sons of the Country" movement, in the north, and the Committee for a Democratic Secular Republic in Palestine, in Jerusalem) who advance this slogan. The Communist Party during the last elections called to vote for Barak and supports partition ("Two State for two peoples"). There is also a small organization in Tel Aviv called "Maavak Sotzialisti" ("Socialist Struggle"), which call themselves Trotskyists, but even they support partition and call for "a socialist Israel alongside a socialist Palestine" - apparently there will be second-class "citizens" in the Jewish commonwealth of the future. As for an orthodox Marxist party, that is an unheard-of luxury here.

Most activists believe that the worst is yet to come. There is a threat of war with Lebanon, for Israel refuses to exchange the civilian hostages it took in Lebanese territory for the soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah outside Israel's borders, arguing that it is a terrorist organization (the Palestinians are not terrorized by the state, of course!). There is also the possibility of a large number of suicide bombings in buses carried out by desperate

Palestinians. In both scenarios, there are talks of a "national unity" government of all the Zionist parties - which under the present circumstances can only mean a fascist government aiming at massive repression and perhaps also an ethnic cleansing a la 1948. During the last few days I took part in many manifestations and have been repeatedly insulted and physically threatened by Jewish fascists. Some of my friends have been sent to jail and one of them had his hand and two ribs broken by the police.

Regards, David
11.10.00

Postscript:

Jews patrol to defend Arab neighbourhood in Haifa

Last night we patrolled in an Arab neighbourhood in Haifa because a right wing demonstration was due to pass there and we were afraid that a pogrom might take place, as happened in Nazareth, Jaffa, Acre, etc. When the demonstration ended, we dispersed. Then, after midnight, an armed soldier began shooting into restaurants in Yaffo Street, in downtown Haifa. Four people were injured - two Arabs and two Jews. One of the injured, a worker in the restaurant from the Galilean village Arabet el Battof, is suffering from dangerous injuries in the intensive care unit at Rambam Hospital. The Hebrew media did not report the event. In fact, the situation is pretty similar to the pogroms against the [Russian] Jews described by Trotsky in his book '1905'.

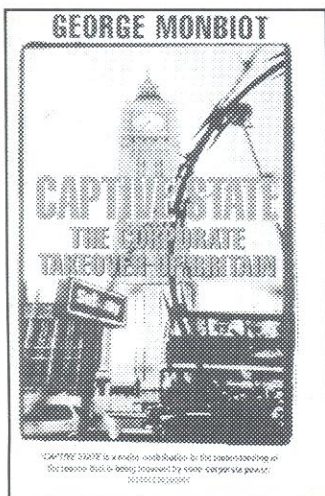
David,
13.10.00

The socialist students who are actively involved in the struggle in the West Bank are not sectarian, and are not opposed to the ordinary people of Israel. They are fighting against imperialism and foreign occupation, but at the same time they are fighting for the social rights and demands of the Palestinian workers and youth against the impositions of the so-called "Palestinian National Authority". They stand not only for national liberation but also for the social emancipation of working people everywhere, regardless of nationality, language or religious affiliation. **THEIR STRUGGLE DESERVES OUR SUPPORT!**

We invite you to set up committees of solidarity with the workers and students in the occupied territories. Pass resolutions condemning the actions of the Israeli oppressors. Organise pickets of the Israeli embassies and consulates. Organise petitions. Arouse public opinion by every means. Raise funds through collections to help the struggle.

Stop the massacre in Palestine!
End the Israeli occupation now!
Defend the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people!
Forward to a Socialist Federation of the Middle East!

Please rush all messages of support to the Palestine students NOW to:
e-mails to: palestinesolidarity@socappeal.easynet.co.uk
faxes to: 020 7251 1095
letters to: PALESTINE SOCIALIST STUDENTS SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN,
c/o PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ,
United Kingdom



Captive State: The Corporate takeover of Britain

**George Monbiot
(Macmillan) £12.99**

Reviewed by Steve Jones

Those who are in any way concerned about the influence of big business over our daily lives and public institutions will find much food for thought in an important book just published called "Captive State". In the introduction to his book, the investigative journalist George Monbiot talks of the way in which these companies have added their names onto one public project after another. For example in relation to the now infamous Millennium Dome we see that "...its Body Zone was sponsored by the chemist chain Boots, its Mind Zone by the weapons manufacturer British Aerospace and its Learning Zone by the supermarket Tesco. The 'Our Town' stage, where 'the diversity of local culture is celebrated', was financed by that guardian of diversity, McDonalds." Monbiot goes on to list sponsorship deal after sponsorship deal, often implemented without any consideration as to whether such link-ups might not be totally inappropriate.

However this aspect of corporate strategy is not Monbiot's primary interest. What he is using it for is a means of leading us towards what he feels is a far deeper problem, namely the way in which capital is "... seizing powers previously invested in government, and using them to distort public life to suit their own ends... the corporate control of the means of government, as well as its implementation."

To prove his point he concentrates on a series of case studies, each designed to show a different aspect of what has been happening: the Skye Bridge project, hospitals in Coventry, urban regeneration in Southampton, supermarkets verses small farmers, Monsanto and the engineering of food, corporate intervention in university education and so on. Each story told here contains more than enough to make your blood boil - this is not a book to read if you are feeling a bit agitated already.

Let's take the first story Monbiot tells. Here we had a much-needed project to build a bridge to connect the Isle of Skye to the

mainland. Simple enough and had it been built with public money then this project would have had most of its costs covered by money from the EU. But no, the then Tory government decided at the end of the 1980s that yes, the islanders could have a bridge, but that it must be paid for out of private money through something called the Private Finance Initiative. What no-one realised at the time was that this was a trial run for a system of finance that would enable private companies to make countless millions at the public's expense. The project was dodgy from beginning to end with the bridge users being forced to pay some of the highest tolls in the world to use the bridge, their only way of reaching the mainland since the alternative cheaper ferry service was terminated by the government in the same week as the bridge opened. Since then, a brave campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment has been carried out by the Islanders and their supporters, often in the face of blatant intimidation by the law.

Sadly, despite initial support when in opposition, Labour has taken no action to stop these high charges and indeed has enthusiastically gone along with taking action to protect the bridge owners.

In fact it is a shameful and depressing thread running through the whole of this book that New Labour has been the most vigorous supporter yet of schemes such as PFI and all the various other scams by which capitalism has lorded it over the public sector. Fat Cat directors and the like have been shunted into well-paid positions of power on all manner of public bodies. Council and national government officials have been falling over themselves to ignore the wishes of the general public whilst showing themselves to be ultra-friendly towards big business. No wonder Blair is at pains to always remind us that New Labour is "...the party of business!"

The most chilling chapter of all is headed "Government In Exile - The Corporate Bid for World Domination." This may sound over the

top, until you actually read it. Here we see mapped out in black and white the various attempts over the last few years to transfer power from elected governments to the big corporations on a world-wide scale. This started with the attempt in the mid-nineties to introduce what one of its creators called "the constitution of a single global economy", the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). Prepared in secret this would have given companies the right to sue any government in the world whose laws or actions were deemed to be hindering their ability to make money.

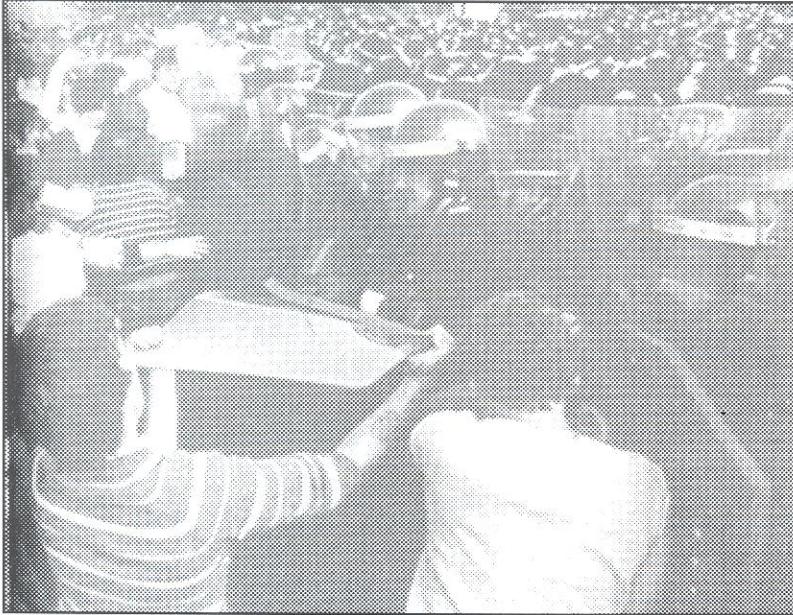
The implications of such a global restraint were and are staggering and it took concerted international protests to get the measure dropped in 1998. Needless to say the most enthusiastic supporter of MAI was the New Labour government. Since then concerted efforts by the representatives of the Great Powers have been carried out to get the MAI measures implemented by other means such as through the World Trade Organisation and arrangements such as NAFTA, the Transatlantic Economic Partnership and so on. Bodies such as the Transatlantic Business Dialogue, a coming together of representatives of over 100 big US and European companies, and the even more dodgy sounding European Round Table of Industrials, are hard at work pushing the line of deregulation and global rights for business (not of course for workers).

It is fascinating to see how Marx's analysis of the rising power of globalisation is being borne out 150 years later by books such as this. Monbiot's solution is just to watch and protest, which is fair enough but we would go further. The issues raised here sharply pose the need to fight inside the Labour and trade movement against the reactionary activities of New Labour and for socialist policies. This is the point where this book stops and the journal in your hand starts. ☆

Order your copy from Wellred Books!

Dancing in Defiance -

A review of "Billy Elliot"



►
Ogreave:
Riot police charge picketing miners

*'time is short, life is cruel,
but it's up to us to change
a town called malice...'*
The Jam from the film's sound-
track

Reviewed by Mark Turner

With the exception of the social and cultural elite in Britain very few people know or care anything of ballet or modern dance, so it was an unusual investment for the capitalists looking for a fast buck. It didn't make the film any more attractive to me that the right wing media applauded and some (well meaning) journalists berated "Billy Elliot" as two-hour cinematic justification of scabbing. But see it I did, and I'm glad I did.

"Billy Elliot" is a new British film, partly funded by the Arts Council, which tells the story of a 12 year old boy whose mother has died and is being brought up by his father and elder brother. They are striking miners, in the 1984-85 strike. The father gives his son 50p a week to pay for boxing lessons, but Billy prefers to dance so spends the money on ballet lessons instead. His teacher soon realises that he has a talent that needs nurturing and submits him for an audition for the Royal Ballet School. When Bill's dad and brother find out they - to put it mildly - express their concern that this is not a suitable career for a miner's son! In defiance of his dad he continues dancing and eventually his father has a Saul on the road to Damascus size change of heart: realising that his son is truly gifted. It is on this that the film pivots, and where the two strands of the story cross. To send his son to the school he will need £2000 and when he's chopping up furniture for firewood this is an impossible amount to find. So he decides that he has no choice but to scab, against everything he

and his elder son stand for.

For those who have not seen the film I won't spoil it - but what happens is crucial to the intention of the film and most bourgeois have misleadingly portrayed the events as support for the scabs. Suffice to say the reverse is true.

For those on the fringes of the labour movement whose response to every problem workers face is to go glassy eyed and shout "Strike!" not unlike Father Jack from "Father Ted", this film will be seen as reactionary. But whilst advocating and supporting strikes as a weapon for workers, this journal and its supporters recognise that they are no picnic, when they drag on; they mean bitter struggle, sacrifice and stress. Though these pressures are sketched in painful detail, the pride, discipline and dignity of the strike is also evident. In contrast, the police appear as a strange, almost alien, invading force, and I can't recall a single face of a policeman being shown. Indeed, the lasting impression is of military attacks reminiscent of the initial terrifying appearance of the Gorilla army in "Planet of the Apes".

It cannot go without comment that "Billy Elliot" was produced by the BBC, who have rightly been crowing about its critical success. But this belated compassion for the plight of the miners in the 1984-85 strike comes 15 years too late. It cannot make up for night after night of anti-strike propaganda which often reached levels of subtlety worthy of Harry Enfield's wartime parodies. The brutality of the well armed, well-protect-

ed police against men and boys in trainers and T-shirts was never given this kind of "balance" when it mattered. The BBC was just another arm of the state machine which was mobilised to defeat the miners.

That's the politics. What is there to recommend? Well every scene is carefully framed, leaning on the naturalism of Ken Loach's "Kes" but transforming into a modern musical for the dance sequences. It is a film of great set pieces, and starting images - the relentless chase by the police of Billy's brother and the resulting beating, a child dragging a stick along a brick wall which suddenly becomes a wall of police riot shields. But even more - the dancing. This is Fred Astaire with a fist: Billy dances in defiance at his dad to the sound of The Jam's "Town Called Malice", and it is an unforgettable sequence. They could have taken the easy option of using a bog standard Eighties pop soundtrack, but instead make exhilarating use of T-Rex's "Children of the Revolution", The Jam and The Clash's "London Calling". Jamie Bell is brilliant as Billy, and Gary Lewis seems constantly on the verge of exploding with any and all emotions, but mainly rage. This film is not a call for revolution, but is very accomplished, and will make you angry, tearful and laugh. It is well worth seeing. ☆

It's down to you!

At this time of year we are entering the pre-Xmas selling spree. Shops are already decked out with all manner of festive decor in order to tempt you into doing serious damage to your credit cards. This is not an accident, retail outlets know that this is the time when they make the most money. People involved in fund raising also know that this is the time of year when most cash can be collected. Charities and the like will be moving into overdrive to empty people's pockets for "a good cause." Of course big business will not be keen in helping people out, they just want to make money for themselves. Having created the problems of the world through their ruthless exploitation and greed they are not really interested in entering into the festive spirit and doing something about it. This doesn't surprise us - we know what makes these people tick. Even when they do give donations to one cause or another it is usually seen as just a marketing tool.

Compare the cynicism of big business to the spirit of giving shown by many working

class people who often fork out even if they are left short themselves. If nothing else it shows how short of the mark all those people who talk about "human nature" and the rest really are. Most people at this time of year want to see a better fairer world, free of misery and oppression. But that requires something rather more fundamental than just putting a few coins in the hat. It requires a fundamental change in society, it requires the struggle for socialism. This is what *Socialist Appeal* is about and why we are asking you to consider donating to us. We have no other source of finance than that of support from ordinary working class people. So it is down to you.

With just over a week and a bit to go the appeal fund stands at £10,248.13 raised towards the £13,000 target. We would like to thank all those who contributed - and please keep up the good work. This money is urgently needed to ensure the future of *Socialist Appeal*. Our next target of £5,000 is for the special building fund to allow us to develop our operations. (see page 13)

As has been reported already we will have to move offices soon to a bigger place. This is an expensive business and will cost us quite a bit, not just in removal charges but in redecorating, installing phone lines and so on. Our printing machine will have to be professionally moved which again will cost us. So raising the £5,000

Socialism won't come on a plate

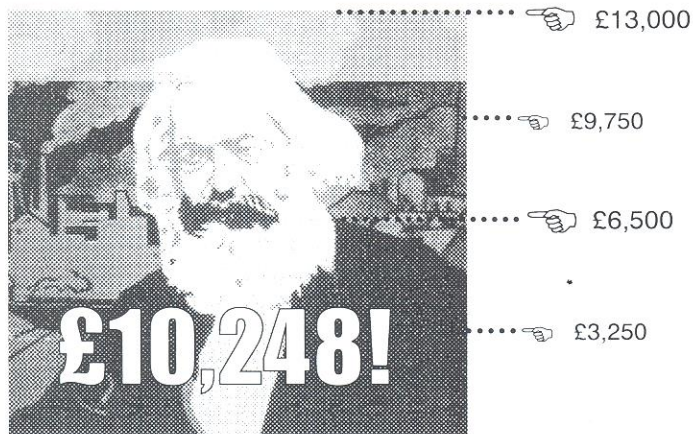


will be very important.

This is the best time to raise cash. Every option should be taken up. Every reader should consider what they could give towards the fund. Sellers should approach everybody they normally sell to asking them to make a festive donation. Tell them how important it is to have a journal standing up for socialist ideas in the Labour and trade union movement and why we need that voice to be heard loud and strong. Start organising those Xmas socials now - this is a good way of making money and enjoying yourselves at the same time, which can't be bad. So send what you can to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. Cheques/POs should be made payable to *Socialist Appeal*.

Special thanks to Alison (£30), the six London readers who gave an amazing £1,620, Mersey readers (£40), Jim (£60), G Jones (£10), Leicester readers (£10), West London readers (£50), F. Leetch (£7.50), Darrall Cousins (£7.55), Ron (£10), sellers at a London meeting (£170) and those others which space unfortunately does not permit a mention. Keep it up!

by Steve Jones



London Socialist Appeal X-mas Social!

X-mas is getting closer and closer and we want to celebrate with you! That's why we are organising a social for the 16th of December. Tickets will cost £5 each (£3 unwaged) and with that you will get free food and a free drink. Also top music, raffles, a good atmosphere and quality entertainment. Book your ticket now at PO Box 2626 London N1 7SQ.



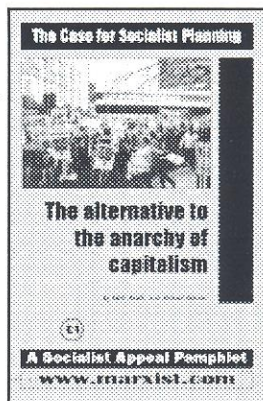
pamphlets

Socialist Appeal publishes pamphlets on a wide range of topical issues. From the stock market crash to the opening shots of the Iranian revolution, we have published material that not only comments on and explains

the issues as they happen, but puts forward a Marxist alternative to the views you'll get from the media, the Labour and trade union leaders, the City and big business. Indispensable reading for labour activists.

- **The Communist Manifesto.** ref. 0256
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**The alternative to the
anarchy of capitalism**
by *Mick Brooks and
Michael Roberts*
price £1
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Socialist Appeal

Fights for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

☆ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

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

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

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

Join us in the fight for socialism!

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

Name.....

Address.....

.....tel.....

return to: **Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ**
tel 020 7251 1094 e-mail appeal@socialist.net