

●Book Catalogue ●UNISON Strikes ●Hague Conference ●Competition

Socialist Appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Dec-Jan 2000-01 issue 86 Price: £1

No more sell-offs

Renationalise

the lot



Inside

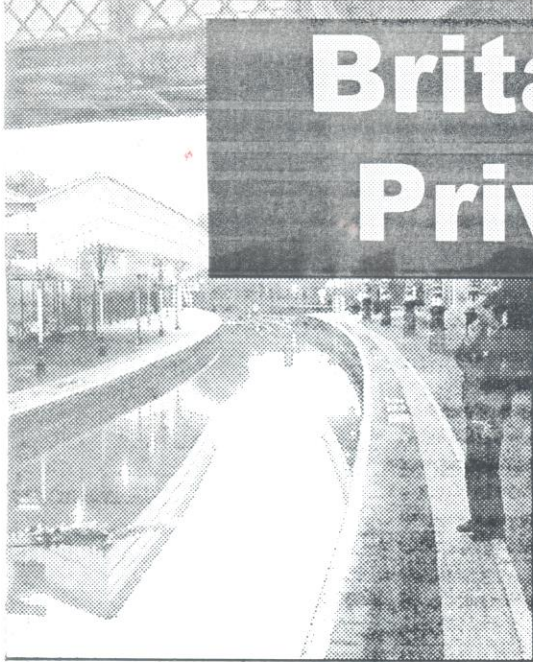
The true story of the Red October
Plan Colombia
Struggle in Palestine
Equal pay scandal
Economic review
Trotsky's testament



Lessons of the US election

www.marxist.com

Britain in the grip of Privatisation Chaos



"It was not so much the fragmentation [of British Rail] which has led to deficiencies in safety management, but the decision to put Railtrack into the private sector."
Victor Coleman, Chief Inspector of Railways in a statement to the Paddington Inquiry.

On the windows of the headquarters of Railtrack at Euston there is a grovelling sign saying, "Sorry is not enough." This, however, will not be sufficient to wash away the blood on its hands. Likewise, the resignation of Gerald Corbett, chief executive of Railtrack (with a massive payoff), who should have been charged with corporate murder, was a further ploy to stem the growing discontent with the privatised rail system now sweeping the country.

Clearly, the entire board of Railtrack, including Corbett, should have been sacked. But that is insufficient. The government should have acted swiftly to take back the railways into public ownership. Instead, to its shame, the Blair government decided to bailout these parasites with a further public subsidy of nearly £5 billion. In the past, the government has said it could not afford renationalisation. But when its corporate friends are in difficulty, it can come up rapidly with a massive cash handout. These crooks couldn't believe their luck. They were responsible for bringing the system to its knees, killing people in the process, and have now been rewarded for their incompetence! What a disgrace!

Instead of being a "macho man" to the rail companies, Prescott has been a docile pussycat. Tangled up in his support for Blairite PPP, he has been forced to accept the privatisation of the railways, with all the consequences that it entails. The government should be inundated with protests from trade unions, constituency parties, and other

Labour organisations.

In the meantime, in a meeting with rail industry leaders, Blair has voiced private fears that the rail industry may be overreacting to the Hatfield crash, which killed four people. **How out of touch can you get?**

The deaths on our rail network are a direct result of the privatisation of the system. The break-up of British Rail into over 100 private operating companies, each with its own separate agenda, was a recipe for chaos. Public safety went out of the window. They were deliberately running a dangerous rail service, with broken rail tracks up and down the country. They kept silent about this scandal. Nothing must get in the way of their profits! It was a deliberate cover-up, which was exposed in the Hatfield disaster.

Given the public outcry, exactly a year after the Paddington crash, they had to do something. Belatedly, they were forced to patch up the rail system, with speed restrictions imposed on 880 sections. Emergency timetables have been introduced, which have been subject to more delays. The state of the rail system resembles a Third World country. In 1830 Stephenson's *Rocket* travelled from Liverpool to Manchester in one hour, today some trains run by First North Western were taking an hour and 14 minutes.

With the cancellations, trains are severely over crowded. As one commuter put it: "They herd us in like cows." As a consequence, the AA estimates that road traffic levels have risen by 25% in some areas.

The reason for the rail privatisation was nothing to do with making the railways more efficient, as was claimed at the time by the Tories. It was everything to do with asset stripping and pillaging the state sector for the benefit of big business. The railways were sold off for a song, while the government - Tory and now Labour - continued to subsidise the private companies. It was a scandal that Labour promised to rectify. A clear promise was made to renationalise the railways and bring them back under public control. Unfortunately, Blair carried on where the Tories left off and the commitment to renationalisation was abandoned.

It has become clearer to everyone that the privatisation of the utilities under the Tories was a license to print money. All the talk about how increased competition would free up the state monopoly and benefit consumers was nothing more than a smoke-screen. The privatised water companies, gas and electric are all involved in cartels to fix

prices and profit levels. The powers of the regulators are a sham, which allow these private bloodsuckers to get away with murder. The so-called 'wealth' tax brought in by Gordon Brown never affected the 'excess' profits of the companies. They simply used their cartels to pass on the tax through price increases!

Meanwhile blood sucking Railtrack and the operating companies squeeze as much profit from the system as they can. Profit, as is always the case under capitalism, was the driving force behind their decisions and actions. The greed of the companies and the interests of their shareholders are paramount.

After the Southall and Paddington train disasters there has been growing public opposition to privatisation. A year ago, 75% in an opinion poll came out for the renationalisation of the railways. Now, with the Hatfield disaster, that figure would be even higher. Not a day goes by when there is not massive delays, an accident or incident or even a derailment (as happened last month with a Virgin Train outside Glasgow). According to the shame-faced and toothless Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, passengers will have to wait 20 years before they can expect 94% of trains to run on time! Of course, the Bransons and Corbetts will not be affected with their chauffeur-driven cars and private jets.

The Labour leaders should expose this scandal. They must drop all plans to privatise air traffic control and the London underground. They must immediately take back into public ownership the railways and the other industries privatised by the Tories, with compensation on the basis of proven need. A socialist transport programme must include the public ownership of rail, buses and freight, which can be integrated into a national plan, under the control of government, passenger representatives and workers within the industry.

This can be used as a springboard to take over the 'commanding heights of the economy' - the major industries and financial institutions - and run the economy in the interests of working people. On that basis, the class divide can be eradicated and the problems facing the mass of people are solved once and for all. Only then will the profit-motive give way to production for need and the paramount importance of safety in all walks of life. ☆

This month SA contains:

2.....	Editorial	Wellred Catalogue.....	15
4.....	News	<i>(pull out special)</i>	
	Hague	The true story of the	
5.....	conference fiasco	Red October.....	20
	Whatever Happened to	<u>International</u>	
6.....	Equal Pay?	Colombia.....	23
8.....	Modern times	Lessons of the	
10.....	Economics	US election.....	24
	<u>Trotsky's</u>	Palestine.....	26
12.....	Last letters		
13.....	Testament		
19.....	Youth		



Socialist Appeal

*Published by
SA Publications*

PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ
tel 020 7251 1094
fax 020 7251 1095

appeal@socialist.net
www.socialist.net
www.marxist.com
www.newyouth.com
editor: Alan Woods

and...

- Book review
- Film review
- Press fund
- Capital idea
- Judgmental
- Moving appeal
- What we stand for

Join our "What they
say" competition!



You can win a one year
subscription to *Socialist
Appeal* for free!

London LP conference

The biennial conference of the London Labour Party, held in Stratford this November, was intended to be a total non-event at which those who attended would meekly sit back and accept the Millbank preelection line. For most of the morning that is the way it seemed to be going. Speech and "question and (non) answer" session followed one after the other, with delegates feeling patronised and voting with their feet to head into the tea bar or nearest pub. However things changed after lunch. Delegates returning to face the grim prospect of the dreaded workshops were confronted instead with two emergency resolutions on tube privatisation and the need to oppose PPP. The mood became electric with the RMT and FBU delegations leading the way. Delegate after delegate got up to support the resolutions, others shouted their support from the floor. After much pressure from the Chair, a delegate was rounded up to speak against the resolution which he duly did against a chorus of mass heckling. Not surprisingly the resolutions were carried by a four to one majority. This mood of anger carried on into the commissions with a vote being taken (by 46 to 25) to support Ken Livingstone's readmission into the party. In fact a call had been made to have this discussed by the whole conference but a move to overturn the Chair's ruling on this whilst being carried was lost on the basis that it did not get a two-thirds majority. So far as the vote for the position of Chair was concerned, the Left candidate Geoff Martin lost the vote by 40% to 60% although he did get a majority of the trade union vote (which would have been higher if UCATT had not been denied ballot papers on a technicality) which if nothing else shows the limitations of the Millbank machine who otherwise (despite supposedly being neutral) did an effective job in farming in the votes for their man. However the Left did pick up some extra seats on the GL Board (the Blairite name for the executive) and know that there is a job to be done in order to build on this and return the London Labour Party to the fighting traditions of old.

Steve Forrest
Erith and Thamesmead CLP
(personal capacity)

Scotland at a standstill

The latest in a series of one day strikes by 80,000 local government employees in Scotland again brought much of Scotland to a standstill. Libraries were closed as were many schools, council offices and leisure centres. Council run ferries in the highlands did not set sail. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has offered these workers a derisory 2.5% pay rise. In England and Wales workers have been offered a 3% rise for the same job.

Support for the strike was solid across the country, with workers from other unions refusing to cross UNISON picket lines. In Edinburgh more than 500 workers filled a local cinema for a strike rally where those workers taking selective all-out action, involving more than 600 workers across 19 of Scotland's 32 councils, were given tumultuous applause.

The union leadership vowed to fight on for the just claim of their members. However many of these members were left in some doubt as to what the next step should be. This was raised in questions from the floor at the end of the speeches from the platform. Earlier, as we have previously reported, the union leaders promised to step up the action to two and three day strikes if there was no progress from management. There has been no improvement which the membership could accept, yet there has been no stepping up of the action either. The so-called 6.1% over two years that management claimed to be offering was seen through by the members from the beginning. They rejected it by 68% to 32%.

The solid support for the strike shows the determination of the workforce, with the backing of workers in other unions, to fight for their just wage claim. Now is clearly the time to step up the action and prepare for all out action if that is what is required to make the management see sense.

UNISON's management has grown significantly since the start of this dispute, by 12% in Glasgow alone. UNISON members and activists in other unions around the country should take note. Fighting in the interests of your members is what builds unions not car insurance deals and cheap holidays. ☆

Hackney workers and residents fight back

Hackney local government workers are moving closer to strike action in the face of massive cuts being proposed by the New Labour council leadership. 500 jobs are threatened as part of a package of cuts intended to save over £25 million. Wholesale privatisation is also being proposed, starting with the refuse and street cleaning services. Council tax will rise by 10% and any asset which can be sold off will be. Council Managing Director Max Caller claims that his cuts package is necessary to bridge the shortfall in council income. Many have blamed the £50 million shortfall in government funding. Others have pointed to the mismanagement of council services by the New Labour leadership who have ignored the interests of ordinary residents and treated Hackney like a gigantic PLC.

In addition the whole of the council education service is being threatened by privatisation following a recommendation by the outgoing reactionary chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead. This Tory crony has constantly attacked comprehensive education, especially in the inner cities, and campaigned for right wing education methods and the taking away of services from local council control.

However, workers and local people are fighting back. In addition to the ballot for strike action, a series of actions have been organised. On Saturday 25th November, over 500 people demonstrated against 'Mad Max's' plan, with striking workers from Dudley Unison also travelling down to give their support. A further day of action was to take place on November 29th with a one-day strike and march on parliament scheduled for December 18th. Workers are already warning that the council's actions could spell disaster for Labour at the next local elections. Labour councillors should break with Toryism and stand instead on a programme of no cuts, no privatisation and no redundancies. The council tax should not be increased and the councillors should launch a campaign to demand that the shortfall in revenue faced by councils such as Hackney should be met from the profits of big business. In London especially firms have made a mint from cash provided from local and national government, all in return for very little. This is where the cash can be found to finance local services, not from the pockets of ordinary workers and the jobs of council staff. Hackney council must be made to change course. ☆

Hague conference fiasco

The collapse of the November talks at the Hague on the problem of global warming should come as no surprise to anyone, including those who have suffered from the recent floods and high winds.

by Steve Jones

Those politicians and officials who headed off to what they may have assumed was just another jolly always had to contend with a very big problem. On the one hand they were all sitting there because of the tremendous pressure and concern from below on all their respective administrations over the environment. Indeed many of these worthy ladies and gentlemen had previous been hard at work making fine sounding speeches about saving the planet and so on. Not surprisingly many of those who went along to this conference to protest did not entirely believe them.

For on the other hand there was the pressure from big business to protect their profit margins. Cutting back on waste emissions is all very well, they argue, but we have shareholders to think off and all this costs money. For the negotiators of the US - the main offender - this was a very big problem to say the least. The "growth" of the American economy has meant that emissions of greenhouse gases has steadily increased and is estimated to increase still further - 28% more by the year 2010. A far cry from the promises of the 1997 Kyoto summit where the US had agreed to cut emissions by 7% by the 2010 deadline.

After several days of dodging protesters - or not in some cases - a very dubious deal indeed was being knocked together. This involved trading off carbon emissions against new forests and farmland which would absorb these gases. This would not only involve US planted forests but also the "purchase" of other existing forests, mainly from Russia and other former Soviet bloc countries, to use in earning credits to make the quota. The people entrusted with getting this deal was to be good old loyal Britain.

However it wasn't long before the deal begun to collapse under its own absurdity. European negotiators tried their best to ignore facts as long as possible but it soon begun apparent that the deal could not be

gotten away with. Hence the smokescreen of Prescott blowing his top and accusing the French Environment Minister of being "tired" and so on. It was left to others to point out that the rest were also having problems working out how they could explain this deal away, especially as some experts were now emphasising that this proposal could increase emissions rather than cut them.

So the situation looks no better after this conference than before. The naive hopes of the Kyoto summit have been well and truly shattered. The prospects are bleak with that intellectual giant and (possible) US president George W Bush stating that global warming is just a myth. The brutal fact is that capitalism has spent decades now ripping apart the environment, not because they do not understand the danger, but rather because they simply do not care. They are not worried about polar caps melting or wild weather conditions - its all about share prices and profit warnings. In truth the chaotic way in which the system works, with its overproduction, cost cutting and short-termism, will always lead to attacks on the environment. Any measures which are put forward will, if agreed, simply be ignored or got rid off when they think they can get away with it.

Yet the situation should be far from hopeless. It should be quite possible to set about repairing much of the damage done and preventing any further decline in the situation. It does not need us to abandon technology or anything like that. Indeed technological advances should be benefiting us, reducing time spent on work and improving the standard of living. This is why socialism represents the only way forward for the human race. Socialist planning would ensure that resources are properly used and handled for the benefit of all rather than the profits of the few. On that basis the measures needed to drastically reduce carbon emissions, and therefore the greenhouse effect, so graphically being demonstrated by the wild weather we have seen over the last few months, could be successfully carried out. Resources would be conserved and serious action taken to avoid pollution and replace that which has been destroyed. The alternative for the planet under capitalism is all too clear and cannot be allowed to happen. ☆

Judge Mental



Sunday 26 November 2000

Now Michael Howard is an old friend of mine. When he was the Home Secretary he always took a tough line - even though he didn't have a clue what was going on in the Prison Service. But I was a bit peeved by his response to the Lord Chief Justice's ruling on the tragic James Bulger case. Quite correctly the Court ruled that the Judges should have decided the length of the sentence not the Home Secretary. But Michael argued back in public. He said that politicians should decide rather than Judges because politicians have to submit themselves for election and the public can vote them out whereas Judges are "unaccountable". The boys at the Mustn't Judge Club were taken aback. We shouldn't be drawing attention to the fact that we in the judiciary are not elected. Before we know it the public will be clamouring for the right to elect Judges. And where would that leave us? Utter chaos. Without a system based on class background and public school education we'd have a hard time defending private property. Luckily this incident has now blown over. But I think I'll just have a word in Michael's ear next time we share a Campari. ☆

Whatever Happened to Equal Pay?

"Still waiting after all these years" - these words (with apologies to Paul Simon) could easily apply to the search for equal pay for women.

Thirty years after the passing of the Equal Pay Act in 1970, a new survey suggests that women could have to wait another 30 years before they can expect to be paid the same as their male colleagues.

A spokesman for Bargaining Report from the Labour Research Department, as reported by BBC News, said: "This year again the evidence shows that the legal route to equal pay is still moving very slowly, with long delays and often poor outcomes for the women workers concerned."

by Sheila Clark

Julie Mellor, chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), also estimated that it "could take another 30 years" to close the 20% gap between women's and men's average earnings. She said that there had been little progress since the equal pay laws were first introduced, apart from a 1% narrowing of the pay gap!

In 1900, the EOC notes that "men comprised about 70% of the labour force... Only a small minority of married women worked and women were largely excluded from higher level and higher paid jobs." This contrasts with today when women make up half the workforce.

Pay for women has certainly improved if you look back to the period before the First World War, when they earned between two fifths and a half of the average annual earnings of men in most occupational groups, according to Office of National Statistics figures.

Since 1970, the overall gender pay gap has narrowed. "Women working full-time then earned 63% of the average hourly earnings of men ... the equivalent figure for 1999 was 81%."

But the actual situation is worse, if you look at actual weekly or annual earnings. The New Earnings Survey figures for 1998 showed weekly earnings of £310 for women, or 72.5% of the male figure of £427. The annual figures are £15,400 (71% of £21,900 for men).

The above figures are for full-time workers. The many women who need to work part-time, fare even worse. In 1998, part-time women workers earned £6.04 per hour - less than three quarters (73%) of the £8.22 hourly rate for full-time women.

But, if you compare them with male full timers, on £10.26, they earned only 59%, exactly the same proportion as back in 1978.

Government figures show women are concentrated in occu-

pations where earnings are low. The average hourly earnings of hairdressers and beauticians is £4.84 and 89% of them are women. Three-quarters of checkout operators and sales assistants are women, with average earnings just over £5. At the other end of the scale, two thirds of general managers are men, with earnings of over £20 per hour.

Facts and Figures

The above situation may partly explain why women's average income in 1996-97 was £153 per week - just over half (53%) of the male average of £289.

Income from welfare benefits accounted for more than a fifth of total female income. Over 45% of women, compared with just over 20% of men had an income under £100 per week in 1996-97. At the other end of the scale, over 10% of men, compared with just 2% of women had incomes above £500 per week.

This demonstrates why the minimum wage legislation has benefited so many women. Over 2 million adult workers were estimated to earn below the National Minimum Wage rates in Spring 1998. Seven

out of ten were women, mostly part-time. They were most likely to work in hotels and restaurants where nearly two thirds of employees were women.

In America, where they have had equal pay laws since 1963, women are still paid less - even when they have similar skills, experience and education.

But equal pay is not just an issue for women. The AFL-CIO trade union confederation calculates that, in 1998, women were paid only 73 cents for every dollar that men received. This works out to \$200 billion (£143 billion) of income each year lost to working families in the USA.

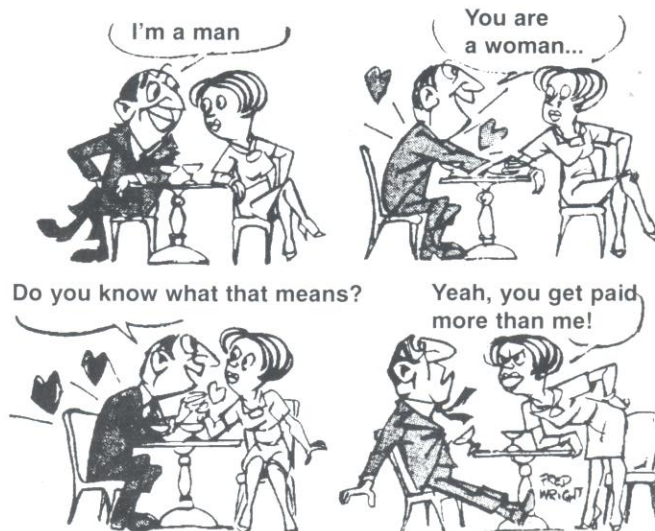
The loss is even more significant when you take into account that, according to AFL-CIO's 1997 survey, nearly two out of three (64%) of working women said that they provide half of family income - or more.

International comparisons

When women get equal pay, their family incomes rise and the whole family benefits. Men gain too. The AFL-CIO points out: "The 4 million men who work in predominantly female occupations lose an average of \$6,259 (£4470) each year...The 25.6 million women in these jobs lose an average of \$3,446 (£2461) a year."

The gap in pay in the UK is higher than the European union average. On the basis of gross hourly earnings, while women in Sweden, Denmark and the former East Germany earn 87% or more of men's pay, the British figure is less than three quarters, at 73.7%. Ireland, Portugal and the Netherlands are even lower, with Greece at the bottom of the league with just 68%. (The figures are from Eurostat figures for 1994-1995.)

There was a residual difference showing that women were being systematically paid 15% less. This is after taking account of other factors, such as working women being younger on aver-



age than men, because many leave the workforce to have children. They also tend to be less well-educated than men, with over half (51%) receiving only a basic secondary level education or less, compared to 43% of men.

The Equal Opportunities Commission blames four factors for unequal pay:

- Gender segregation in employment - because many women and men are concentrated in different areas of work. Those which are traditionally seen as women's work, such as nursing, teaching and clerical work tend to be lower paid. (60% of public sector workers are women.)

- Different working patterns - where women are more likely to work part-time and take breaks to care for children

- Direct discrimination in pay systems and

- Undervaluation of women's jobs.

These inequalities lead, according to the Commission, to "reduced economic independence; greater likelihood of low pay while working; and greater likelihood of poverty in old age."

A Marxist analysis would add that unequal pay is another device used in the interests of the capitalist class to divide the workforce.

Successful Negotiations

On the positive side, last year was a bumper year for settlements.

The GMB trade union achieved a negotiated settlement on behalf of ancillary staff at Newcastle General Hospital worth about £1m for its members.

The EOC points out that "pay progression arrangements need looking at, since men generally stay longer with the same employer than women, even though women are increasingly returning to work soon after having children." (*Labour Research*, March 2000)

Some unions, for example the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) have used job evaluation to achieve equal pay deals - in the Prison Service, Ministry of Defence and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, according to *Labour Research*.

Bargaining Report research found that workers are much more likely to win their claim through union negotiation than fighting their case at a tribunal. The number of applications to tribunals has averaged less than 500 a year and the number of cases actually heard has been well under 100 in most years.

However, last year one case heard by the European Court of Justice was that of *Preston v Wolverhampton Healthcare*. It involved the claims of more than 60,000 women workers concerned that, as part-time workers, they had been denied backdated pension rights.

The European Court of Justice ruled the

women were entitled to backdate their pensions to 1976. It may be a hollow victory, when you think how many of these low-paid workers will be able to afford to make up more than 20 years' pension contributions.

The EOC launched its campaign, "Valuing Women", to help close the pay gap, in October 1999. They published a series of adverts. The first urged: "Prepare your daughter for working life - give her less pocket money than your son."

The Commission found that most 17 to 25 year olds were not aware of the pay gap. More than 70% of young women said that their choice of job would be influenced by an employer's commitment to equal pay. Julie Mellor said: "The cream of British youth simply won't stand for the gender inequalities we've all put up with for so long."

According to the EOC, in 1998, 93% of male employees worked full-time compared with only 57% of women. 83% of part-time employees were women. "Nearly half those with dependent children gave wanting to spend more time with their family as the reason, and two fifths said it was due to domestic commitments."

The Cabinet Office fact sheet on "Women's Income and Employment" says: "having children is possibly the most significant factor affecting women's income and earnings opportunities ... [it] means a drop in personal income, a loss of momentum on the career ladder and often leaving employment for several years."

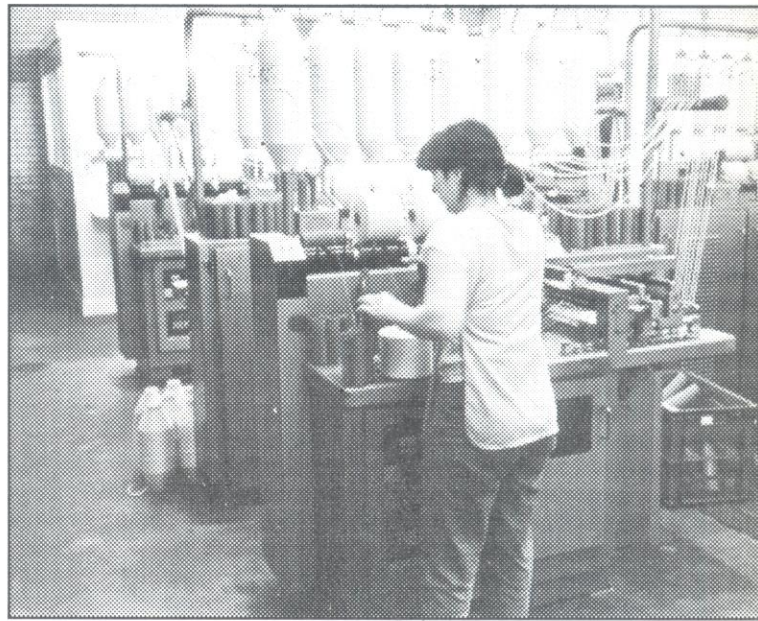
'Family-friendly policies' are hardly more than a slogan at present. Generous paid maternity and paternity leave are vital if women are to be able to play their full part in society. The trade unions have a vital part to play in winning these benefits for all.

Making changes

The government's own figures show that a woman is likely to be paid about a quarter of £1m less than a man during her working life. If she has children she loses out even more - by an estimated £381,000.

These figures come from a study produced by the London School of Economics.

"Being a mother can add dramatically to the loss ...but the reasons for what is termed the 'female forfeit' are women being concentrated in lower paid sectors of the job market, and discrimination in pay against those



doing the same work as men." (*Guardian*, 21 February 2000)

The BBC reported on the Trades Union Congress campaign urging women to find out whether they are being paid the same as their male counterparts. But asking a colleague the size of his pay-packet goes against the grain.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has called for national strategies in employment, education and training to promote wider opportunities for men and women.

Under a capitalist system, the employers will only go along with this as long as it suits them. When skills are in short supply, like during both World Wars, they are prepared to train women and allow them to do a wider range of work.

The TUC calls for reform of equal pay and sex discrimination laws. "Women workers have put up with poor pay because of institutionalised discrimination and the fact that society has traditionally undervalued the kind of work they do," said general secretary John Monks.

It is not enough for the TUC to simply urge employers to be fair to women. In the interests of all workers, the trade unions must involve the women workers, who are now joining in greater numbers, in campaigns alongside male workers to combat the long hours culture which destroys the family and means that neither parent has much leisure time to spend with their children. We want a shorter working week, without loss of pay - which is perfectly possible using the latest technology. The wealth now concentrated in the hands of the few, should be shared and invested in enabling a better quality of life for all.

To produce a genuinely equal society, where workers can enjoy free education to fulfil their potential and receive an income based on needs, we have to re-organise society onto a socialist basis. ☆

Capital idea

The Price of Life in Cold Blood

Well can you put a price on life? Well under capitalism everything has a price tag. Take the deaths on the railways. Is it worth all this trouble to make the rail system safe? asks *The Economist*. "No it is not, life involves risk", it continues, "and calculations about how much money to spend on reducing danger have to be made in cold blood - or at least with a cool head." If this is not bad enough, these civilised Ladies and Gentlemen go on to justify their money-bag views. "Governments, which invest in risk-reduction through, for instance, road-safety measures, and which legislate to require companies to spend on risk-reduction, have to ask how many lives a given amount of money can be expected to save - they must, in other words, set a price on life."

Stress

Stress is the fastest growing health issue for workers according to a recent survey by the Industrial Society. Three quarters of all companies feel it is the biggest health risk to their staff, yet they continue to pile on the pressure. The TUC agree that stress is a major workplace hazard. John Monks comments "A 24-hour economy doesn't have to mean long hours, we should be working better not longer." We are all in favour of efficiency, however this should not be at the expense of our health. In fact, the amount of time being lost through ill health caused not only by long hours but by increased pressure during work time is typical of inefficient capitalism. The market wastes human resources as well as raw materials and technological advances. We should all be working shorter hours, under less stress. Efficiency and health and safety are entirely compatible, but not if you are in the business of making profits. Stress and long hours are the natural product of the wasteful market economy. ☆

Selling Power

Recently there has been a good deal of attention given to the plight of people caught up in the frenzied efforts to sell gas and electric contracts. Few people have had less than one or two of these salesmen, liveried and disguised to appear like meter readers, at their door.

by Alan Durant

There is however another side to this story, that of the poor souls trying to sell these services. Recently, having been laid off as a pre-Xmas present, I applied, against my better judgement, for one of these jobs. At face value it looked a lot better than most of these sort of jobs. There was a basic of £200 a week and there was a two week training period. So I thought "nothing to lose" and applied.

I found on being given an interview that the job was through an agency, this had not been apparent in the job advertisement, where it appeared that you would be working directly for the power company. I was impressed when I presented myself there at the size and plush nature of the place. Where does the money come from to support these establishments, so much a feature of the last ten or twenty years? Of course the answer is obvious, most of the people employed through these agencies are working at or near the minimum wage and the agency gets a cut of what, by right, should be theirs.

On entering, I was plonked in front of a computer at which I filled in all my details. I thought to myself that this process must be very intimidating to anyone not used to these ubiquitous machines, especially people in their forties fifties or sixties. Of course when you pass fifty or even forty you are much more unlikely to get a job.

Presentation

After filling in my details I was ushered into an office by a personable young woman who gave me a little presentation extolling the virtues and giving me the gen on the power company involved. This completed I was then taken into another office to be confronted by most peoples image of a salesman, suited, flash, fast talking and unfortunately one of these persons who tries to stare you down. If I'd lowered my eyes I now realise I could have saved myself a lot of trouble. There then followed a series of inane questions. "If you hadn't made a sale all day, its dark, rainy and 7 pm what would you do." I

gave the only sensible answer, "go home". "If you find yourself flagging what would you do to rekindle you enthusiasm", "have a Mars bar". I was convinced that I must have failed to come up to expectations.

Electrodes

After this I had to do a "psychometric test". "Does it involve taking my clothes off and having electrodes attached" I asked, fed up by now and not really caring if I got the job or not. The psychometric test involved answering obvious questions again on a computer with alternatives, from "strongly agree" through "I've no bloody idea" to "strongly disagree". This completed, I left sure that there was no way that I had got the job. However, that evening I received a phone call telling me I could start training in Manchester the following Monday.

On the Friday I got another phone call saying that there were not enough people to make up a training group in Manchester and would I be prepared to travel down and stay in the East Midlands for three days training with my expenses paid. The observant among you will have noticed that the two weeks training has rapidly shrunk to three days.

I agreed although the start date was a week later than it was originally supposed to be.

The agency

I was due to travel down on the Sunday night and as my faith in the organisational abilities of the agency were beginning to wane, on Saturday morning I phoned up to check the details. A young lad informed me, that everything was in order and so on. Sunday night I set off with a lightish heart. On arrival at the designated hotel I presented myself at the reception only to be told that they had never heard of me, nor of the agency, nor for that matter of the power company concerned. As luck would have it, I had provided myself with the mobile number of the agency person responsible and gave her a ring. She said she would ring me back within an hour. Sitting in the hotel lounge I picked up a copy of a national Sunday newspaper only to have my eyes fall on a long article about the mispractices of gas and electricity sales people, which was perhaps not what I needed at that moment. After a while she rang back and informed that the training had been organised by another agency, as it turned out the actual trainers were from a third agency, (employed by the second, employed

by the first, employed by the company).

At this point perhaps you would like to pause and consider what a monumental waste of time effort and money this adds up to. When they say that in the future we will not have enough money to provide a comprehensive welfare state it seems that they have never considered the alternative. Scrap all this wasteful duplication and pointless endeavour, use the resources, of these obviously too rich power companies, to pay for the people doing these pointless exercises to work in the caring professions where most of them would, I'm sure, be a lot happier.

After a while I had a phone call back to say that there had been a mistake, but that I was to book myself in anyway. Unfortunately the hotel wanted paying for the room up front. As the rooms were £75 for a single, there was no way that I was going to risk paying out of my own pocket. Another phone call was made and credit card details provided and at last I had somewhere to sleep.

This was the first and hopefully the last time that I have had occasion to stay in one of these conference/training style hotels. Downstairs looked quite presentable but the rooms were shoe boxes, with walls so thin you could almost see daylight through them. The heating had two settings, baking hot and freezing cold, the arc lights outside made it feel like staying in Colditz and every hour and a half the plumbing went into the anvil chorus and woke everybody up. All this for only £75 a night (list price). Next day, after a breakfast of shoe leather masquerading as bacon, the training started, prompt at 9 am but in fact at ten.

Deregulation

The training was pretty much what you might expect, lots of emphasis on determination, application and confidence. Lots and lots of acrinims, role play, things to remember about the deregulation of the gas industry that you would never use and some tests. Perhaps the most interesting thing was the instruction to never ever mention the customers 14 day cooling off period. The people taking part were a mixed bunch, ranging from an ex-coal miner to an ex-ice hockey player, nice people for the most part and not my image of someone involved in sales. Perhaps the common denominator was the need to find a reasonably well paying job, often to enable them to pay off debts etc.

After completing the course my first day out was in Manchester. My team were a group of five guys, in their forties or fifties, except for one who was younger. I was told that our target was three gas and three electric each day a combined electric and gas being worth approximately £23 in commission. Unfortunately these targets did not appear to be being reached. The person I went out with for a couple of hours in the morning ended the day with one double sale,

net earnings for eight hours £23. But of course there is the basic of £200, well perhaps not. True, if you sell to a level less than £200 commission you still get £200. But to get over £200 you must first earn £200 worth of commission. Also, as was pointed out to me with emphasis, if you didn't manage your £200 on a regular basis you would be quickly down the road. Bad enough, you might think, but to add to this was the instruction that you weren't to take lunch breaks or really any breaks at all as being seen sitting in your car was considered to be a sign of a lack of drive and commitment.

Commitment

So there you are traipsing around in the pouring rain from 12 till 8 with the supervisor checking on your commitment. It makes you look forward to the weekend. Though you have to work one Saturday in four, unless of course the team is behind on its targets, in which case you have to work as many Saturdays as the team manager tells you to.

Interestingly, the manager stays safely home in bed on these occasions, doubtless to help him cope with executive stress.

To conclude, what have we got? Lots of

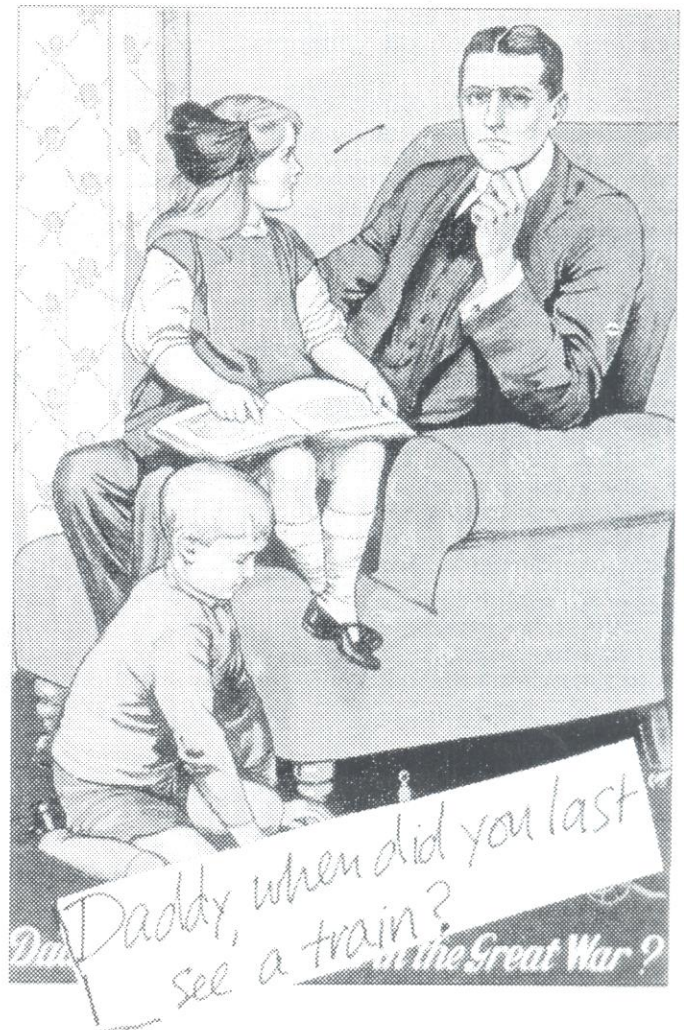
people working long unsociable hours for something in the region of £200 a week. There is massive wasteful duplication, while the energy companies fight for market share. But this competition does not produce much variety in prices.

Proper job

This year you may save a little on your gas bill, but is it worth all the hassle of continually switching from one company to another in pursuit of marginal savings. I was asked often what happens if they put up the prices next year, week, minute, to which the answer was that this was controlled by the regulator. Why can't we have one company for our energy supplies publicly owned and controlled.

This would result in huge savings both in administration and the money spent on this selling frenzy. Not only that, but the profits could be used to benefit the community as a whole and not just go into the pockets of shareholders. Perhaps if this was to happen I could then have a proper job doing something useful. ☆

Evans' view



Less iron in the soul

First there was the surprise attack by the fuel protestors. And the government was in full retreat. Then along came the well organised and prepared campaign of the pensioners. At the October conference of 'New Labour' again the government was

defeated. This conference of supposed Blairite clones voted for a big increase in pensions and for tying pensions to wage increases - a policy specifically resisted by the government.

by Michael Roberts

Of course, the Iron Chancellor has no intention of acceding to the conference decision. But the slump in the public opinion polls for New Labour has taken the steel out of him. When he got up in parliament to speak, he very quickly announced substantial handouts to the truckers - a tax cut of 3p a litre on diesel and low sulphur petrol, a reduction in vehicle excise duty for trucks and small cars. At the same time, Brown announced a rise in the basic state pension of £5 a week (£8 a week for couples) and extra cold weather allowance. Along with extra money for schools and the NHS, altogether Brown is boosting government spending by £4.4bn this year and £5.7bn next year, on top of the public spending announced in last March's budget.

The capitalist press had only one conclusion: 'prudent' Mr Brown was no longer. This was the terrible 'tax and spend' policy of Old Labour and that was bad news. If the capitalist pundits are right, the rest of us can only cheer. At last, a Labour government is going to stop the inexorable collapse of public services, which has led to the rail crashes in Paddington and Hatfield; to the scandals of Bristol Royal Infirmary and Radcliffe hospital; to the nightmare of the North Wales children's homes; and to the collapse of schools in many inner cities etc.

But does it really mean a turn of policy? Tony Blair spoke to a nurses conference last month in which he apologised for keeping to the vicious Tory spending limits for the first two years of his government. But it was necessary, he said, to ensure low interest rates and fast economic growth and establish permanent economic stability for Britain. These sound like worthy objectives, although the price so far of thousands of avoidable deaths in hospitals and trains and misery for millions at school, in hospital and travelling to work seems very high.

The truth of the matter is that such has been the heavy level of taxation on ordinary people under New Labour and such has been the shortfall on spending that the government has built up huge surpluses on its budget, way higher than it planned itself. Mr Brown's largesse is merely handing back some of that money. Indeed, Brown intends to keep building surpluses over the next few years. What for? Not to create a better health service or transport system, but to pay off the debt owed to the banks and financial institutions for past borrowing. Sure, paying debt reduces the cost of future interest payments. But it also reduces the amount available to the government to spend on services.

Interest on borrowing

Let's look at some figures. This year the government will spend £30bn on interest on borrowing from the City of London. But it spent only £7.3bn in investing in new hospitals, schools, transport etc! Indeed, as Gordon pointed out in his speech, the government and British people have been bled dry by the banks and financial institutions. "For the last 20 years, 42p of every pound spent went to debt interest and social security for those unable to work".

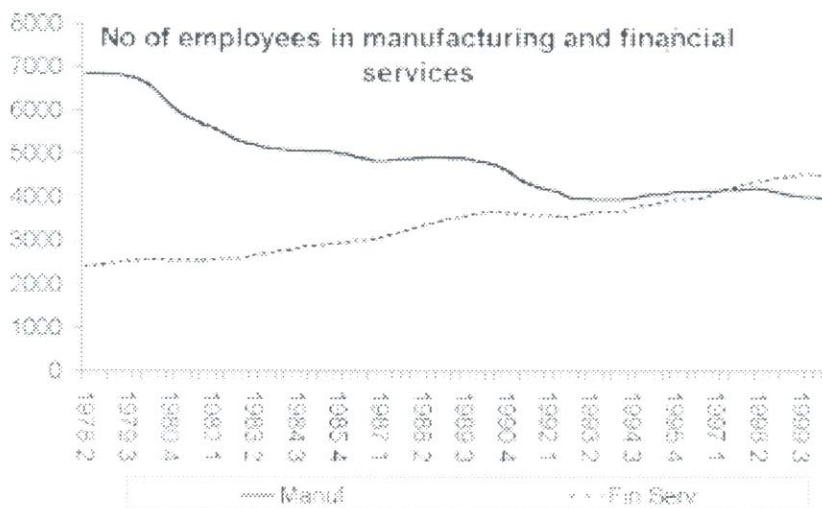
In five years time, the government will still be spending £25bn on interest payments after paying off £12bn in debt to the

big banks and insurance companies. New Labour plans to increase annual net investment in public services to £19bn by 2004. This will only take government investment as a share of national income back to the level of 1993. Will it be enough to turn around the mess in public services?

Well, take the NHS. At present, the UK spends 6.8% of GDP on health, of which 4.5% goes to the NHS. This is 1.2 percentage points less than the average in Europe and some 5percentage points less than in France, just voted the best health service in the world by the UN. Spending on the NHS would need to rise to £68bn a year in 2005 to meet the European average. Currently, spending is just £41bn. Brown and Blair's much heralded boost to the NHS would only take spending to £56bn by 2005. The gap is precisely the amount that Brown intends to use to pay down government debt to the City of London! He cannot do both: pay off the capitalists and deliver a properly funded NHS. And he's chosen the former.

Or to be more correct, he can only do both if he raises more taxes or if the UK economy should grow much faster than it does now and so provide extra revenues. Can he raise taxes? Well, if you mean can he raise taxes on our wages, then he is already doing it and intends to do more to pay for existing spending plans. The reality is that tax revenues on income tax have

risen from 10% of GDP when New Labour came to power in 1997 to 11% now and will rise to 11.4% of GDP by 2005. Yet taxation of companies is falling! When New Labour took office, company tax revenues were just 3.2% of GDP. Now they are only 2.4% of GDP and will fall to 2.3% of GDP by 2005. Indeed, in his pre-budget speech, the Iron Chancellor positively revelled in informing everybody that the UK has the lowest rate of company tax in all of



"the major countries" and the lowest "in our history" and then announced he was going to reduce and abolish various other taxes for corporations so that "we create the best modern environment for business".

Wow! Is this not a business-friendly government! So, if the health service and other public services are to be properly funded, they are not going to be paid for by big business. It will be paying less under New Labour. The burden will fall on us through income tax and social security deductions from our modest wages and through VAT on our purchases in the shops.

Of course, that burden will be less in relation to our income if the UK grows fast and living standards rise quickly over the next five years. That is the Chancellor's aim and hope. How can it be done? Gordon summed the key task: "Long-term prosperity for all depends on reaching American levels of productivity growth".

If Gordon means the average growth in output per worker achieved by the US over the last 30 years, then that would not be too difficult to achieve. For it has been less than 2% a year. But he means the exceptionally fast growth that the US has made in the two years during the so-called high-tech revolution. In the second quarter of this year, productivity in the US rose 5.4% a year. UK productivity at the same time was rising just 2.5% a year - and that's a record. US productivity is 45% higher than that in the UK, while it is 18% higher in France and 11% higher in Germany (and that includes east-ern Germany).

New Labour's way of trying to get higher

productivity is to tax companies less and hope they will use the extra money to invest in new machinery and techniques and also train their employees to higher standards.

But British industry has no intention of boosting investment in these areas. When New Labour got the job of guiding British capitalism in 1997, British manufacturers invested about £20bn a year back into their companies. This year they invested just £17bn! The real investors were not the manufacturers but the financial institutions and service industries. In 1997, they invest- ed over £70bn. This year they will invest £99bn. That means the profits of the unpaid labour of British workers is not going into boosting technology and efficiency in British manufacturing but into better computers and systems in the City of London to gamble on the stock market.

And big business continues to send more and more of its profits abroad to invest. In 1997, about £16bn more invest- ment left the country than came in. Last year, this deficit reached £75bn! Now, with more people employed in the financial serv- ices industries than in the whole of manu- facturing, Britain is truly a 'rentier' economy. Gordon Brown hasn't got a snowball in hell's chance of getting UK productivity up to US levels under capitalism.

Does it matter if the 60m people in Britain can still make a living by the City of London skimming off the incomes of other countries that do make things people want? Financial services plus tourism plus pop music and the theatre - that's the future of British success under New Labour or the Tories.



Of course, this is a joke. Even little Switzerland is not just a financial centre. It has huge pharmaceutical and food monopol- ies that deliver wealth and employment as well as its sécrétive and corrupt banks. A large, populated economy like Britain cannot just rely on financial services. It needs industries that make things too.

But, as its manufacturing base shrinks, British capitalism is relying more and more on industries that depend on the manufac- turing of others. That means as soon as the level of manufacturing and the making of goods around the world slows and starts to fall back, Britain will suffer more than most. Then even these limited improvements in pensions and public services announced by Brown and Blair will be in jeopardy. ☆

Subscribe to Socialist Appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement



I want to subscribe to Socialist Appeal starting with issue number.....(Britain £15 / Europe £18 / Rest of the World £20)

I want more information about Socialist Appeal's activi- ties I enclose a donation of £.....to Socialist Appeal's Press Fund

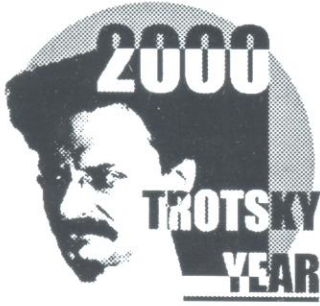
Total Enclosed: £.....(cheques / PO to Socialist Appeal)

Name.....Address.....

.....Tel.....

E-mail.....

Return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ



The following items represent the final writings of Leon Trotsky, excluding unfinished or uncorrected texts. At first glance seemingly mundane and minor, these letters shows Trotsky's human side, complete with a wry sense of humour, rendering them strangely moving. They also show a Trotsky concerned to move the struggle forward, looking to the future and quite happy to involve himself in the minute details of that fight. These are not the words of a man waiting for the end.

On the 20th August 1940, an assassin acting under orders from Stalin's secret police gained entry to Trotsky's compound in Mexico. Known to the guards as Frank Jacson, but whose real name was Jaime Ramon Mercarder, he had for months been working to gain the confidence of Trotsky and his guards using a relationship with one of Trotsky's supporters. Claiming to want to show Trotsky an article he had written, his real intention was murder. Waiting until he was alone with Trotsky in his study, he struck using a concealed pickaxe. Trotsky fought back with surprising strength but by the time the guards arrived the damage was done. Although still conscious and able to speak, Trotsky knew how serious the wounds to his head were: "I feel here that this time they have succeeded."

By the time the ambulance finally arrived, he was starting to drift in and out of consciousness, his left arm and leg already paralysed. By the evening, he had fallen into a coma and the decision was made to operate. However, the wounds were too grave and at 7.25 pm the following day he died.

His final dictated words shows that his spirit and confidence in the socialist future remained undiminished by the twists of fate: "I am close to death from the blow of a political assassin... struck me down in my room. I struggled with him... we... entered... talk about French statistics...he struck me... Please say to our friends... I am sure... of the victory... of the fourth International... Go forward." It is a message addressed to all trade unionists, labour movement activists, class fighters and socialists who have allied themselves to Marxism and the banner of Bolshevism. It is a message which Socialist Appeal, in honouring Trotsky in the 60th year anniversary of his death, intends to take forward.

Trotsky's last letters

The first text is a letter written to Ray Rainbolt, a Minneapolis truck driver.

Dear Comrade R.

During the last two years there has been more than one discussion about you coming here. Next to the last time we waited for you when your daughter and her husband visited us. The last time it was when Jim Cannon and Farrell Dobbs and Joe Hanson came here to check the situation after the assault.

Now we hear that the matter is being discussed again. Of course the decision is completely up to the party and you, since you should know better there on the ground if your trip would be detrimental to the party and trade union work. I can only express the wish from our local and very "provincial" point of view that your visit announced so many times should really be carried out. I am sure that your visit even for a couple of weeks would be of high value for our small garrison, not to mention the pleasure of meeting you.

You will of course find a room and a plate in our house.

With best comradely greetings.

L. Trotsky.
August 18th, 1940

The second set of letters, written on the fateful day of the attack, were messages of solidarity to two trade union activists serving prison terms as a result of their involvement in a Minneapolis strike.

Dear Comrade Edward:

Jake Cooper tells me that you will soon be released from your provisional asylum on August 23.

It is always preferable to leave than to enter such a place.

My warmest congratulations and wishes.

Fraternally yours,
L. Trotsky

Dear Comrade Max:

I learned from my friend Jake Cooper that on August 23 you will be released from jail.

From my own personal experience I know that such a day is very agreeable.

I wish you all the best and especially - not to be hasty in visiting the same place...

Fraternally yours,

L. Trotsky

The last text here, again dated August 20th was a letter written to a Henry Schultz.

My dear Hank:

Please do not think we have forgotten you, because we have not yet sent the photographs. Everything is slower here, as you know from your own experience in the reconstruction of the house

From Joe's letters you probably know that we have made some progress during the past weeks, but we are still far from the end.

How are your feet, and your health in general? I hope that the soil of the fatherland is more favourable to your general status. And how are your wife and daughter?

I received an excellent gift from Grace - a dictionary of slang. There is only one difficulty - that at meal times I must keep this book in my hands in order to be able to understand the conversation. However, I shall try to study it between meals in order to better check the "academic" part of the household. In the part I have already studied which is devoted to college slang, I had hoped to find some abbreviations for the various sciences, philosophical theories, etc., but instead I found about twenty-five expressions for an attractive girl. Nothing at all about dialectics or materialism. I see that the official "science" is a bit unilateral.

The Northwest Organiser becomes more precise - more aggressive - more political. We enjoyed it very much.

With friendliest and warmest greetings from household to household, I am,

Fraternally yours,

L. Trotsky

TESTAMENT OF LEON TROTSKY

My high (and still rising) blood pressure is deceiving those near me about my actual condition. I am active and able to work but the outcome is evidently near. These lines will be made public after my death.

I have no need to refute here once again the stupid and vile slander of Stalin and his agents: there is not a single spot on my revolutionary honour. I have never entered, either directly or indirectly, into any behind-the-scenes agreements or even negotiations with the enemies of the working class. Thousands of Stalin's opponents have fallen, victims of similar false accusations. The new revolutionary generations will rehabilitate their political honour and deal with the Kremlin executioners according to their deserts.

I thank warmly the friends who remained loyal to me through the most difficult hours of my life. I do not name anyone in particular because I cannot name them all.

However, I consider myself justified in making an exception in the case of my companion, Natalia Ivanovna Sedova. In addition to the happiness of being a fighter for the cause of socialism, fate has given me the happiness of being her husband. During the almost forty years of our life together she remained an inexhaustible source of love, magnanimity, and tenderness. She

underwent great suffering, especially in the last period of our lives. But I find some comfort in the fact that she also knew days of happiness.

For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try and avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full.

*Leon Trotsky.
Mexico February 27th 1940*

A coda was added later dated March 3rd 1940. Mainly dealing with what should happen should

he be involved in a serious drawn out illness, it ends with the following words:

"... But whatever may be the circumstances of my death I shall die with unshaken faith in the communist future. This faith in man and in his future gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion."



Youth for Socialism

The third National YFIS school was a great success!

On the 4th and 5th of November 32 youth, members of YFIS and people interested in Socialism, got together to discuss some of the most important ideas of Marxism. There were people from all around the country: Brighton, Glasgow, St. Andrews, London, Durham, Reading, Staffs.

We started the weekend with an introduction to "What is YFIS" and then we carried on with a discussion about "What is Marxism?" introduced by Phil Mitchinson, from *Socialist Appeal*. The discussion was very interesting with a large number of comrades asking questions and commenting on different points of the subject.

After the lunch break Jordi Martorell introduced a session about imperialism and the colonial revolution. This subject was also very well received because through it we had a review of the general situation world wide. From why the imperialist powers allowed independence to the colonial countries and what has happened with that "independence" to the effects of the privatisation programme of the IMF in the underdeveloped world.

We also discussed the "theory of the permanent revolution" against the "two stages theory" with practical historical examples which show the catastrophic consequences

of the application of the latter. One of the cases mentioned was Indonesia in the 1960's. At that time the Communist Party was a mass party which even had the support of a section of the army. Its leadership, instead of taking power went for an alliance with the "progressive bourgeoisie". This "progressive bourgeoisie" organised a coup and in the two following years, between 1 and 1.5 million trade unionists, communists and militants were assassinated, eliminating a whole generation of revolutionaries.

The last session on Saturday was about the new edition of the book published by Wellred Books, Lenin and Trotsky - What they really stood for, which was introduced by one of the book's authors, Alan Woods.

To finish the day, we organised a social to have a good time after the discussions and to raise funds for the future activities and publication of material by YFIS.

It was a very enjoyable social in which comrades had the opportunity to carry on with the discussions with some good music and good atmosphere. We raised £42.74!

The first session of Sunday was on the History of British Trotskyism, introduced by Ted Grant. This is a very wide subject, especially since the speaker is a person who has participated actively in that movement. So at

the end we had to leave the second part of this discussion for the next YFIS school.

To finish the school, Rob Sewell introduced a session dedicated to Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son ("Leon Sedov, Son, Friend and Fighter") in which we

learnt a little bit more about this almost anonymous revolutionary and also about Lenin and Trotsky themselves and the role of Stalinism.

We also dedicated some time to the situation in the Middle East. YFIS expressed its total solidarity with the Palestinian Socialist Students of the Union of School Students Committees and repudiated the criminal assassination of three student members of this organisation by the Israeli army. YFIS is organising a campaign of solidarity that will consist of meetings, the publication of material, and the general organisation of the solidarity movement itself.

The mood of the school was great and very refreshing. It was a very exciting experience. Youth from all over the country, many of whom we were meeting for the first time gathered together with a same aim: To fight for a better future, to fight for the transformation of society.

We made £67.50 from the registration fees and £42.74 from the social, making a total of £110.24 for the building of YFIS.

On top of that about £40 worth of material from the Socialist Appeal bookshop was sold. Some youth, enthused by the school took some extra material to sell in their own areas.

We closed the school singing "The internationale", although some comrades don't know the lyrics very well yet.

In fact, something that shows the intrinsic internationalism of YFIS was the composition of the school itself. There were people from all over the world:

Peru, USA, Serbia, Germany, Austria, Spain, Russia. The potential has been clearly shown. Now it depends on us to do something with it. ☆

by Espe Espigares

- ☆Get involved in YFIS!
- ☆Help us to build it!
- ☆Get involved in the fight for a Socialist future!



NUS demo on the 15th of November

Wellred Catalogue

Marx and Engels

1. The Communist Manifesto
Karl Marx & Frederick Engels
Price £1.00
2. Selected Works
Karl Marx & Frederick Engels
Price £14.99
3. Socialism, Utopian and Scientific
Frederick Engels
Price £2.95
4. Capital - Volume 1 - Capitalist Production
(Central Books, hardback)
Karl Marx
Price £15.00
5. Capital - Volume 2 - The Process and Circulation of Capital
(Central Books, hardback)
Karl Marx
Price £15.00
6. Capital - Volume 3 - Capitalist Production as a Whole
(Central Books, hardback)
Karl Marx
Price £15.00
7. Capital
(abridged version)
Karl Marx
Price £8.99
8. A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy
Karl Marx
Price £4.99
9. Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts
Karl Marx
Price £4.99
10. Letters on "Capital"
Karl Marx & Frederick Engels
Price £7.95
11. The Transition from Ape to Man
Frederick Engels
Price £1.00
12. 'Wage Labour & Capital' and 'Wages, Price & Profit'
Karl Marx
Price £3.95
13. The Poverty of Philosophy
Karl Marx
Price £4.95
14. The Civil War in France
Karl Marx / Price £4.50

15. Mathematical Manuscript

Karl Marx
(hard back)
Price £15.00

16. The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State

Frederick Engels
Price £6.99

17. The Condition of the Working Class in England

Frederick Engels
Price £7.99

18. Capital - Volume 1 (Penguin)

Karl Marx
Price £15.99

19. Capital - Volume 2 (Penguin)

Karl Marx
Price £12.99

20. Capital - Volume 3 (Penguin)

Karl Marx
Price £14.99

21. The Grundrisse

Karl Marx
Price £16.99

V. I. Lenin:

1. The State and Revolution

Price £1.50

2. Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder

Price £2.95

3. On Marx and Engels

Price £1.20

4. The Three Sources and Component Parts of Marxism

Price £0.50

5. The State

Price £0.75

6. The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky

Price £1.50

7. On the National and Colonial Questions

Price £1.00

8. One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Price £2.50

9. A Great Beginning

Price £0.75

10. Imperialism - The Highest Stage of Capitalism

Our Price £5.99 (originally £8.99)

11. What is to be Done?

Price £5.95

12. Will the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?

Price £1.50

Leon Trotsky:

1. The Revolution Betrayed

Price £7.50

2. History of the Russian Revolution

Price £19.99

3. Lessons of October

Price £2.50

4. In Defence of Marxism

Price £5.95

5. The First Five Years of the Communist International - Volume 1

Price £6.95

6. The First Five Years of the Communist International - Volume 2

Price £6.95

7. Whither France?

Price £5.95

8. The Stalin School of Falsification

Price £5.95

9. Stalin's Gangsters

Price £3.95

10. The Third International After Lenin

Price £5.95

11. The Transitional Programme - The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International

Price £1.00

12. Political Profiles

Price £4.95

13. Problems of the Chinese Revolution

Price £5.95

14. Collected Writings on Britain - 3 Volume Set

Price £12.00

15. Collected Writings on Britain - Volume 1

Price £4.95

16. Collected Writings on Britain - Volume 2

Price £4.95

17. Collected Writings on Britain - Volume 3

Price £4.95

18. Fascism, Stalinism and The United Front

Price £4.95

19. Their Morals and Ours

Price £1.00

20. Stalinism and Bolshevism

Price £1.00

21. Towards Socialism or Capitalism?

Price £4.95

22. The Class Nature of the Soviet State

Price £1.00

23. Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention - Russia 1918-21

Price £4.95

24. Terrorism and Communism

Price £4.95

25. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches - 5 Volume Set

Price £60.00

26. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches -

Volume 1: 1918 - The Founding of the Red Army

Price £15.00

27. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches - Volume 2: 1919 - The Hardest Year of Fighting

Price £15.00

28. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches -

Volume 3: 1920 - Year of the Polish War

Price £15.00

29. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches -

Volume 4: 1921-23 - The Red Army on Peace Footing

Price £15.00

30. How The Revolution Armed - Military Writings and Speeches -

Volume 5: Marxism and Military Affairs

Price £15.00

31. Literature and Revolution

Price £7.95

32. Young People Study Politics!

Price £0.50

33. Radio, Science, Technique and Society

Price £0.50

34. May Day in the West and the East

Price £0.50

35. Report of the Siberian Delegation, 1903

Price £1.95

36. Art and Revolution

Price £13.45

37. Leon Trotsky on France

Price £14.45

38. Problems of Everyday Life

Price £17.95

39. Leon Trotsky Speaks

Price £13.95

40. Challenge of the Left Opposition- Volume 1- 1923-25

Price £17.95

41. Challenge of the Left Opposition- Volume 2- 1926-27

Price £17.95

42. Challenge of the Left Opposition- Volume 3- 1928-29

Price £17.95

43. Writings of Leon Trotsky 1929-40

(14 volumes)

Write for details

Other Authors:

1. Ten Days That Shook the World

John Reed

Price £7.99

2. The Iron Heel

Jack London

Price £6.99

3. 1937 - Stalin's Year of Terror

Vadim Z. Rogovin

Price £19.95

4. A History of Communism in Britain

Brian Pearce & Michael Woodhouse

Price £6.99

5. Art as the Cognition of Life

Aleksandr Konstantinovich Voronsky

Price £19.95

6. From Lenin to Stalin

Victor Serge

Price £9.95

7. Absolutism and Revolution in Germany, 1525-1848

Franz Mehring

Price £4.95

8. The Bolsheviks in Power

A. F. Ilyin-Zhenevsky

Price £6.95

9. The Red Book

Leon Sedov

Price £3.95

10. Arthur Ransome in Revolutionary Russia

Arthur Ransome

Price £12.95

11. Minutes of the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, 1903

Price £7.95

12. The Red Army

Erich Wollenbery

Price £5.95

13. One Long Night - A Tale of Truth

Maria Joffe

Price £5.99

14. 1923-33 - The First Ten Years - History and Principles of the Left Opposition

Max Shachtman

Price £1.95

15. The Tales of Sub-Lieutenant Ilyin

F. F. Raskolnikov

Price £6.95

16. The Platform of the Joint Opposition, 1927

Price £3.95

17. Hungarian Tragedy

Peter Fryer

Price £11.99

18. And red is the colour of our flag

Oskar Hippe

Price £9.95

19. The Young Trotsky

Max Eastman

Price £3.95

20. On Historical Materialism

Franz Mehring

Price £2.50

21. Bolsheviks under Illegality

S. Tchernomordik

Price £1.50

22. Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917

F. F. Raskolnikov

Price £7.95

23. To The Finland Station

Edmund Wilson

Price £8.99

24. The Far Left in The English Revolution

Brian Manning

Price £7.95

25. England's Turning Point

Christopher Hill

Price £7.50

26. Into The Whirlwind

Evgenia Ginzberg

Price £8.00

27. Left-Wing Democracy in The English Civil War

David W. Petegorsky

(hardback)

Price £12.00

28. The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power (1918- 19)

Price £20.95

29. Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International (1907- 16)

Price £20.95

30. Arthur Ransome in Revolutionary Russia

Arthur Ransome

Price £9.95

31. Kronstadt

V.I. Lenin & Leon Trotsky

Price £10.45

32. History of the Communist Party of Great Britain - Volume 1- Formation and Early Years (1919- 24)

James Klugmann

Price £10.99

33. History of the Communist Party of Great Britain- Volume 2 - The General Strike (1925-26)

James Klugmann

Price £10.99

34. Revolt on The Clyde

William Gallacher

Price £7.99

35. The Jewish Question- A Marxist Interpretation

Abram Leon / Price £11.45

36. June'36 - Class Struggle and Popular Front in France

Jacques Danos & Marcel Gibelin

Price £5.95

Wellred books:

1. Lenin and Trotsky - What they really stood for

Alan Woods and Ted Grant

Our Price £5.95 (originally £8.95)

2. Bolshevism - The Road to Revolution

Alan Woods

Our Price £9.95 (originally £15.00)

3. Russia - From Revolution to Counter-Revolution

Ted Grant

Our Price £9.95 (originally £11.95)

4. Reason in Revolt - Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science

Alan Woods & Ted Grant

Price £9.95

5. The Unbroken Thread - The Development of Trotskyism Over 40 Years

Ted Grant

Price £6.95

6. Germany - From Revolution to Counter-Revolution

Rob Sewell

Price £2.50

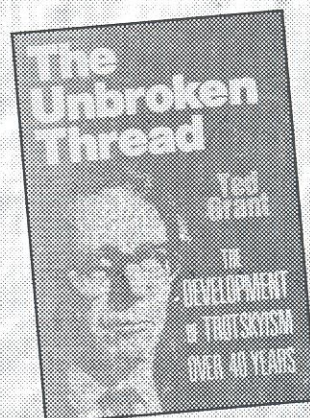
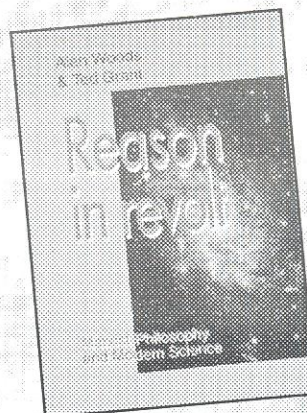
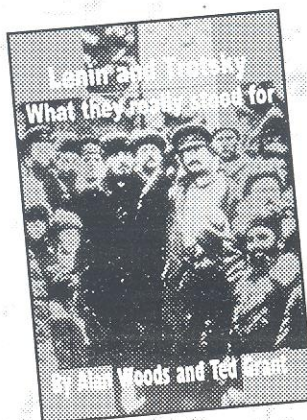
Wellred, the Marxist bookshop for workers and youth is proud to bring you its New Year catalogue.

Whether you are new to the ideas of Marxism or already have a well stocked bookshelf, we have got all the books you need to arm yourself for the struggle to change society.

The books featured here can be ordered from Wellred Books at the usual address, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. Please make all cheques payable to Wellred. Add 20% for postage and packing.

Don't forget these books can be bought with your credit card online at www.marxist.com/wellred. Check out the website for updated offers!

Any queries: contact us on www.wellredbooks@yahoo.com



Youth for Socialism

The Future of Young Labour

A very important meeting took place on the 12th November at the Students Union of London University into the future of Young Labour. Organised at quite short notice it was attended by over thirty people from Young Labour, Labour students and the trade union youth sections. There were discussions on the policies that young people would like to see from a second term Labour government. There was general agreement from the meeting to campaign for a higher minimum wage with no discrimination on the question of age and a determination to end student fees. There were many speakers against the privatisation of the tube, air traffic control and in favour of renationalisation of the railways. There was also a discussion on democracy and the building of the youth movement. Where even the leadership of Labour students and Young Labour nationally recognised the need to reinvigorate Young Labour involving closer co-operation throughout the movement in pursuit of a democratic and campaigning Young Labour. One breakthrough is that for the first time for years the Labour Students are going to stand a candidate for NUS president with the policies and the candidate democratically elected at the Student Council. There is a Young Labour conference in Glasgow on the 16th to the 18th February 2001 and it is vital that all young socialists in the party attend this conference so that we can continue at the conference itself the good start that this meeting made in the fight to turn Young Labour into a mass campaigning socialist youth organisation.

Steve Forrest
Erith and Thamesmead
CLP Youth Officer
(personal capacity)

Four Palestinian Socialist Students Killed

21st November, 2000

In the aftermath of the events unfolding in the Palestinian territories after 28th September we launched a Palestinian Socialist Students Solidarity Campaign. We now know that four of these Palestinian students are among those that have been killed. Below you will find a letter we have received from Palestine about these four victims. On the basis of this we have to step up the solidarity campaign.

The figures of the Palestinian dead and wounded in the West Bank and Gaza since 28th September speak for themselves: 285 killed, more than 9000 injured, and 800 arrested! We now have three concrete names. We need to use this to build up the campaign. We should take this information to the party branches, trade union branches, youth committees, etc., and all other areas of work we are involved in. We should present resolutions to these organisations to be forwarded to local Israeli embassies, to MPs, trade union leaders etc.

In the resolutions we should demand that Israeli troops be withdrawn from Palestinian territory and that those

responsible for these acts of atrocity be punished.

All messages should also be sent to socappeal@easynet.co.uk so that we can forward them to Palestine.

PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS
REQUEST,

and please report back to us with any proposals you have.

Please rush all messages of support to the Palestinian socialist students now!
By e-mail:

palestinesolidarity@socappeal.easynet.co.uk

By fax:
+44 20 7251 1095 (or 020 7251 1095 if
you are in the UK)

By post:
Palestine Socialist Students Solidarity
Campaign,
c/o PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ,
UK

YFIS in the UK has launched an e-mail discussion list. Now you can discuss Marxist ideas and find out about YFIS activities, even help to organise them, online without waiting for the next issue of *Socialist Appeal*. To find out more and to get involved today, e-mail us at espe@newyouth.com

The true story of the Red October

Part One Of Alan Woods' article on *The true story of The Red October* and the Leninist hero Valery Sablin ended with *The Sentry* leaving Riga at 1 am on November 5, 1975. Part Two concludes the story of this remarkable and heroic revolutionary event.

Oleg Maksimenko, a rating, recalls that there was a strange atmosphere, a silence on board before they left port. On hearing the alarm that announced the ship's departure, all the crew's pent-up energy was suddenly released: "We were all running around like lunatics," recalled Maksimenko. But soon this initial confusion was replaced by a feeling of elation of men who have thrown off the yoke of slavery and raised themselves up to the height of free human beings. Maksimenko recalled: "The ship was gathering speed and this feeling of uncertainty became overwhelming. There was a feeling of freedom. A kind of contentment as if one's heart was going to take flight." During the next six hours, all kinds of contradictory feelings arose among the crew, reflecting the rapid rise and fall of their hopes and fears.

"I looked out and saw a ship coming out of the harbour," says Maksimenko, "I thought it was going to block us. The *Sentry* made a sharp turn to the right I was nearly thrown overboard; I was just clinging on. It felt as though we were at 45 degrees. And this other ship kept on coming. Then it suddenly turned left." The crew breathed easy again. The *Sentry* had got out of Riga!

Sablin had written a speech calling on the people of Russia to rise up and overthrow their corrupt bureaucratic rulers and create a genuinely Communist society, which he had planned to broadcast once the ship reached Leningrad. Instead, the speech was transmitted as soon as it left Riga. Immediately on leaving port, Sablin gave orders to broadcast the appeal over the ship's tannoy system on a wavelength that could be picked up by ordinary citizens. Every line of the appeal blazed with revolutionary ardour:

"I address myself," said the proclamation, "to those of you who take our revolutionary past to their hearts, to those who can think critically but not cynically about our

present and about the future of our people. Ours is a purely political act. The real traitors to the Motherland will be those who attempt to stop us. In the event of a military attack on our country we will defend it loyally. But now we have another aim - to raise the voice of truth."

But unknown to Sablin, the radio operator did not dare to broadcast it as an open text. and sent the speech in code; it was only understood by Sablin's superiors in the naval hierarchy. Sablin's voice thus was silenced. It never reached the working class audience for which it had been written.

The Kremlin counter-attacks

The initial reaction from the authorities in Riga was one of shocked disbelief. Soon, however, the realisation dawned on the authorities that something serious had occurred. "Nothing like this had ever happened before," said a high-ranking officer. "They had seized a ship. And they refused to deal with us - only with Moscow. That was bad enough. But that such a thing should be led by a Commissar!" Sablin received a direct order from the Commander-in-Chief of the navy: "Stop the ship and return to port immediately." Sablin refused. The *Sentry* sailed on.

The Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev was woken in the middle of the night and informed of the situation. By now the revolt had the undivided attention of the Politburo. Was this a defection? Or the beginning of a revolt? At 4am, the captain of the Baltic Fleet was woken up and told to mobilise his ships. His orders, direct from Brezhnev, were to find the *Sentry* and stop it; or sink it.

Thirteen heavily armed coastal vessels were sent in pursuit. At daybreak on 9 November, they caught up with it. The Commander issued the order to stop or be sunk. But the commander was still in some doubt as to the intentions of the mutineers. Were they really heading for Leningrad, or was the ship intending to

defect to Sweden? Leningrad lies about 300 miles north-east of Riga as the crow flies. By sea, the route is double that length. The Gulf of Riga is impassable to the north, closed off by the Estonian islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. A ship making for Leningrad from Riga needs to head west towards Gotland, then Northwest towards Stockholm, then turn east into the Gulf of Finland. There is no way of knowing whether a ship is heading for Leningrad or Sweden until the two routes separate in the Baltic.

A coastguard vessel located the *Sentry* at dawn; the ship appeared to be heading for Stockholm. The KGB radioed the ship with a treacherous message, aimed at dividing the rebels: if they stopped the ship and released the commander, the men would be pardoned. Understandably, at this point there was a surge of doubt among some of the mutineers, but others remained firm and this was enough to decide the outcome. The *Sentry* sailed on, sending the coastguards a message: The message broadcast by the rebels began: "Comrades! We are not traitors to the Motherland. We are not going abroad." Nonplussed by the mutineers' defiant message, the naval pursuers hesitated. And just at that moment, Soviet warplanes appeared overhead.





The air wing of the Baltic Fleet had orders to disable and if necessary sink the Sentry. One squadron flew over the ship, openly displaying their missiles. The commander described how he gave the fatal order: "Prepare to fire!" There was a short pause. Realising the psychological implications of his words, the commander asked the pilot if he had understood the order. "Order understood!" came the laconic reply of the squadron leader. A minute passed, seeming an eternity, then another minute. Then the shocking reality suddenly dawned on the commander. The planes had passed over the rebel ship without having discharged their missiles!

The pilots had deliberately refused to fire on their comrades. For a moment it appeared to those in command that the mutiny was spreading. The fact that pilots of the fleet air arm had refused to open fire must have sent a shudder down the spine of the masters of the Kremlin. Panic broke out. The general staff stepped up the pressure for immediate action against the rebels.

A second group of fighters was dispatched with different pilots who had been told god knows what story to persuade them to obey orders and attack the Sentry. "When the planes appeared it changed everything," one of the mutineers recalled. "If we did not stop we knew they would bomb us." Two fighters appeared, flying low. On board the Sentry no-one said a word; the men only stared at the skies and waited. Then the sound of gunfire was heard. For a moment some of the crew thought it was a NATO attack. Then they saw a wall of water as a bomb fell in front of them. There was a loud noise as the hull cracked. The ship lurched and started to go round in circles. Then they knew it was all over.

The fighters had dropped bombs ahead of and behind the ship. With the ship battered by the blasts, the resolve of the men cracked. Some of the crew opened the hatch and let out captain Putorny, who seized a pistol, ran to the bridge and shot Sablin, who was unarmed and offering no resistance, in

the leg. Then the captain rang the shore in a hoarse and almost unrecognisable voice: "Cease firing. I have taken control of the ship." Less than six hours after the ship left Riga the mutiny was in ruins. By 6am, the Sentry was occupied by paratroops and KGB men. Leningrad was still 400 miles away.

When the ship was boarded there were plain-clothes men among the new arrivals. The KGB was already taking charge. The rebels were made to stand against a wall from seven in the morning till six in the evening. Those who guarded them were ordered to shoot them in the legs if they moved. At this stage those guarding the prisoners were ordinary soldiers. On the way back to Riga one officer asked Sasha Shein the question which must have been on everybody's mind: "Why did you do it? You broke your oath." To which Shein replied

One of the KGB's most experienced interrogators was assigned to Sablin. The men in the Kremlin had received a rude shock. They were determined to discover what was behind the revolt. Was there an organisation? Who had led it?

quite naturally: "Just look at how we live! What sort of a life is that? Do you really think people should have to live like this? It's just one big lie." The officer made no reply, but Shein was convinced that he agreed and even showed some sympathy.

In Riga the KGB took over the investigation. The entire crew of the Sentry were arrested, even those who had opposed the mutiny. All were sworn to silence. This measure was no accident. In Riga people were already talking of a "second Potemkin". This represented a mortal danger to the regime. The authorities did not want news of the uprising to spread and finally were therefore even prepared to present it to world

public opinion as an attempted defection to the West - something that could not be further from the truth.

Sablin, Shein and 14 others were sent to Moscow's notorious Lefortovo prison for interrogation. One of the KGB's most experienced interrogators was assigned to Sablin. The men in the Kremlin had received a rude shock. They were determined to discover what was behind the revolt. Was there an organisation? Who had led it? A true proletarian revolutionist, Sasha Shein, when asked what part he played, manfully told the interrogators that he had played an active part from the start.

In a predictable move to split the rebels, they separated the ordinary ratings from the "ringleaders". The KGB invited them to write down everything they remembered of the events on the Sentry. "Take all the time you want, even if it takes months," they were told by their gaolers. For four long months the young conscripts, nineteen or twenty years of age, were kept in isolation, with no contact with the outside world and no idea of what punishment awaited them. Eventually they were brought before a special tribunal of senior officers. The make-up of the tribunal was clearly designed to overawe and intimidate them. "More admirals and generals than you could count," one of them later recalled.

These were not trained Marxists but ordinary young workers. Defeated and isolated, with no perspectives, most pleaded ignorance. One of the sailors commented wryly: "I'll never try that again." Upon which one of the generals ironically remarked: "You mean you'll try something else?" The assembled top brass seemed to find this amusing and

smiled. The sight of a smile on the lips of the generals made the conscripts relax. "You see, they are laughing. That means they are human beings. They know we are all youngsters and will probably forgive us!" But forgiveness is not a word that featured in the lexicon of the Stalinist Bureaucracy. These sailors - ordinary working class lads - still suffered from the naivety and inexperience of youth. They had never read Shakespeare's line: "There are daggers in men's smiles."

Sablin was still on crutches during the initial interrogation. He soon convinced his interrogators that defection was not part of his plan. But the real truth could never be

admitted by the KGB. That a high-up Party official should turn against the system - this was something that must never be known. Sablin and Shein were only brought to trial nine months later. Sablin had been interrogated every day for this period. Only when his tormentors had satisfied themselves that there was no organisation behind the uprising, that it was all down to one man, did they decide to confine the punishment to the main ringleaders, Sablin and Shein. The others were all released - although they were subsequently victimised by the regime and marked for the rest of their lives. But the supreme punishment was reserved for Valery Sablin.

At his "trial" which was held in camera, Sablin conducted himself with exemplary heroism. When Sasha Shein was finally brought face to face with his old comrade, he recalls how Sablin "looked at me with that piercing gaze of his, as if he was looking into my very soul. And it was as if he was asking me: 'Are you still fighting or have you given up?'" Sablin was found guilty of betraying the Motherland. But the regime still had one more terrible surprise for this unbroken and defiant enemy. Although this crime usually carried a 15-year prison sentence, the Kremlin had other ideas. Such a dangerous enemy could not be allowed to live. It was Brezhnev's personal decision to have him executed by firing squad. The regime's hired judges merely repeated a verdict that had been already arrived at in advance. The trial had been a farce.

As soon as the death sentence was read out a chill ran through the courtroom. Sablin did not know about it till the last minute. Not even the investigators knew about the orders from the Kremlin. The judges read out the sentence and hastily began collecting their papers and walking out. Only after they had left did the exhaustion and strain of the previous months take their toll. Valery slumped forward against the barrier and had to be supported by a guard. Shein received an eight-year sentence. This was the last time he saw Valery Sablin.

Sablin was executed a few weeks after his trial, but his relatives did not find out that the execution had taken place until eight months later. Sablin was buried in an unmarked grave, the whereabouts of which has never been revealed. His family can only honour his memory at a monument for political prisoners.

A hero of our time

The Bureaucracy had succeeded in crushing a dangerous revolt. But just to defeat the revolutionaries was not enough. It never is. It is necessary to wipe out all trace of them and to blacken their memories. Hence the disgusting slander was invented that the crew of the Sentry wanted to defect to the West. The true facts emerged only in 1990, in the dying days of the corrupt and degenerate regime that undermined and destroyed the

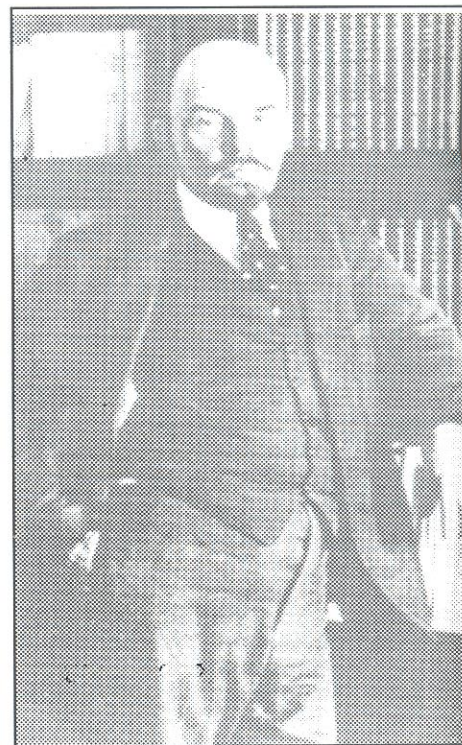
Soviet Union from within.

Sablin's story is now widely known in Russia. In 1996 there was an appeal to give Sablin a posthumous pardon. The following year, Sablin was featured in the documentary series *How It Was*. In the West, Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October* was a best-seller; the fictional defector Marko Ramius, played in the film by Sean Connery, had a massive popular appeal. But Valery Sablin, with his faith in the victory of the revolution, has been forgotten until now.

The crew that had followed Sablin received a variety of punishments, although none were imprisoned. "The state machine ground us all down, the 'wheels of justice' - unjust as they were - affected all of us, even the officers, regardless of seniority." In the words of the Sentry's radio operator, "Our careers were ruined. We all lost our jobs, our love of the sea, our passion to defend the Motherland, it was all crushed. The machine broke everyone's lives." Yet in spite of everything, the memory of the revolt still evokes feelings of pride. Twenty five years since these remarkable events, the surviving members of the crew met to commemorate the mutiny. There was no trace of regret, no apologies or excuses. "We are proud of what we did", they say. And Sablin? "The man was a hero," they say, "he should have had a medal." In a moving tribute to his old comrade at the close of the documentary Sasha Shein pronounces the following judgement: "Every society needs noble spirits, without them, no society can move forward. Sablin was such a noble spirit."

The Channel Four documentary is a wonderful document. Yet it obviously has its weaknesses. Not being written by Marxists, it has no real understanding of the political significance of the events which it so honestly and movingly portrays. The issues are mainly given a human interest, which is valid within certain limits but which is not enough. Certainly, if Sablin himself would have lived to see it, he would doubtless be grateful but highly critical, particularly of the programme's conclusions which would appear to be that the mutiny on the Sentry was a heroic but hopelessly doomed episode - an historical curiosity, like Sablin himself. "Even after his death," the documentary concludes, "Sablin remains an enigma: a loyal Communist who dared to stand up to the state."

But for any person acquainted with the history of the USSR, there is no enigma here. Sablin was not the isolated individual painted by this programme. He is one of a gallery of heroes of the Russian revolutionary movement who fought and died in a struggle to rescue the traditions of October and who entered into a life-and-death struggle against the Stalinist Bureaucracy. The men and women who began this struggle were the members of Trotsky's Left Opposition in the 1920s, who perished in Stalin's death camps and the dungeons of the GPU-KGB.



Nor was Sablin the only example of a high-ranking Communist who was prepared to stand up to the Stalinist tyranny and defend a Leninist policy. Even in the ranks of Stalin's GPU there were such people. In 1937, Ignace Reiss, a high-ranking officer in the GPU openly declared for Trotsky and called for a political revolution against Stalin, the gravedigger of the October Revolution. Like Valery Sablin, Ignace Reiss was murdered by the Bureaucracy. And for every one of these heroes whose name we know, there have been a hundred and a thousand who have no name and no grave.

In the days before his execution, in that dark night of isolation on the brink of the abyss, Sablin was allowed by his tormentors to write a final letter to his only son. These words, so full of optimism and confidence in the future of humanity, are his last will and testament. They still ring out like a clarion-call to future generations:

"Trust the fact that history will judge events honestly and you will never have to be embarrassed for what your father did. On no account ever be one of those people who criticise but do not follow through their actions. Such people are hypocrites - weak, worthless people who do not have the power to reconcile their beliefs with their actions. I wish you courage, my dear. Be strong in the belief that life is wonderful. Be positive and believe that the Revolution will always win." ☆

The full unedited version of Alan Woods' article on The True Story of Red October can be read online at www.marxist.com

Alesander Lopez, Colombian trade unionist tells us the

The reality of Plan Colombia

Alexander Lopez is one of the youngest trade union leaders in Colombia - president of a large union organisation in SE Colombia and national coordinator of the public sector workers. However this presents a considerable physical risk for him. 45 trade union leaders have been killed already in just the first 9 months of this year. Alexander himself has had 3 attempts on his life with one of his bodyguards being killed.

Now he is carrying out a tour of Europe to explain what is behind the so-called Plan Colombia, organised by the US supposedly to fight the Colombian drug trade but in reality to implement a very different agenda against the peasants and workers in the interests of the bosses and their friends in government. Alexander opened the meeting held at Congress House in London in November by thanking those who had organised the meeting alongside the TUC and Unison who had sponsored it, thereby ensuring that it could take place: "I would like to thank you in the name of the Colombian people for the opportunity that you have given me to explain our situation, at present one unknown by the rest of the world. There are other factors apart from the narcotics business in Colombia. These factors are being covered up by the government using narcotics as an excuse. The first thing I want to say is that in Colombia there is a situation of class struggle."

Alexander went on to denounce the role being played by the superpowers, especially the US, the IMF and the World Bank in creating the basis for the violence that we now see in Colombia.

"As a result of this violence... over the last ten years 3500 trade union organisers and officials have been killed alongside a further 25,000 people. During the last 6 years, 1.5 million peasants have been displaced from their homes. We also see the bombings carried out as part of the US invasion (that is how we see the US so-called intervention) which under the cover of fighting against the drug lords has involved bombing not only the countryside but also parts of the cities. All this is carried out under the massive gaze of the international community. I do not mean the people of the world but rather its governments who are

aware of the real situation in our country, the class struggle which is going on and therefore the need to put to break on this... they do not want Colombia to become another Cuba. The big international companies cannot allow this because it would represent big losses for them, both economically and strategically.

Last October, Alexander participated in a very important meeting against Plan Colombia organised in Santo Domingo with trade unionists from all over the world participating, including 300 from Colombia. Numerous first hand reports were given of human rights violations and abuses. All 300 Colombian trade unionists voted against Plan Colombia. However two days after this meeting, the European Union decided to give \$350 million dollars towards Plan Colombia.

"We have to understand that Plan Colombia is a war plan aimed against the Colombian people, organised by the American government. Some \$7500 million in military aid has been amassed to defeat the class struggle in Colombia. The campaign to stop Plan Colombia being started has now the object of stopping it. About 10,000 hectares of land has been polluted with such toxic glisofatos, poisoning the peasants who work the land. This had led to 50,000 people fleeing to avoid the bombardments of the US and Colombian military. Alongside this are the attacks of the paramilitary forces, used by the government to eliminate trade unionists and any activists who disagree with the government and its corrupt backers."

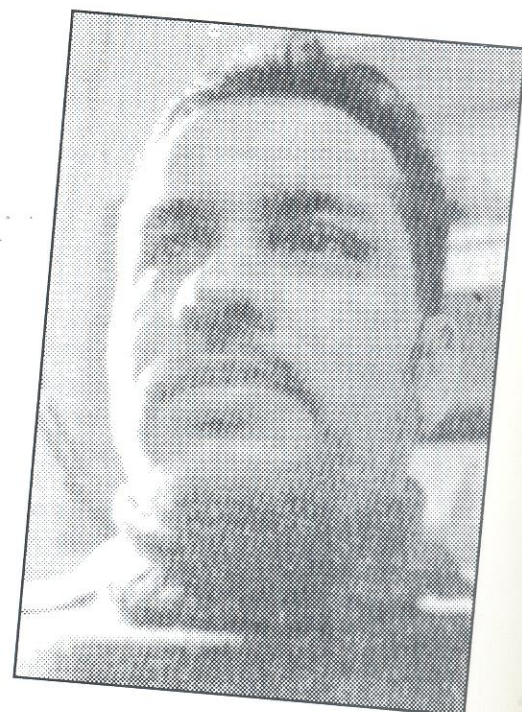
Alexander expressed his total opposition to Plan Colombia and emphasised the important of solidarity action against it. It is essential that the world knows about what is behind all this. The problem of drugs is one not only for the world but for the Colombian people... Plan Colombia does not however deal with the real root of the problem. The Colombian peasants who grow the cocoa used for drugs do so because no one will buy their coffee and cannot be compared to the big traffickers in narcotics."

"Plan Colombia has the aim of suppressing the struggle against privatisation. The big multinationals are buying Colombian industries for just a few pennies. They already

have most of the mines.... 60% of the oil, 50% of electricity and communications. They also 90% of the Colombian social security - in a situation where 905 of the Colombian people have no social security anyway."

"Behind the drive for privatisation is the rush for big profits for big business and also for those in government - Colombia ranks very highly in the corruption league. Four ministers of the Pastrana government are already in prison because of corruption. This shows that the current government is just as corrupt as previous ones."

"On the other hand we also have the problems of war. There are comrades in Colombia who are involved in the armed struggle, fighting for the liberation of our country. Obviously all sections of society have to fight against the system depending on their situation and we in the labour movement are also doing our part. We think that Colombia can have a real democracy. We understand the risk that this presents for us and our families but we are going to carry on our fight. This is why we appeal to the international community for solidarity... we will not rest until we achieve the liberation of our country." ☆



Lessons of the US election

The American Presidential election has become a complete farce - if you haven't already noticed - with Bush and Gore both making claim and counter-claim that they have won the race to the White House. In a cat fight to the wire, both contestants are prepared to use any means to become the 'most powerful man in the world'. As a consequence the lawyers are having a field day with legal challenges coming thick and fast: Gore's team is seeking a judicial review over the vote counting in Palm Beach, while Bush's team is countering with guns blazing, saying everything is in the bag. The struggle over who should get their snout in the pig trough, is certainly a case of the same species, the crocodiles and the reptiles, slugging it out. Peter Johnson, editor of the American Marxist journal *New Youth*, takes a look at the issues behind the race.

Nearly a week has passed since the US Presidential election, and still there is no declared winner. What does all of this mean? How is it possible that the vote is split almost identically between the two major candidates? The simple answer is that the two candidates are virtually identical! As we have explained many times, both the Democrats and the Republicans are essentially two sides of the same coin.

Both parties are firmly in the pockets of the capitalist class - no matter who wins, the ruling class has covered all its bases by contributing \$540 million in campaign "contributions" to the coffers of both parties. Both parties defend the interests of private property and the market, so capitalist interests are guaranteed no matter who wins. As Marxists we are implacably opposed to the rule of private property and the anarchic, wasteful, market economy, so there is absolutely no question of supporting a "lesser evil". As filmmaker Michael Moore points out, the lesser of two evils is still evil!

While many people panic about a Bush victory, let's look at the facts of the matter. On issues of importance to working and poor people, what differences would there be between a Bush or a Gore presidency? Both want to increase the military budget. Both support the death penalty. Both oppose universal healthcare. Both support the "war on drugs" and the criminalization of millions, as well as supporting \$1.3 billion in military "aid" to Columbia.

Both oppose same-sex civil unions. Both support NAFTA, the WTO, and the crushing of the colonial world at the expense of workers everywhere. Both support continuing the embargo on Cuba. Both support the embargo and bombing of Iraq which costs over 5,000 lives a month. Both will do next to

nothing to increase the minimum wage (they agree to raise it by just 50 cents!).

With virtually carbon-copy candidates it is no surprise people could not tell the difference and were split nearly 50/50!

Many people are terrified of Bush appointing conservative judges to the Supreme Court, especially as concerns defending abortion rights and *Roe v. Wade*. This landmark decision, protecting the right of a woman to choose survived the ultra-conservative years of Reagan, Bush, and Newt Gingrich - but no thanks to Gore or the Democrats! In fact, *Roe v. Wade* was passed under a conservative-appointed judge, and more anti-women/abortion rights legislation was passed under the Clinton/Gore administration than under Reagan/Bush! Gore is clearly no great defender of women's rights - he has supported the appointment of very conservative and openly anti-abortion and anti-working class judges. The issue of abortion rights is a very important one, and is

close to many people. But the fact is that an overwhelming majority of the country supports the right to choose. So the panic over *Roe v. Wade* is in reality a scare tactic designed to get people to vote for a "lesser evil" out of fear. Politicians do not operate in a vacuum - they do not simply do what they want. They are very sensitive to the mood of the population. Politicians of all shades will be hard-pressed to force their conservative agenda without a reaction. Despite what Bush says about abortion, what candidates say they will do and what they actually do in practice are totally different things - remember George Bush Sr.'s "read my lips: no new taxes"?

The events unfolding before us is raising serious doubts among millions of workers about the authority of the "leaders" of the so-called "free world".

Everywhere one goes, it seems people are discussing politics. More people are interested in the aftermath of the election than the presidential campaign itself. This is a very healthy development. Americans have overnight been forced to face the glaring contradictions in their supposedly most democratic of all governments. Countries like Cuba and Zimbabwe have offered to send international observers to oversee the ballot recount! The US ruling class loves to parade around as the defender of "democracy", imposing its will on other countries (and if they can't succeed in getting their man in power electorally, they use "extra-legal" means like assassination and military coups). But now all of that stands exposed - they cannot even run a smooth election with the semblance of democracy themselves.



While the focus is currently on Florida, one can only imagine the extent of fraud and corruption on a national scale. There were reports all over the country of people (especially minorities) being turned away from the polls, of 3rd party candidates being removed from the ballot, the "invalidation" of thousands of votes, missing ballot boxes, etc. Not to mention the wholly undemocratic "debates", the use of technologically outdated voting machines and an often complex voter registration process. These are the issues we must focus our attacks on - the utter lack of democracy and the rampant fraud. For all the phraseology about "democratic" America, it is now clear to millions that all is not well in the land of the free and the brave.

Discussion has also been heated over the institution of the Electoral College. We do not have direct popular suffrage in this country (if we did, the election would already be decided in favor of Al Gore of the Republicrats). Instead we go through a process whereby we vote for "electors" who then elect the president. The reason for this is obvious - the founding fathers did not trust the masses to make the "right" choice.

But even this undemocratic process will not decide the election this year - the next President will likely be decided by teams of lawyers and judges!

The authority of the next commander in chief will be sorely limited both domestically and internationally - the colossus of US imperialism is showing the world that it indeed has feet of clay.

The question of Nader is a very important one. Many people feel that he cost Gore the election. But nothing could be further from the truth! If Gore loses the election, it is entirely his own fault. He had everything going for him - a booming economy, incumbency, and far greater experience. But by presenting an almost identical agenda as his opponent, he himself failed to address issues of importance to those who ultimately backed Nader. As Nader points out, Gore is responsible for Gore - he should not have assumed he would get certain votes, but should have earned them. If anything, Gore's scare tactics cost Nader the 5% he needed for major party status and matching federal election funds. Nader's campaign energized millions of people, and in spite of the countless thousands who abandoned Nader at the last minute and fell for the "lesser evil" argument by voting for Gore, over 2.6 million people voted for him. Only in one state was Nader truly a decisive factor - Florida. But had Gore simply won his own state of Tennessee, and Clinton's Arkansas or traditional Democratic stronghold West Virginia, then the close vote in Florida would be an irrelevancy. It is only because of Gore's failings in other states, which should have been "in the bag", that Florida became an issue. In fact, we should thank Mr. Nader for helping bring about a situation in which

millions of people aren't simply dozing off again for another four years, but are actively participating in politics between elections, and questioning the status quo. These people will be keeping a vigilant eye on the next president, and the steady move towards the right in US politics will be forced to a halt.

So how is it that the candidate of an incumbent party at the helm of a booming economy is threatened with losing? It is

quite simple really - the economy is not booming for millions of working Americans! As has been explained many times, the fact is that American workers have far less buying power than they did 30 years ago, and we work far longer than any other advanced industrial country. The boom has not brought us better jobs and job security, benefits, earlier retirement, universal healthcare, quality education, etc. It has brought a reduction of real wages, record layoffs, attacks on unions and new unionization drives, 44 million people without health care, nearly 2 million people in jail, and a booming temp work industry with few benefits or job security. This largely explains the reaction against the incumbent Democratic Party. Due to the two party monopoly, half the population looked for a solution in a familiar alternative - the "other" party (the Republicans in this case). It also explains why roughly half the population didn't bother voting for any candidate whatsoever. The real winner of the election was the "none of the above" party!

What is the solution to this situation? How can we break the stranglehold of the Republicrats?

Two capitalist parties

Many people feel that they should support the Democrats as a way of fighting off the supposedly more "evil" Republicans. But we have already explained that from a Marxist perspective there is fundamentally no difference between these two capitalist parties. Nader's campaign marked an awakening of millions of youth and workers, and began to harness the energy of the nascent anti-capitalist movement. But it is clear that the extremely heterogeneous movement behind Nader cannot challenge the Republicrat monopoly alone. We must build on these forces and unite with the only organizations based firmly in the working class, and with the resources and infrastructure to mount a serious challenge - the trade unions.

The working class is the largest class in this country, and yet we are perpetually faced with choosing between two candidates of the capitalist class. The millions of work-

ers who trusted Gore to stop Bush and the Republicans have now seen that the Democrats could not even decisively achieve that. The Democrats cannot fight the "right" wing of US politics for the simple



reason that they have become part of it! The trade union leadership criminally supported the Democrats, and created illusions among the rank and file that with labor's support, Bush could be stopped. But the resulting mess only proves that these leaders do not really have the interests of the workers in mind, but simply do the bidding of the Democratic Party. The only solution is for the workers to trust their own forces and strength to defend their interests. The trade unions must break with the Democrats! What is needed is a mass party of labor with socialist policies based on the trade unions. This may not seem to be an easy or "practical" solution at the present time. But as Marxists we are not obliged to settle for "practical" solutions. We want genuine social change which will improve the lives of billions of people - change which can only come through democratic and international socialism. This cannot occur overnight, and will take a lot of painstaking work. But the ongoing electoral fiasco makes it clear that the capitalist system cannot solve even the most basic problems of bourgeois "democracy", let alone expand that democracy to the economic and social arena. We must work patiently and resolutely to build the forces of Marxism and explain the ideas of socialism as the only solution to the problems facing workers and youth the world over.

The result of the election is still in limbo. Whatever the result, we will have a capitalist candidate in power. But the current state of affairs has made it obvious to millions that things are not running as smoothly as the capitalists had hoped. Combine this political situation with the volatile international situation and an increasingly shaky economy, and we can be sure of one thing - the next four years will be a period of extreme instability, and will provide very fertile ground for the ideas of revolutionary Marxism and socialist internationalism. Over the next period we must concentrate our efforts towards building a mass party of labor and the forces of genuine Marxism in the US and internationally. ☆

While Arafat attempts to derail the Intifada: The killing of Palestinians in the territories goes on unabated

The conflict in Israel/Palestine is in no way closer to a solution. The new uprising (Intifada) in the Palestinian territories is going to continue for a rather long time. The reason for this is clear to anyone who understands the terrible conditions the Palestinian people have had to put up with for decades. In the past few years the situation has further deteriorated. Unemployment has risen, the level of poverty has increased. On top of this we have the expansion of the Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, even now while the conflict is going on! According to Agence France Presse (27.11.00) "Israel intensified its settlement activity in the occupied territories by increasing land sales in October, the first full month of the Palestinian uprising. The lands administration has sold 607 parcels of land for construction in the settlements during the month of October." In the midst of conditions of economic and social underdevelopment (bad housing, scarcity of clean water...) the Jewish settlers arrive and set up villages which have good roads, plentiful clean water, constant power supplies... This is a permanent source of provocation for the Palestinian masses.

by Fred Weston

As if this were not enough we now have the terrible, almost daily, killings of Palestinian youth. The number of those killed by the Israeli army has now reached nearly 300. A further one hundred are critically wounded and are facing a slow but certain death. Every day two or three of these die because of the low level of medical care. A total of 11,000 Palestinians have been injured and another 80-100 are added to that list ever day. 50% of those killed, injured and arrested are young people or even children!

The latest UN report reveals that Israeli troops are now using more and more live ammunition instead of the so-called rubber bullets. Colonel Reisner of the Israeli army recently stated that: "The current situation has more of a semblance of war than of peace." The Israel military is now resorting to the assassination of what it considers "dangerous elements" (such as the man who was killed in Nablus with his 10 year old son!).

As The Guardian (28.11.00) explained, "the main change of strategy has been to target and assassinate men Israel accuses of leading militias that have attacked its soldiers and settlers." What utter hypocrisy! If we follow this logic of assassinating those involved in killing Israeli soldiers, how many Israelis would the Palestinians have to kill in order to eliminate those responsible for the 300 Palestinian deaths?

The Israeli security forces have clearly embarked on a policy of bringing the Palestinians to their knees through starvation and state terrorism. This extends to the officials of the client statelet in the Palestinian-controlled areas. For instance, a couple of days ago an Israeli helicopter fired a rocket at the car of a leading Fatah activist in the West Bank, killing him and two

passers-by.

But the Palestinian people cannot simply abandon the struggle. They are living in what amounts to an open prison. The Israel Defence Force recently imposed a closure on areas under full Palestinian control. The closure cut off Palestinian communities from one another and barred all vehicles from entering or leaving cities (except for humanitarian reasons).

The leadership they deserve

Their conditions have pushed the Palestinians on to the road of the mass struggle, the Intifada. Thus the demonstrations and protests are continuing. But the masses do not have the leadership they deserve. The workers and youth of Palestine have shown that they are prepared to struggle. Behind them they have the whole of the Palestinian people (apart from a very small privileged elite that would rather have a cosy relationship with Israel and US imperialism at the expense of the Palestinian masses). This impasse can lead to frustration among some layers. This frustration is leading to other kinds of actions such as car bombings, shooting of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, etc. This is an unfortunate development as this will only serve to strengthen the right wing inside Israel itself.

The enemy of the Palestinian people are not ordinary workers and youth in Israel. The enemy is the Israeli ruling class. This same ruling class also exploits Israeli workers. The task of genuine socialists is to develop a strategy which can help to bring out the class differences within Israeli society itself. The Israeli media will only use the terrorist attacks to whip up an even more intense campaign of racism, chauvinism and anti-Palestinian feelings among ordinary Jewish

workers and youth. This will have the unfortunate effect of uniting the Jewish workers in Israel behind their own ruling class, thus strengthening the hand of the Israeli military. Inside Israel the wave of chauvinist and racist propaganda is on the increase. The Israeli media present the situation as if the whole uprising had been orchestrated by Arafat. This is totally false. Its role is to whip up fear among the Jews in Israel, to make them feel insecure and thus to unite around the government... The split of the working class into hostile Jewish and Palestinian sections is already a historical tragedy that strengthens the hand of reaction.

And yet even in this moment of chauvinist and racist hysteria, which the media are trying to maintain in Israel, the idea is beginning to sink into the minds of some Israeli strategists that military repression alone is not going to stop the Intifada. As The Economist (25.11.00) pointed out, "Even knee-jerk militarists are beginning to suspect that military means alone will not quell the two-month-old Al Aqsa Intifada..."

Thus while military operations continue, a desperate, half secret, series of meetings have been taking place in order to try and find some sort of compromise. On November 18th, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, held secret talks with Arafat. In spite of publicly attacking Arafat as being responsible for the unrest serious Israeli strategists understand that Arafat's ability to control the situation is becoming more tenuous every day. His power base is being whittled away. Other forces are growing instead.

It is interesting to note how the US based intelligence analysts, Stratfor (10 November 2000) view the situation: "It appears Arafat has lost control of the rebellious Fatah. For example, Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader in the West Bank and commander of the Tanzim militia, has taken a hard line against Arafat. On November 8, he made the Fatah rift clear, claiming the Intifada will go on - with or without Arafat. A rift in Arafat's Fatah has become increasingly distinct as the Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, continues in the streets. Israel has shifted tactics, and is now taking out Fatah elements no longer loyal to Arafat. Ironically, the attack may indicate progress is being made in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. (our emphasis) The precision of the Israeli helicopter attack indicates Arafat's security services are co-operating with the Israelis - in accordance with the Egypt agreement - in order to liquidate Fatah elements who are promoting

the Intifada outside Arafat's control... In essence, Israel can help keep Arafat in power and continue negotiations or watch him fall to the hard-liners and unrestricted Intifada in the territories. Even if Israel is now effectively fighting Arafat's domestic battle for him, it does not mean Arafat's problems are over. On the contrary, Arafat must now deliver on his promise to secure a Palestinian state through peace negotiations. If Arafat cracks down - or helps Israel crack down - on those leading the Intifada, and then fails to negotiate a final settlement, he will be completely discredited. He may also lose his legitimacy and public mandate to lead the Palestinian people." Thus, while the media attack Arafat, the Israeli security forces are de facto collaborating with him. This shows that they have a common class interest, that of the master and his puppets! This is confirmed by one small news item published by *Strafrot* on 7.11.00, in which they pointed out that: "The head of the Israeli foreign secret service has held co-ordination discussions in Cairo with leading Palestinian secret service officers, with Israel asking for the re-arrest of radical Islamists released last week.. The Palestinians said all prisoners had been taken back into custody."!!

The UN is not a solution

Arafat recently requested that the United Nations station 2,000 troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However the US opposes such a move. Should Marxists support this call for UN troops to be stationed in the Palestinian territories? Some may think this is a practical option. "It will stop the killings, etc..." In reality it would not solve any of the problems. The aim of Arafat would be to rely on UN troops to maintain his corrupt Palestinian Authority. Behind the flag of the UN his already repressive security forces would strike a blow at Arafat's opponents. Already left activists are regularly arrested and harassed by the Palestinian police. It would be a betrayal of the Intifada and of the aspirations of the Palestinian people. They want their land back, they want the return of the 4 million refugees. They want a land in which they can govern their own affairs. A Palestinian Authority held up by the presence of UN troops would remain a puppet of Israel. As things stand the Authority is totally dependent on Israel economically. Of its \$1bn budget, one half comes from Israel! This would not end with the presence of UN troops. In its 50 year history the UN has not solved anything. It obeys the dictates of the major powers. We can only place our confidence in the Palestinian people themselves. What they lack is not UN troops, but a leadership that is prepared to harness the enormous revolutionary potential that they have already amply displayed in the struggle so far.

The more advanced layers among the Palestinian workers and youth understand

this. They fear that what is taking place is an attempt to change the aims of the Intifada - to free their land from Israeli occupation - and to use it simply to increase pressure to reopen the so-called "peace negotiations". But the advanced layers cannot accept this. They have not been fighting, they have not lost nearly 300 dead just to return to Oslo and Madrid. The struggle has gone beyond that!

All the regimes of the Middle East are frantically manoeuvring to avoid a major conflict. They all mouth support for the Palestinians, but none of them are prepared to seriously struggle for the rights of the Palestinian people. US imperialism, the European, and even the Israeli ruling class itself would like to avoid war. But the situation may spiral out of control.

Inside Israel, while one wing of the ruling class is trying to reach some kind of secret deal with Arafat, another wing is reaching the conclusion that Israel must use the full might of its military capacity and put an end to the mess, as they see it. Some are considering a de facto repartitioning of the area, by annexing some of the settlements and building what would amount to a massive security barrier between Israel and the Palestinian territories. This could only be achieved on the basis of massive and bloody ethnic cleansing and it would also involve the expulsion of the Israeli Arabs, the Palestinians living within the borders of Israel. The right wing is playing the chauvinist card and Barak has to constantly look over his shoulder for fearing of being overthrown.

Barak has in fact lost his parliamentary majority and has constantly been involved in a game of brinkmanship and zig-zags aimed at appeasing the members of his coalition. But the situation has reached its limits and now Barak has decided to stake everything on early elections. The date of the elections has yet to be fixed but they could take place within the next three months. Barak is hoping to glue together the broken pieces of the "peace process" and thus be able to go to the electorate, presenting himself as the best person to solve the present crisis. He hopes to put pressure on Arafat to return to the negotiating table with the clear message that either he negotiates with Barak now or with the right wing Sharon, should the latter win the elections, the very man who sparked off the present conflict when he visited the Al-Aqsa site! By re-opening "peace" talks Barak hopes to be able to go to the elections and win. But this is a very risky game to play. What can Barak give Arafat that would



appease the Palestinian people? Any serious concessions would provoke the right wing who would further whip up the chauvinist frenzy in Israel. Any serious concession on the part of Arafat would further weaken him among the Palestinian masses.

A similar situation is facing the rulers of the various Arab regimes. They are all facing potential revolutionary upheavals on the part of the masses. The masses are demanding action from these regimes. If these regimes do nothing they could be faced with overthrow. Thus they could all find themselves on the path of war even though none of them wish to go down that path.

The path of the class struggle

There is, however, a way out of this mess. A section of the Palestinians are looking to fundamentalism as a way out. This would be a blind alley, as it has proved to be in Iran where the fundamentalists hijacked the 1979 revolution. They can also choose the path of the class struggle. The various petit bourgeois nationalist forces have failed to lead the Palestinian masses out of the impasse. It is time for the workers and youth to take to the road of the class struggle and socialism.

That means overthrowing the weak puppet regime in the Palestinian Authority itself and launching a class war that would have to spread outwards to Jordan and the other surrounding Arab countries. Thus from a position of strength the Palestinian workers could then approach the Jewish workers on a class basis and invite them to break with their own ruling class and join their Arab brothers and sisters in the struggle for a transformation of society throughout the Middle East and beyond. Once the interests of the privileged elites on both sides have been eliminated then the workers can set about solving the national conflict on the basis of a development of the resources of the Middle East to the benefit of all the peoples that inhabit the area. ☆

Rogue States

Noam Chomsky

Pluto Press

£10.99 paperback

ISBN 0 7453 1708 1

Reviewed by Steve Jones

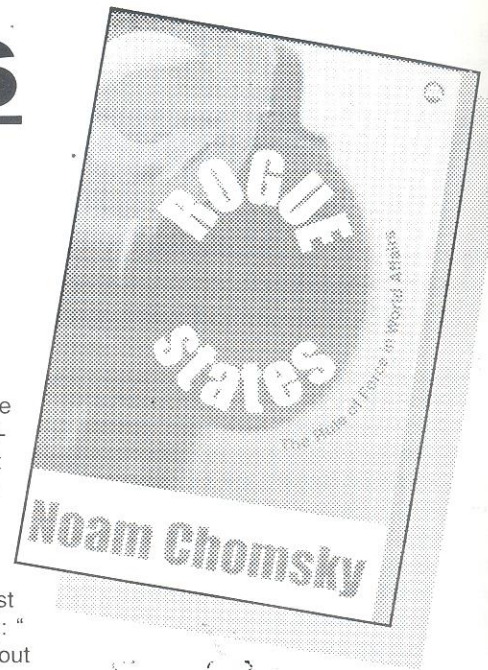
The recent spate of jokes in the world's press about the conduct of the US presidential election has served to again underline the simmering resentment which exists, especially in the third world, over the double standards and hypocrisy of super powers such as America. The US has been more than a little keen recently to waive the big stick and pontificate on about the "international rule of law" and "humanitarianism" in order to justify its meddling in world affairs. So to find their constant criticisms of other countries' election procedures flung back in their faces is ironic indeed. Of course, as Noam Chomsky explains in his new book, their standards are somewhat selective anyway, ignoring human rights abuses in those countries deemed to be friendly to Western interests. So Chomsky reminds us that the US has at various times uncritically supported such characters as General Suharto of Indonesia, Saddam Hussein, "... Trujillo, Mobuto, Marcos, Duvalier, Noriega, and many others. Crimes are not of great consequence; disobedience is." In other words only when these people had either stopped taking orders or were no longer considered useful were they removed and/or demonised by the US and their friends in the West.

This book correctly contents that such

bodies as the United Nations are there either to be cynically used or (more usually nowadays) just ignored when not required or considered a possible hindrance. This is the way it has always been. The quote Chomsky digs up from UN Ambassador Daniel Moynihan concerning the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 is more than a little telling: "The United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried forward with no inconsiderable success."

Chomsky considers the use of the term "rogue state" by the West since the ending of the Cold War in acting as a catch-all excuse to underwrite any action which the US and their lapdogs may desire to carry out. States can drift in and out of this classification (witness Yugoslavia) depending on how the US "national interest" is to be best served. The examples which Chomsky considers in chilling detail - Iraq, The Balkans, Cuba (of course), Indonesia and East Timor - make for uncomfortable reading.

The other side of the coin is Plan Columbia. This has involved making Columbia the world's leading recipient of US



military support, focussed around a two year project to cost around \$7.5 billion. In return for all this is Columbia cleaning up its appalling human rights record? No, quite the reverse evidently. In reality a brutal campaign of terror is continuing in the interests of profit and wealth, effectively aided by the US rather than being curtailed. The silence from Washington is deafening.

Chomsky argues strongly that the term "rogue state" should more correctly be applied to superpowers such as the US who abuse their position to act without reference to the very "international rule of law" which they go on about so much. This is an excellent book for anyone wishing to learn more about the underbelly of imperialism today and therefore why we need to fight for socialism. ☆

New Marx Series!

Over the past year we have dedicated space to a series of features on the ideas and life of Leon Trotsky, commemorating the anniversary of his brutal assassination, and celebrating his practical and theoretical contribution to the revolution.

With this issue the year 2000 and that series come to an end. Don't worry if you missed any of them, they can be ordered from us at the usual address.

In 2001 Socialist Appeal will begin a new series outlining the fundamental ideas of Marxism in relation to politics, economics and philosophy, and their relevance to the new century.

By that we mean the ideas of Marx and Engels themselves. There is a vulgar view of Marxism which claims that we reduce everything to economics.

Marxism is not a dogma. In the first place Marxism is a philosophy, a method for understanding the world around us and events in society.

Applying this method to human society allows us to see history not as a series of unconnected events, dominated by kings, queens and bishops, but a process of interconnected events based on the interests of different classes in society.

If we are serious about replacing capitalism, we must first understand it. Capitalism is a society based on the production of commodities. What are commodities? What is profit? How are workers exploited? In uncovering the Labour Theory of Value Marx provides us with the necessary tools for understanding how capitalism works - or rather why it doesn't.

This will not simply be a series of

reprints, useful as these often are, but major new articles, looking at subjects like Marx's economics, globalisation, and the new paradigm.

Dialectical Materialism the philosophy of Marxism, and modern science, the law, morality, democracy and the state.

Trotsky's epoch making theory of Permanent Revolution in relation to the Middle East, Ireland and the Balkans.

Over the next twelve months these articles can be collected to form a comprehensive introduction to the ideas of Marxism, the ideas that the ruling class can't bury.

The theory of Marxism is an invaluable guide to workers, trade unionists, and students who seriously want to fight to change the world. Don't miss out on this important new series in 2001, subscribe today and make sure you get your copy of Socialist Appeal every month. ☆

Ressources Humaines

by Laurent Cantet

Reviewed by Rob Sewell

Ressources Humaine is a French film that has made a big impact where ever it has been shown. It is probably the first film that has also been used as a management-training video! First, it was shown at the Sundance Film Festival to Hollywood producers, then it was shown recently to employees of Usinor, a French steel-maker.

The film is so close to the troubles of everyday working life, that management want to learn lessons about workers' behaviour. For the bosses, it is a great lesson in how best to handle workers. It is a case of modern-day Taylorism. The film is about a small French factory where managers "administer (employees) the same way you would administer stocks or capital", as the producer Laurent Cantet puts. How else could it be?

The film examines the relationship between Franck, a bright ambitious management trainee, and his father, a production-line worker. As expected Franck sets out to increase productivity and a battle develops between his approach and the resistance of the shop floor.

The film has been a roaring success in France, where more than 1.5m viewers watched it when it was screened on TV. About 150,000 saw it in French and Italian cinemas. It has appeared in eight film festivals and won seven awards. It is even playing in a cinema in New York's Time Square.

The film touched a raw nerve. "Everyone recognises himself", says Cantet, who wrote it three years ago, when France was embroiled in a national debate about the 35 hour week.

The scenes are very realistic. This is more the case when you discover that real factory workers were hired to play the parts. "The man who played the father (Jean-Claude Vallod), he worked in a factory all his life. The way he is standing in front of his machine, the way his shoulders are bent, no actor could find that as easily."

As well as acting, the workers actually contributed the writing the script. How better could reflect real shop-floor life? One critical scene involves the meeting between union representatives and managers that turns into a bitter

argument. "Mrs Arnoux (Danielle Melador) was a real trade unionist. The director had been a director in real life. He owned a factory near Paris," says Cantet. "We worked together by improvisation. They were able to say: 'I don't think that would happen.'"

It was this part that was shown to Usinor's human resource managers. It shows how arguments ('the class struggle') can spin out of control, commented a spokeswoman for the factory!

"In the factory, it is normal that the boss can speak that way to the workers," states Cantet. "We had special screenings for management schools and human resource departments, and a lot of the directors were shocked because they could recognise too much of themselves."

The bosses are keen to find out about factory life. Rather than go down to the shop floor, they prefer to view the workers through a camera lens. Then they can hold detailed discussion of how to control the workers and how to frustrate their demands - while they carry through rationalisation and drives for greater productivity.

Although Cantet is not a trade unionist or even working class, he has depicted life by his unconventional method as it really is at the sharp end of working life. The film couldn't help ending on a pro-labour note. "I think 35 hours is still too much, especially when you've spent even one week in the factory," he says.

If you get a chance to see the film when it comes to Britain, don't hesitate. ☆

Competition!

Win yourself a year's free subscription to SA. Just fill in the caption of Tony and John. Return to SA PO Box 2626 N1 7SQ. Best one chosen on 5th January will win! Winner will appear in the new year issue.

Blair.....

 John.....

Don't forget to include your name and address



We need your support

First of all, on behalf of all those involved in the production of Socialist Appeal, I want to thank you for your support and encouragement over the last year and wish you all a very merry Xmas and a not too sober new year! Capitalism doesn't exactly make it easy to finance and produce a socialist magazine such as ours each month. We are reliant very much therefore on the committed support of our readers and sellers. We especially thank those who have made donations to our funds during the year - without your support we could not have made it.

This has been a momentous year. Internationally we have seen movements in the Middle East, Serbia, Latin America and beyond. In Britain we have seen the movement of the Rover workers in Birmingham, strikes in the public sector, the threat to Fords Dagenham, students and youth marching against capitalism, and many other struggles both big and small. This autumn we saw the fragility of capitalism reliance on "just-in-time" well and truly exposed by the fuel crisis - an event which itself seemed to be starting to act as a focal point for general dissatisfaction against New Labour. We have ended the year with floods and gales, revealing the damage done to the environment by capitalism. Most of all we have seen the near collapse of the national

rail system, brought to its knees by the short-sightedness of privatisation and the criminal failure to put safety first. *Socialist Appeal* has set itself the task of explaining why all this has happened and what needs to be done. The funding for this comes from ordinary workers like yourself.

Now, as you have been informed elsewhere, we are about to move office. This is going to cost us more than a bit so we need your help. We have launched a £5000 moving appeal which will enable us to move into and do up new offices and hit the ground running in the fight for socialist ideas in 2001. A number of readers have already given - to date (end of November) we have raised £567.10 towards our target. But as we all know December is the critical month. If every reader chips in with something then we will easily reach the £5000 target by December 31st. A number of readers have already pledged various amounts up to £100 (and beyond). What can you give? Every penny we receive is an investment in a socialist future.

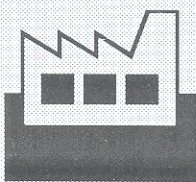
Some sellers have got together to organise special initiatives to help raise cash collectively. In London there will be a grand Xmas social on December 16th. If you live in London then you must come to this. Even if you are from outside the capital city, why not make it that date to come up to London to do

your Xmas shopping? Phone our office on 020 7251 1094 for full details. Other projects we have heard about include socialist Xmas cards from Peterborough sellers and mugs from Southend and Herts sellers. Again phone our offices for details. Can other groups of readers or sellers match this?

Central however remains the individual donations. All those who read our journal should be approached to make a donation. Some readers are making regular donations by standing order through their bank. If you want to join them then let us know and we will send you details. We are confident that you will all come through for us and ensure that we hit our £5000 target by the new year.

Special thanks to the following: Sean McCartney (£15), Dragana (£10), 2 West London readers (£50), Alison (£30), Jean Webb (£11), St Andrews readers (£60), Eastern supporters (£61), Colin Rice (£100), Mersey readers (£28). Ray (£63), Rachel and Des Heemskerk (£100), Mark Townsend (£10), Leicester readers (£10), Mark Langabeer (£10), and others. Why not join them? Send what you can to us at Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. (Cheques/POs made payable to *Socialist Appeal*)

Steve Jones



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

- £100 £50 £25 £10 Other £.....

Return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ (Please, make cheques payable to *Socialist Appeal*)

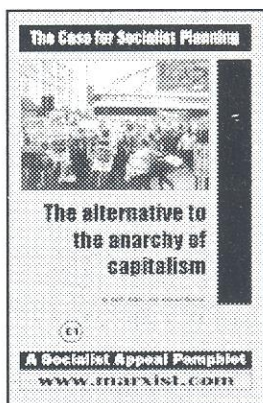
pamphlets

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
By Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. **Price** £1.00
- **Lessons of Chile.** ref. 0257
By Alan Woods. 1973. **Price** £1.00
- **Revolution in Albania.** ref. 0258
By Alan Woods. 16th March 1997. **Price** 70p
- **Diana, The monarchy and the crisis in Britain.**
ref. 0259
By Alan Woods 10th September 1997. **Price** 50p
- **The coming world financial crash.** ref. 0260
By Ted Grant 31st October 1997. **Price** 50p
- **A new stage in the capitalist crisis.**
Fear of recession grows. ref. 0261
By Alan Woods. 2nd January 1998. **Price** 50p
- **Kosovo.** The Balkans crisis continues. ref. 0262
By Alan Woods. 12th March 1998. **Price** 30p
- **Indonesia.** The Asian revolution has begun.
ref. 0263
By Alan Woods and Ted Grant. 22nd May 1998.
Price 50p
- **Crisis in Russia.** Free market failure. ref. 0264
By Ted Grant and Alan Woods. September 1998.
Price 50p
- **The real reason behind the bombing of Iraq.**
ref. 0265
By Alan Woods. 18th December 1998. **Price** 20p
- **Balkans War.** Nato facing defeat? ref. 0266
By Alan Woods. 13th May 1999. **Price** 70p

- **East Timor.** Can we trust the United Nations?
ref. 0267
By Ted Grant and Jean Duval. September 1999.
Price 50p
- **Privatisation Disaster.** Time to renationalise the
railways. ref. 0268
By Rob Sewell. **Price** 50p
- **World Economy.** On a Knife's edge. ref. 0269
By Alan Woods and Ted Grant. **Price** £1
- **The socialist alternative to the European Union.**
ref. 0270
Price £1
- **Struggle inside Iran. The first shots of the Iranian
revolution.** ref. 0271
By Alan Woods. **Price** 50p
- **Rail industry in crisis. A Fighting programme for
rail workers.** ref. 0274
Price £1



**The alternative to the
anarchy of capitalism
by Mick Brooks and
Michael Roberts
price £1
ref. 0275**

Order Form

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Tel.....
e-mail.....

REF. number

PRICE

TOTAL

RETURN to:
Socialist Appeal, PO BOX 2626
London N1 7SQ

Cash / Cheque



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

