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Journal of The Socialist Party - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

The American Jihad finds a new target



'Real men' want to go to Iran



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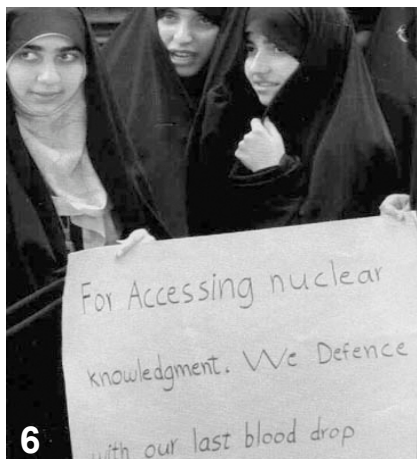
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4th March** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
TEL: 020 7622 3811
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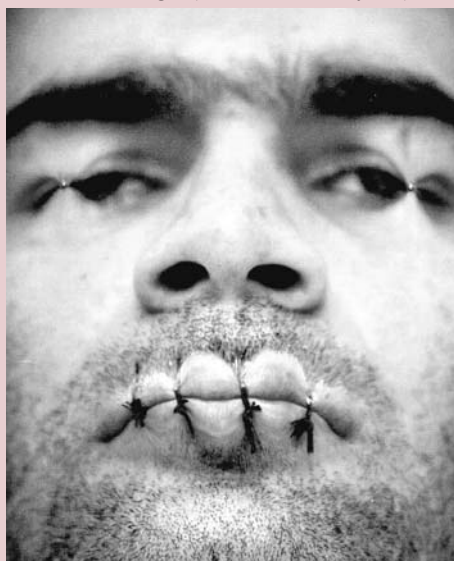
The fuss over the Danish cartoons of Mohammed has not been the only recent event that has raised the issue of free speech. There was also the government's failed attempt to make it more difficult to criticise religion. There were the trials of the BNP leaders and of the Muslim cleric Abu Hamza. The elected mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was required to appear before an unelected body with the power to eject him from office for a remark made to a journalist from the gutter press. David Irving was arrested in Austria for holocaust-denial. All these were attempts - either by law or by direct action - to punish people for expressing an opinion.

We in the Socialist Party have always insisted on the advantages, for the advancement of the cause of socialism, of the fullest possible freedom of expression of political and social ideas, including when these take the form of religion (since all religions hold views on how society should be organised and are in this sense political). No view should be prevented from being expressed. And no view (not even religion) should be exempt from being criticised.

We have always practised what we preach. We opposed the banning of the *Daily Worker* in 1941. We have criticised the policy of "no platform for fascists" as censorship by direct action. We have debated against fascists and Islamists, exposing their views before their followers to the withering criticism of the socialist case.

The main case against censorship is that it considers that people are too ignorant to decide for themselves and so must be protected from hearing certain views. All

censors, actual or would-be, consider themselves a cut above the rest. *They* are not corrupted by reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* but their servants would be. *They* are not affected by reading anti-Christian or anti-Muslim writings (as the case may be) but



their followers would be. *They* are not affected by a BNP rant but other, less enlightened people would be.

Since ideas are thrown up by social conditions censorship never works to suppress them anyway. The Catholic Church was not able to prevent the rise in Europe of the secular, practical materialism generated by capitalism and has been forced to accommodate itself to this. The same fate

awaits Islam, which seems to want to rival Catholicism for the title of the world's most intolerant religion. At the moment its clerics are desperately trying to hold back the spread of capitalist secularism - and still have the power to mobilise fanatical mobs to rage against a few harmless cartoons - but, as capitalism progresses more and more in the areas where they now dominate they too will lose influence, painfully slow as this is turning out to be.

In any event, Socialists are opposed to the attempts made by Muslim clerics to prevent and punish criticism of their religion. We are under no obligation to respect the religious dogma of these obscurantists that places the so-called prophet Mohammed beyond criticism, not that he has anything relevant or sensible to say for 21st century conditions.

The last refuge of those who favour censorship is the proposition that people should be legally banned from insulting each other. It is true that if you want to persuade someone to change their views insulting them is not the best way to begin. But you can't legislate for good manners or good persuasive techniques. To allow one side in an argument to cry "you've offended me" and appeal to the law to silence the other side would mean an end to free speech.

Our answer to all censors is to reaffirm that workers are quite capable of judging for themselves, quite capable of sorting out the wheat from the chaff and working out which ideas accord with their interests - and which do not. The best condition for the emergence of socialist understanding remains free and frank discussion.

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Sorry, Page Cannot Be Displayed

"Your abhorrent actions in China are a disgrace. I simply don't understand how your corporate leadership sleeps at night." Tom Lantos of the US House International Relations subcommittee was pulling no punches when upbraiding representatives of Yahoo, Microsoft, Cisco Systems and Google for their supine acquiescence to the Chinese government's insistence on

strict censorship in their search engines. He further told them that they had accumulated great wealth and power, "but apparently very little social responsibility" (BBC Online, Feb 15). Google recently agreed to block politically 'sensitive' sites and even words, including the word 'democracy', while Yahoo has recently been accused by the media watchdog Reporters Without Borders of handing over information to the Chinese authorities that resulted in an 8 year prison sentence for the writer Li Zhi in 2003 and a 10 year stretch for another writer, Shi Tao, in April 2005.

But with an internet population of 111 million, the largest outside the US, China is hard to resist, and service providers who resist its charismatic charms, or who debate political ethics, are likely to end up in history as footnotes. This is globalisation, after all, and arguably it's not all as bad as it sounds. The accusation that these companies are assisting China to suppress rebellion in return for market share is not entirely fair,

since the world saw graphically how well China was able to suppress open rebellion entirely by its own efforts. Chinese capitalism is moving towards liberalisation because liberal capitalism is cheaper and easier to run than state repressive capitalism, and the entry of western IT into China is the thin end of the liberal wedge, bound even though it presently is by guards and restrictions. And unlike Yahoo, Google shows on its search results page which sites have been blocked, so that users in China do at least know that they are being censored. Wouldn't it be interesting if we knew what information was being denied to us in the West?



PVI PDQ?

Hold the front page! Sex is good for you, says study! Acute stress is relieved by sex, according to new research from the University of Paisley, UK (*New Scientist*, Jan 28). If this sounds like one of those studies scientists frequently conduct simply to prove the galloping obvious, here's the twist - it has to be penetrative vaginal sex, because other forms including masturbation don't work as well, and abstinence doesn't work at all. Of those studied when put in a high stress situation, those who had had exclusively penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI) recovered fastest, followed by those who had had non-coital sex or simply masturbated. Abstainers had the highest blood pressure and took longest to recover. The researcher, Stuart Brody, speculated that the result might be caused by a 'pair-bonding' hormone called oxytocin, released during penetrative sex.

What the study doesn't show, of course, is the states of mind of those involved. It seems logical to Pathfinders at least that those having PVI are also most likely to be those enjoying another, more unquantifiable, phenomenon: love. So could it be love that takes the stress away, rather than the sex?

At any event, capitalism has done the same antisocial thing to sex that it has done to food, clothes, shelter, and all those other little needs of ours - it has commodified it, which means in practice that a very large proportion of the population have no access to it. It will be very interesting, once the brutal and human-hating engine of capitalist market culture has been switched off, to rerun these studies. Pathfinders suspects that there will be a lot more sex, and a lot less stress, all round.

Life Sentence

Further to our recent enquiry (*Socialist Standard*, Feb 2006) concerning the dubious benefit of living longer in capitalism, apparently we can already look forward to the even more dubious appeal of 75 year mortgages and a retirement age of 85 (*BBC Online*, Feb 17).

Shripad Tuljapurkar, a biologist from Stanford University, told the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in St Louis that anti-ageing advances could raise life expectancy by a year each year over the next two decades. This was, he thought,

going to put a strain on social security and medical care, unless the retirement age was raised. Translated, what this means is that the capitalist class is damned if it's going to pay for workers to have a long holiday from hard labour when they could be nose to the grindstone for another twenty years, or until they drop dead.

The biologist did add that the trend towards longevity would create a "permanent underclass" in poor countries that didn't have the same resources. Sadly, this underclass already exists, and living to the age of 45 would be an achievement for many members of it.



Chadian President Idriss Derby releasing the oil profits from the Chad-Cameroon pipeline.

'Fiasco' in Chad.

Imagine giving a mugger your wallet on condition that he only used the money to look after homeless kittens. This is pretty much what the World Bank did when, in collaboration with Exxon Mobil, it invested \$4.2 bn to develop oilfields in southern Chad and then build a pipeline to pump all this lovely oil through neighbouring Cameroon to the coast.

Now as everyone knows, Chad is a corrupt dictatorship with no record of respecting human rights or giving two hoots about its own poverty-stricken population, but the government was

surprisingly keen to agree to use the profits from all this oil development to invest in social healthcare programmes, a condition the pious World Bank insisted on. Now that the work has been done and the pipeline in place, the Chad government has - shock, horror! - reneged on the deal and used the first profits for what it euphemistically calls 'internal security', ie. suppress poverty-inspired revolts and also, probably, start another war with Sudan (*New Scientist*, Feb 11).

Pathfinders would like to offer its services to the World Bank as consultant (at appropriate fees) the next time it plans to make a deal with a despot bunch of crooks. Predicting this cock-up would have been easy money. But the suspicion is that the World Bank is not really as naïve as it looks, and that in among the hand-wringing a satisfactory deal has been done. Exxon Mobil, for one, must be crying all the way to the bank.

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

Letters

Wrong about Kenya?

Dear Editors,
We have the following observations on the article "Kenya Referendum farce" (*Socialist Standard*, December).

The struggle for a new Constitution has been going on since Moi took power in 1978. In 1982, the fear by Moi of the setting up of the Kenya Socialist Alliance led the Moi government to convert Kenya into a one party dictatorship. During the 80s, the struggle around the Constitution mainly focused on changing the document to allow for political pluralism. Moi gave in and allowed alternative parties in 1990. But the struggle for a new Constitution continued as Moi continued to use the document to abuse power.

We agree with much of your views that the Constitution will not put food on the table for the exploited workers and the oppressed in Kenya. Our view within the Kenya Socialist Democratic Alliance and which we have repeated several times in the past is that the Constitution is a piece of paper which will be violated by the ruling class if their interests are at stake.

From a Socialist perspective, the Constitution can only matter if the power to implement it rests on the hands of the working class, not the thieving ruling class. Even if another "democratic Constitution" is drafted and passed, it will not solve the problem of mass unemployment, mass poverty, exploitation of workers and peasants in Kenya, collapsed health care system and other social and economic maladies brought about by the rot and decay of the deformed capitalist system in our country.

The "Yes" and the "No" bandwagons have no political alternative because parties represented on both sides are fundamentally liberal. We take the position that the real solution to the crisis in Kenya rests on the establishment of a "Workers/Socialist Party" in the country. At the moment, the

unworkable system of capitalism is not facing any confrontation.

Our support for the "Orange team" was strategic. Kenyans need to do away with "the problem of the Constitution" so that they can realize that a New Constitution is actually not the solution to the political and economic crisis brought about by the thieving ruling class.

You could have come out clearly in the article to assert that Kenya needs a Socialist government or a "Workers Party" armed with a revolutionary socialist Program for change and transformation instead of talking about a "system which has no frontiers".

Your article is good. But your writer should also have attacked capitalism directly instead of talking about a system "where money is being worshiped". By leaving out the dimension of "Socialism" and "Capitalism" in the article (referring to them indirectly) your writer squandered an opportunity to pit Socialism as an alternative against capitalism which needs to be overthrown in Kenya.

We believe that it could have been wrong for us to support the "Yes" side or to sit on the fence as your writer did because the struggle for a new constitution is part of the democratic struggle in our country. While participating in the process, we utilized every opportunity to point out that the Constitution is not the answer to the crisis in Kenya while at the same time pointing out the limitations of the Orange camp which will not be able to go beyond the Constitution to challenge capitalism.

Needless to say, our Comrades on the ground managed to introduce "Mapambano", our Newsletter, as the official slogan of the Orange campaign. Since the Orange leaders will not be able to deliver even if they came to power, a new force will have to come into play and this is the period we are preparing for.

OKOTH OSEWE, SECRETARY, KENYA SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (www.kenyasocialist.org)

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Real men want to go to IRAN



We'll be watching the news headlines, or maybe there'll be a news flash, and we'll be informed that the RAF, along with the USAF's long-range B-52 bombers, and the Israeli Air Force have carried out overnight bombing raids across Iran, targeting nuclear facilities, radar stations, airfields and anti-aircraft bases.

As in the case of Iraq, there will be the prior attempt at the mass manufacture of consent. Bush and Blair, and indeed any other European leaders who think they will have something to gain, will peddle the line about newly elected Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. They'll say he is another Saddam Hussein who, if Iran's nuclear programme is not halted, will be able to lob a nuclear missile at the West in a few minutes and that Iran is supporting international terrorism, financing terrorist cells all over the world, including Al Qaeda. The case will be made that Iran is still very much a part of the axis of evil, first referred to in George W Bush's State of the Union Address in 2002, and its people, secretly harbouring thoughts of Western-style democracy, are crying out for regime change.

Indeed, it has already started. In his January 2005 State of the Union Address, Bush said: "Iran remains the world's primary state sponsor of terror, pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve." The White House has in fact been steadily creating an anti-Iran climate in the US for some time. The *Wall Street Journal* (3 February) reported that "in recent polls a surprisingly large number of Americans say

they would support U.S. military strikes to stop Tehran from getting the bomb."

Both Bush and Blair have already hinted at military intervention and Israel has previously threatened Iran. The *New York Times* (13 January) reported Meir Dagan, the chief of the Israeli Mossad, declaring that "Israeli policy makers all agree that a military option against Iran's nuclear facilities cannot be ruled out". The *Sunday Times* (11 December) had already reported that Ariel Sharon had instructed Israel's air

“there is too much US corporate interest in the Middle East and Central Asia for the US to even think of cutting back on one barrel of oil”

force to get ready for a military attack against Iran by the end of March, when Israeli elections are scheduled. Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud Party, gave notice that if Sharon did not wipe out Iran's nuclear installations, he would see the job was done if he became prime minister in March.

A year ago it was reported that Iran was anticipating an attack by the US and that it was ready for an impressionable

response within 15 minutes. For over a year Iran has been mobilising recruits into citizens' militia and has made plans to engage in the kind of "asymmetrical" warfare that has bogged down US troops in neighbouring Iraq.

Iran has sizeable oil reserves that look quite enticing and which other countries have been eyeing up for some time. The highly regarded *Oil and Gas Journal* reported last year that 125.8 billion barrels of oil were in Iran just waiting to be pumped out. Iran is also the number two producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Most of Iran's crude oil is to be found in an area known as Khuzestan, bordering Iraq and the Persian Gulf and the location of Iran's largest untapped oil fields - Yadavaran and Azadegan. There are serious profits to be had here but, tellingly, the Chinese state oil company China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation has a 50 percent stake in the vast Yadavaran field.

Russia too has a claim in Iranian oil. Three years ago Russia decided to expand its oil procuring and distribution methods by shipping Russian crude to Iran, to be refined for domestic consumption, with Iran delivering a corresponding amount of oil to Russia, thus decreasing the cost of exports via tankers loaded at Black Sea ports and making Russian oil accessible to buyers at competitive prices.

So it's unlikely that Russia and China will agree to a UN Security Council Resolution against Iran which could justify military action if it is thought to have been breached; for they have strong vested interests in Iran which they are desperate



Clockwise, from top: US dead in Iraq and coming home; John Bolton; Iranian military; modern and 'traditional' Iranian women

not to jeopardise. Not that this will bother the US in the least, as both Russia and especially China are economic powers that threaten US global ambitions, so any attack on Iran, which consequently leads to the overthrow of the present regime in Tehran, upsets the long-term ambitions of China and Russia.

Iran would be no push-over. The US would not enjoy a hasty capitulation of the Tehran regime, as was the case with Baghdad, exhausted by over a decade of perpetual bombardment and sanctions. The Iranian army comprises about 350,000 active-duty soldiers and 220,000 conscripts and you can add to this 120,000 of the elite Revolutionary Guard. The country's navy and air force total 70,000 men. Between them, the armed forces have about 2,000 tanks, 300 combat aircraft, and three submarines, hundreds of helicopters and at least a dozen Russian-made Scud missile launchers, the kind Saddam fired at Israel during the first Gulf War of 1991. Iran also has an unknown number of Shahab missiles with a range of more than 1,500 miles. With this in mind you can begin to appreciate the remarks of John Bolton, now the US ambassador to the UN, in the build-up to the invasion of Iraq: "Real men want to go to Iran".

True, a lot of Iran's military hardware is old, thirty years old in some cases, and no match for the state-of-the-art weaponry the US is wont to use. Nevertheless, it is still weaponry and more than capable of delivering untold damage to US forces or any other country within striking distance of its missiles perceived as being pro-US.

With Iran controlling the Strait of Hormutz, oil tankers could easily be bombed as well tankers and platforms elsewhere in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. And Tehran could escalate any conflict, giving the nod for Lebanese Hezbollah militant attacks on Israel, sanctioning also assaults on US interests throughout Central Asia.

Oil Bourse

This month Iran intends to launch its Oil

Bourse which will facilitate the future trade of oil in the euro instead of the US dollar. According to John Pilger writing in the *New Statesman* (13 February) this could have far-reaching consequences:

"The effect on the value of the dollar will be significant, if not, in the long term, disastrous. At present the dollar is, on paper, a worthless currency bearing the burden of a national debt exceeding \$8trn and a trade deficit of more than \$600bn. The cost of the Iraq adventure alone, according to the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, could be \$2trn. America's military empire, with its wars and 700-plus bases and limitless intrigues, is funded by creditors in Asia, principally China. That oil is traded in dollars is critical in maintaining the dollar as the world's reserve currency. What the Bush regime fears is not Iran's nuclear ambitions but the effect of the world's fourth-biggest oil producer and trader breaking the dollar monopoly. Will the world's central banks then begin to shift their reserve holdings and, in effect, dump the dollar? Saddam Hussein was threatening to do the same when he was attacked."

Likewise, Krassimir Petrov, Professor of Economics at the American University of Bulgaria, writing of the establishment of an Oil Bourse in the January edition of *Energy Bulletin*, said:

"In economic terms, this represents [a great threat] because it will allow anyone willing either to buy or to sell oil for euros to transact on the exchange, thus circumventing the US dollar altogether. Europeans will not have to buy and hold dollars in order to secure their payment for oil, but would instead pay with their own currencies. The adoption of the euro for oil transactions will provide the European currency with a reserve status that will benefit the European at the expense of the Americans ... The Chinese and the Japanese will be especially eager to adopt the new exchange, because it will allow them to drastically lower their enormous dollar reserves and diversify with euros, thus protecting themselves against the

depreciation of the dollar."

Addicted to oil?

George Bush, in his January 2006 State of the Union Address made an interesting statement: "The US is addicted to oil". That's perhaps the truest statement Bush has ever said, but he's mistaken if this is meant to signify that the US is going into detox and will be weaning itself off oil. At the moment there is just too much US corporate interest in the Middle East and Central Asia for the US to even think of cutting back on one barrel of oil.

Furthermore, there are dangerous competitors out there, who have an insatiable thirst for oil, so it's important that the US has a say in who has access to the world's oil resources. The US is not that dependent upon Middle East oil for its own domestic consumption, but is aware that one way to control its foremost economic rivals is to influence just how much oil they can have and at what price. With China a fastly growing economic, political and military power, naked aggression is a strategy the US has been and will continue to be prepared to pursue throughout the oil rich regions of the Middle East and central Asia, regardless of the cost of life and the dent to the US's global image. The dollar needs defending, the world's oil resources need to be controlled and military bases built. Dealing with Iran is just one move in the US game-plan to maintain its global hegemony - the real enemy is yet to be confronted.

But for now Washington will use its man at the UN, John "Real Man" Bolton, to help hype a global crisis which could consequently be used to justify attacks on Iran, with or without the blessing of the Security Council. No evidence exists as to Iranian desires to create an atomic bomb, but the country is enriching uranium - legally, as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which some pro-US nuclear states have refused to sign up to. This is the excuse that is being used to whip up support another war for oil. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Dirty war in Colombia



Above: FARC. Below: ELN; SINALTRAINAL; Student graffiti at the National University in Bogota that reads: 'Because I love life, no Coca-Cola'



Workers in Colombia are amongst the poorest in the world yet live in an area rich in natural resources. Colombia's complex and on-going war between the government's armed forces, drug producers and traffickers, leftist guerrillas and rightist paramilitaries, with blurred distinctions between each side, continues. Trade unionists, students, activists, journalists and those accused of collaborating with any side in the conflict are potential victims, not just combatants. This is not only a civil conflict, for following the globalisation of capital we see the globalisation of the means of defending capital: war.

In the late 1980s the Andean Group of governments further liberalized investment regulations to ease the repatriation of profits from foreign investments and to allow a greater foreign involvement in the national economy. This led to the Andean Pact free trade agreement in 1992. The most recent figures show that free-trade capitalism has done little to benefit workers in Colombia. World Bank figures show that the national poverty rate declined from 65 percent in 1988 to 64 percent in 1999. According to the FAO, the number of undernourished people in the population decreased from 6.1 million in 1990-92 to 5.7 million in 2000-02. If this is the World Bank's current motto of 'A World Free of Poverty' in action, then Colombians will be waiting several decades before they even have enough food to eat in a country with the some of the richest natural resources on the planet.

In the late 1980s, when Colombia began to attract British capital, Margaret Thatcher sanctioned military assistance to Colombia's notorious armed forces. This assistance continues to this day. Despite the efforts of journalists and activists, the British government refuse to disclose the full amount and nature of all the military assistance given to Colombia's armed forces. It is known that British military officers have trained their members in the UK as well as in Colombia. The UK government has also aided the Colombian government to set up the National Intelligence Centre a co-ordinating body for the Colombian security forces. The UK government has also sanctioned arms sales to Colombia; indeed Colombian delegations have attended the Defence Systems and Equipment International Exhibition (DSEi) in London and Farnborough International Airshow at the invitation of the Ministry of Defence. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued arms export licences to the value of £3.5 million in 2004. The British government can refuse to allow export of arms, for example, on the basis of risk of use for internal repression, risk of contributing to internal tensions or conflict

in the recipient country or the preservation of regional stability. Perhaps the case of Colombia is an administrative oversight.

US security assistance amounted to \$98 million in military financing, \$1.7 million for military training and education and \$474 million for counter-narcotic operations in the 2004 financial year. Corporations are also thought to make donations to the Colombian military.

The US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004 state that members of the security forces continued to commit serious abuses, including unlawful and extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. Also police, prison guards, and military forces mistreated detainees in harsh, overcrowded and underfunded prisons. State security forces were responsible for 124 extrajudicial killings during the first six months of 2004 and at least 17 of the 65 cases of forced disappearance. Victims are often portrayed as guerrillas killed in combat.

One of the controversial aspects of US-funded counter-narcotic operations involves the eradication of coca and opium poppy plantations by aerial herbicide spraying. The US Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs reports that 2004 was the fourth consecutive record-breaking year of aerial eradication: 136,500 hectares of coca and 3,061 hectares of opium poppy were defoliated. The use of broad-spectrum, non-selective herbicides means that not only is coca and poppy production affected but also food crops, pasture and forests, to say nothing of the possible effects of large amounts of herbicide on livestock and humans. The illicit crop eradication programmes have simply meant that new areas are brought into cultivation. The result is that the increasing destruction of immensely diverse natural forest as farmers are displaced by removal of their means of living and by poorly targeted spraying. Some compensation is available as part of the eradication programme but is inadequate when set against the losses, and not enough to act as a disincentive to further planting of illicit crops.

Commentators have suggested that US-funded counter-narcotic operations are little more than an attack on the financial supply lines of the guerrillas. Quoted in the New York Times last year, a spokesperson from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy said 'Key indicators of domestic cocaine availability show stable or slightly increased availability in drug markets throughout the country'. It seems that the eradication programme has had little effect on the supply of cocaine within the USA.

The Caño Limón oilfield in the

Arauca region, which accounts for 30 percent of Colombia's oil production, has seen some of the greatest violence in recent years. A pipeline which pumps oil to the Caribbean for export has been a major target for guerrilla forces seeking payment for not sabotaging the pipeline. The 18th Brigade of the Colombian military is funded and trained by the US government and an oil company has been accused of abuses against civilians and of co-operation with paramilitaries. Health workers, trade unionists, teachers, journalists and activists as well as members of displaced peasant communities who lived near the pipeline have been victimised by the both the military and paramilitaries.

The US State Department and Amnesty International both state that despite the near impunity with which military personnel carry out atrocities, they continue to fight a 'dirty war' by collusion with paramilitary groups. The extent to which this occurs is unclear, reports vary from the merely sharing intelligence to paramilitaries and the military being trained, transported, armed and fighting together.

Paramilitaries were responsible for numerous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights according to the US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004. There are approximately 12,000 paramilitary fighters in Colombia, mostly members of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of paramilitary groups. Though officially the AUC is demobilising and announced a ceasefire in 2002 more than 1,800 killings and disappearances have occurred since then. Paramilitaries were responsible for at least 304 of such killings during the first six months of 2004, including journalists, activists, trade unionists, indigenous leaders, local politicians and others who threatened to interfere with their drug trafficking activities or those suspected of collaboration with guerrillas. There are also reports that paramilitaries continued to commit 'social cleansing' killings of prostitutes, drug users, vagrants, and the

mentally ill in city neighbourhoods they controlled.

One of the most well publicised aspects of paramilitary killing in Colombia in recent years involved the Coca-Cola company. SINALTRAINAL, a Colombian food and drink workers' union, claim that members and their families have been abducted, tortured and murdered by paramilitaries hired by the management of Coca-Cola bottling plants. With no means of redress in Colombia, the union with the help of the United Steel Workers of America and the International Labor Rights Fund attempted to bring a case against Coca-Cola in Florida under the Alien Tort Statute and Torture Victim Protection Act. The court found the Colombian government complicit with the paramilitaries but absolved Coca-Cola of responsibility as the bottling companies were separately owned, despite Coca-Cola then being the major shareholder in the company. The union's case against the bottlers is unresolved. Since the beginning of the case SINALTRAINAL have called for an international boycott of Coca-Cola products.

The paramilitary groups and guerrillas have their roots in *La Violencia*, the war of 1948-1957 between supporters of the oligarchic landowners and supporters of a liberal state and land reform. At the end of *La Violencia* several independent republics existed within Colombia. The armed forces of the state, supported by the US military, took these areas by force. From one of these republics known as Marquetalia, the creator and future leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) emerged with a small band of guerrilla fighters to continue to fight against the official parties who had now formed a power-sharing coalition. It was later that they aligned themselves with the Colombian Communist Party (PCC). FARC and the PCC severed links in the late 1980s. However, despite the differences between Marxism and the PCC's Leninism, and the obvious discrepancies between FARC's openly stated political programme and that of

Marx, FARC and the smaller pro-Cuban National Liberation Army (ELN) are often referred to as 'Marxists' in the popular press. In fact, FARC declare themselves to be Bolivarian and call for 'Colombia for Colombians, with equality of opportunities and equitable distribution of wealth and where among us all we can build peace with social equality and sovereignty', rather than for Marx's call for workers of all lands to unite for the overthrow of all existing social conditions.

FARC and ELN members were responsible for a large percentage of civilian deaths attributable to the armed conflict according to the US Department of State's Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004. FARC are thought to be responsible for hundreds of intentional killings and have injured hundreds of civilians with bombings and land-mines. FARC also kidnap, torture, and murder off-duty members of the public security forces. Both FARC and ELN kidnap hundreds of civilians to help finance their activities. The Colombian Presidential Programme for Human Rights reports that from January to November 2004, the FARC killed at least 99 persons in massacres. Guerrillas targeted local elected officials, candidates for public office, religious leaders, suspected paramilitary collaborators, and members of the security forces.

The war in Colombia reminds us that we are living with a globalised capitalism. The war is of a global nature and not just a domestic war. Tragically most workers still look to a beneficial national government for amelioration of their conditions. However, as long as the social conditions of capitalism exist, and minority ownership of the means of production and distribution, competition to be that minority will all too often turn to war. Be it the benevolent liberal democratic state with a mixed economy, or the free-market economy or a government of nationalized industry free of foreign influence, this has ever been the case. World socialism will destroy the social conditions that create poverty and war. ■

PIERS HOBSON



Cooking the Books (1)

World poverty not yet history

At a meeting in London on 2 February the "Make Poverty History" campaign decided to

disband itself. A case of making itself rather than poverty history.

That world poverty most definitely hadn't been made history was illustrated by a news item the previous week. "Global jobless rise hampers efforts to cut poverty", read the headline in the *Guardian* (25 January). "£1.5bn living on below \$2 a day is same as 10 years ago". The article was reporting on the annual global employment survey from the International Labour Organisation. There are some 2.85 billion workers in the world, more than half of whom are existing on less than \$2 a day. The number of unemployed in the world stands at 191.8

million.

When in the 1790s Malthus claimed that the cause of poverty was a tendency towards overpopulation, a view still held by many, he was answered by his contemporary, William Godwin, who was the first to point out that every extra mouth brought with it an extra pair of hands. According to the ILO, there are 192,000,000 pairs of hand in the world that are not currently being used. In a world geared to serving human welfare, these could be put to producing the useful things needed to make world poverty history.

The ILO's sister UN agency, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, estimated, as quoted in a book review in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (30 July), that in 2004:

"852 million people faced chronic hunger, up 15 million from the previous year. And in the same year, according to Unicef, one billion children - nearly half the children in the world - were severely deprived. More than 600 children didn't have adequate shelter, and every day,

4,000 died because of dirty water or poor sanitation."

It was to mobilise people to protest against such obscenities in a world of potential plenty that the Make History Campaign was set up - ostensibly. It now seems that the charities and others behind this were exploiting the good will and empathy with suffering fellow humans that most people feel have, for a passing narrow political end: to bring pressure to bear on the leaders of world capitalism gathered at Gleneagles in Scotland last July to get them to adopt a few much-publicised but ultimately ineffectual measures peddled by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The phoney "Make Poverty History" campaign may be over - and the charities behind it gone back to trying to empty the ocean of world poverty, each with their own teaspoon - but the campaign to make capitalism (and so world poverty) history continues.

Oil: the Niger Delta crisis

On January 11, 2006, four oil workers were kidnapped in the Niger delta in Nigeria by the militias and were released only after several weeks of negotiation between the local authority and the central government. As in so many other places, the basic issue was oil.

Nigeria's Niger Delta crisis goes back to 1920 and the treaties that the forefathers of the people of the region signed with the imperial masters in Bonny. The Niger Delta spreads out over several states and even before Nigeria's independence in October 1960, there had been serious tensions surrounding the arrangements for the government of the region.

Warri in Delta state is the second most



70 percent of Nigerians live on under one dollar per day.

important oil town in the country after Port Harcourt, the capital of River state. Delta state produces approximately 40 percent of Nigeria's oil, and it is the richest state in the Nigerian federation. Its capital is Asaba near Onitsha, the biggest commercial market in Africa. But Warri town is claimed by three ethnic groups. Port Harcourt, the capital of River state, has a mixture of small ethnic groups.

When you look at the situation in the Niger Delta, you will see reasons why they took fighting the Nigerian federation. The Niger Delta has been devastated by pollution from oil spillages. Shell has caused a lot of destruction on their land. Capitalism is only interested in making profit at the expense of the poor masses. These people have no shelter; no food, no electricity, no hospital, no school, no road, even no water for them to drink.

This struggle started in the sixties when the late Major Isaac Adaka Boro, a renegade Ijaw soldier, declared an Ijaw secession in February 1966. After him came the writer Ken Saro Wiwa. He fought against environmental pollution in the Niger Delta under the junta of General Sanni Abacha. He was tried and condemned to death by hanging in the late 90s. Recently, Alhaji Dokubo Asari, leader of Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF), started a rebellion against Nigeria. The NDPVF has been in existence since the late 1980's but not on as high a level as today.

The Niger Delta oil is shared in the following ways by the political bandits: Shell owns 30 percent, Total (formerly Elf) 10 percent, Agip 5 percent. The rest goes to Nigeria and the private partners in business.

According to OPEC, Nigeria's total oil production is 2.018 million bpd per day. And a barrel of oil cost \$30 to \$35. Where is the money from oil since the sixties till today?

The Niger Delta crisis has been going on for years but no government in Nigeria has taken the problem seriously. The people have been appealing to the government to negotiate by a peaceful political process on how to increase the little percent of oil revenues that was given to them but the government never bothers to deal with the request or the suffering of the people. And that is capitalism for you.

On December 30 1998, some unarmed Ijaw youths went on a peaceful demonstration to express their grievances to the military administrator of Bayelsa state to tell the multinational oil corporations operating in Ijaw lands and territorial waters and indeed in the larger Niger Delta to pack and leave. Instead of calming the youths down and passing their message to his boss, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, the governor ordered his military boys in the state house (which was built with oil money) to open fire on the protesters. And some protesters died and some were wounded from the gunfire. And that made the youths to go wild in their struggle.

President Abubakar and the governor who were being paid their salary from the tax collected from the poor people, moved in artillery pieces, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, as well as fast attack amphibious craft with 700 soldiers to kill their fellow compatriots whose gold and glass skyline rose out of the Delta's wealth of poverty.

The current president, Obasanjo, promised the Niger Delta that if he was elected, he would introduce a comprehensive development plan for them. But, all those promises were false; after all what did he do when, as General Obasanjo, he was head of state from 1976 to 1979?

The Nigerian military regimes have stolen so much money from the country that they have impoverished it. Each time the Niger Delta people protest, the government refers them to the secretary to government





Ken Saro Wiwa, spokesman of the Ogoni, hanged for his opposition to the Shell-backed government

or the minister of petroleum resources or some other officials who really have no capacity to take decisive steps to address the problems.

The stealing of the Nigerian mineral resources by few groups of political bandits at the helm of government has caused Nigerians to drench in misery and abject poverty. These politicians are happy to drive Lincoln navigator, Lamborghini, limousine, Cadillac, Ferrari, helicopter and jets. Whereas millions go to bed on an empty stomach in this one world. And thousands of people squeeze themselves into dilapidated buses that have no roadworthiness again or technical control.

The oil in Niger Delta is enough to sustain born and unborn Nigerians happy till eternity if properly shared among the people. Not to mention other mineral resources like coal in Enugu, rubber in Benin, cocoa in the West, palm produce, precious stones, tin ore, bauxite and even groundnuts, etc.

Because of the government negligence to the masses, unemployment is massive. Master's degree holders from reputable universities have devised their means of surviving by using motor-cycle to carry passengers for commercial purpose. Armed robbers are terrorising the poor masses. There is no security of life and property as a result of capitalism.

Today the political juggernauts who

were elected to improve on the standard of living of the people are now using the resources of the people to buy property overseas. The majority of the Nigerian politicians often have up to ten executive cars in their homes. Some even have helicopters and private jets, all at the expense of the poor masses. Without talking about their special suites in the Nicon-Noga hotel and Sheraton, all in Abuja for free at the expense of the masses from the Niger Delta oil.

The Nigeria finance minister, Mrs Ngozi Okonji Iwuala, is working tirelessly to retrieve the millions of money that was sent overseas by our political leaders, whereas millions of Naira are lying on her doorstep from these corrupt politicians. These politicians don't pay taxes or rates. They are institutions and untouchable.

Nigerian politicians drive their cars freely on the roads without police control because they all have police escorts that are always

with them. But, for a poor Nigerian to travel from Lagos to Enugu or Owerri or Umuahia or Abakaliki or Uyo or Calabar is like trying to get into heaven. The Nigerian police and the tax collectors are everywhere in the Niger Delta to the Eastern Nigeria roads stopping commuter buses and taxis every hundred metres demanding for tax and rates from the

people whose resources are taking overseas by the capitalist leaders.

It was because of the nonchalant attitude of the government, the marginalisation of the Igbos and other minorities in non power sharing, together with outside capitalist interference, that triggered the declaration of independence by Biafra in 1967. And today many are rising against the state, such as Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC) for the Yorubas. Also, the Arewa Republic for the northerners. Today, many Nigerians are no more thinking of one Nigeria but thinking of their own state secession.

Remember too that the oil that is produced in the Niger Delta costs more money to buy in Niger Delta than in Abuja or in Sokoto, which is about 3500km away from Port Harcourt. Capitalism has no soul or respect for humanity in this one world. Capitalism in Nigeria should be totally eradicated from our society otherwise there will be more kidnapping, armed robbery, guerrilla attacks by militias, strikes, violent demonstrations and anarchy that can lead to total collapse of Nigerian federation like Yugoslavia. The cruelty of capitalism in Nigeria is so cumbersome that 70 percent of Nigerians live on under one dollar per day. While a privileged minority of capitalists and corrupt politicians live more like Bill Gates.

Many Nigerians are running away from the country in search of white collar-jobs in the West because of abject poverty, political crisis and ethnic and religious inquisitions that the government cannot control. In the process, many have died in the desert or on the sea trying to cross border to the West. Many are languishing in prisons in Europe and America, just on immigration offences. Nigerians in the diaspora and at home should rise against imperialism and take the challenge upon them to address the raging crisis in Nigeria for the interest of our people through a political and economic revolution. ■

BAMIDELE C. ILOANYA

The Nicon-Noga hotel in Abuja, where rooms cost slightly more than a dollar a day.



Transport 2055: the missing scenario

In 2020 a global economic slump as severe as that of the 1930s breaks out leaving millions of unemployed in all countries. By 2022 GDP in Britain has fallen by a fifth to 80 percent of its previous level. Two years later the UK banking system collapses. Power cuts had already been routine, as in Third World countries today. In the years that follow GDP continues to fall and most people, to survive, leave the cities and settle in small communities that have to be as self-sufficient as possible, bartering with other communities for what they can't produce themselves. Some local transport is still by car but most is by bike or horse. Armed bands roam the roads between communities, and the communities have to protect themselves by equipping some of their members with Kalashnikovs. By 2043 the population of Britain has fallen from its present 60 million to only 42 million, as a result of millions migrating to other countries and millions of others dying either from sickness and disease or in armed clashes and massacres.



Futuristic low impact personal transport system

This is a scenario painted in a document published in January by a government thinktank, Foresight, which is attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, entitled *Intelligent Infrastructure Futures: The Scenarios - Towards 2055* (www.foresight.gov.uk). It is one of the four "possible futures" described in the document prepared to inform government decisions on transport policy. The other scenarios are not so nightmarish as the one above dubbed "**Tribal Trading**" by the government's futurologists. There are also "Perpetual Motion", "Good Intentions" and "Urban Colonies".

Perpetual Motion is a scenario based on the assumption that a viable alternative to carbon-based fuels for powering transport other than aviation has been found (in hydrogen). No restrictions on the use of personally-owned vehicles for individual transport are therefore necessary. At the same time Information and Communications Technology continues to develop, making possible "telepresencing" (a combination of videoconferencing and virtual reality to allow a virtual meeting where people are "present" as holograms), so reducing the need for business travel. ICT also allows people to be "always on", twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. "Even low-paid service workers are so used to being 'always available' that their holidays are no longer a real break". As a result, already by 2020, stress is "the new obesity". By 2050 over 90 percent of UK citizens are equipped with an electronic ID device "that does everything from advise them on entitlement to public benefits to alerting them when their children leave the school grounds".

The **Good Intentions** scenario assumes that oil continues to be the main source of fuel for transport and that a Kyoto-type agreement on limiting carbon emissions is eventually signed by all countries and enforced by the threat of UN sanctions. As a result the government is forced to confront the right-to-drive car lobby and impose restrictions on the use of private cars. This is assumed



to take the form of each person being allocated an individual carbon-use entitlement which can be traded for cash: "After bitter political conflicts, sometimes

violent, a tough national surveillance system means that people only travel if they have sufficient carbon quotas - and these are increasingly tightly rationed". This doesn't just apply to driving a car. The "carbon credits smart card" is "needed by any citizen who wishes to use any kind of carbon resources, from having a shower, to driving, to eating out, to listening to a digital music system".

The assumption underlying the **Urban Colonies** scenario is that the government does actually carry out the green agenda politicians are always talking about and "put clean environment practice at the heart of its economic and social policies". Most people live and work in more compact cities than today. Car use falls and is replaced by walking, cycling and public transport. "Local electric vehicles are ubiquitous". More food is grown locally, so reducing the need for transport. "Everything either gets recycled as a raw material for another production process, or returned, clean, to the earth or water. Every council runs its own 'freecycle' scheme to help people who have things they want to dispose of find a willing recipient". In 2026 a Consumer Goods Act is passed requiring all goods to be repairable. The use of open source software is widespread and "the public Internet is used only for public messages". The result is "a world in which the main aims of policy are to reduce energy consumption and eliminate waste", where "corporations have retreated from the high water mark of influence they enjoyed at the end of the 20th century".

Foresight organised a number of workshops at which their scenarios were discussed. Perpetual Motion appealed to "the business community" and the technological optimists amongst the scientists, though Good Intentions ("too much, much too late") was seen as "in some respects the most plausible scenario".

Surprisingly perhaps, the final outcome of Tribal Trading - decentralised "community-based schemes to grow food, with bartering and alternative currencies coming to the fore" - was not seen as unattractive by everyone. An outside futurologist is cited as



A modern hydrogen engine

claiming that some (presumably, Deep Greens) see this as having much in common with their aim of "ecocommunalism", though of course preferring a more planned and orderly transition to it than that set out in Foresight's scenario (though quite how the population of Britain could be reduced from 60 million to 42 million within less than forty years - by 2043 - without some enormous catastrophe is hard to see). Most workshops participants, however, saw this scenario as the least likely to happen, on the grounds that political action would be taken to avoid the event assumed to precipitate it (the sudden end of the Oil Age), even if this took the form of the "use of military force to secure additional energy supplies".

The first two scenarios - Perpetual Motion and Good Intentions - both explicitly assume the continuation of capitalism. Mobile phones and hand-held computers linked to the Internet will have their use in any future society, but the main use Foresight envisages for them is to order and pay for goods and services; at the same time they serve as a means for firms and advertisers to keep tabs on what people are buying - and for the state to keep tabs on what they are doing. A society in which workers would be subjected to such Big Brother surveillance and be forced to be available to work 24/7 is another nightmare scenario. As is one

where people have to acquire "carbon-use units" just to eat out or have a shower.

The only scenario that has any sort of attraction is Urban Colonies. But, given capitalism, this is the least likely to happen as its attractive features are precisely the ones that go against the logic of capitalism. It would still be capitalism, but a capitalism unrealistically assumed to have been tamed and humanised by taxes and government action. A capitalist world in which the main aim of policy is to reduce energy consumption and eliminate waste rather than to maximise profits? A capitalist world in which corporations have lost the influence they now have? The Internet under capitalism freed from advertising? Futurologists are allowed some flights of fancy, but this is ridiculous.

To be fair, Foresight themselves point out that this scenario "carries with it an implicit critique of market capitalism and conventional economics". They also claim that among its "guiding spirits" might be included "the Victorian socialist, William Morris". If Morris had to choose just between the four scenarios on offer he might well have chosen this one, but he wouldn't have regarded it as socialism. He once asked why in a socialist society would a law against adulteration be needed since no one would then have any reason to adulterate food. Such a law only makes sense in a society based on competition for profits where some firms will always be tempted to take this short cut to profitability. Much the same could be said of the 2026 Consumer Goods Act passed to force firms to produce products that are easily repairable. Why in a socialist society would anyone want to produce something with welded or moulded parts just so that people have to get a new one if it breaks down (quite apart from wanting to make something scientifically calculated to break down earlier than it need)?

Foresight have missed out one other "possible future": a

scenario in which sometime in the course of the next fifty years a world-wide political movement sweeps away capitalism and production for profit and ushers in a society based on the common ownership and democratic control of productive resources. On this basis humans are in charge of their social environment and what they decide to do can be implemented without coming up against the barriers of profit and the market or the vested interests of an entrenched propertied class.

In the field of transport, it can be imagined that a "right to mobility" is available to everyone by means of a comprehensive and efficient free public transport system and access to free public vehicles. This could involve, in an urban context, a hydrogen-powered automatic transit system, flexible and demand-responsive public vehicles which are a hybrid between buses and taxis (both as in the Urban Colonies scenario, but free), supplemented by a fleet of public self-drive vehicles for hiring without charge when needed for a specific journey or period. Under these circumstances, privately-owned vehicles for the exclusive use of one person or family would not be necessary and the congestion and pollution caused by present-day dependency on private cars for travel avoided. All this would be in the overall context of a society where production would no longer be for sale on a market with a view to profit, but for use so that only good-quality, easy-to-repair products would be made and, as a society geared to serving human welfare, clean environmental practices would be adopted as a matter of course.

This of course is only a scenario. But at least it does better than the Foresight document with its three nightmares and one non-starter. ■

ADAM BUICK

Post Office Workers Unite Across the Sectarian Divide



On 1 February postal delivery personnel at Royal Mail's main sorting office in Tomb Street, Belfast went on unofficial strike, claiming one of their colleagues had been accused of bullying and that procedures not provided for in the agreed disciplinary guide lines were being used by management and these amounted to bullying.

A counter-claim of harassment and bullying was immediately made by management but the strikers' demand for an independent inquiry was aggressively refused with the usual strike-breaking formula that there could be no talks until the strikers returned to work.

Whatever the facts behind the conflicting claims, Post Office management immediately launched a bellicose broadside against the postal delivery staff, obviously confident that the threat of legal action would bring the workers to heel. However, there is a

growing sense of frustration among many workers at Tory and Labour Party laws aimed at crippling traditional defensive strategies and, in this case there is no doubt that threats and managerial tough talk promoted an insignificant incident that should have been solved in-house into a serious dispute now, as we write, entering its third week and bristling with angry exchanges.

In a move that is certainly not calculated to promote a peaceful settlement of the dispute Post Office management have announced that they are bringing in fifty managerial strike breakers from England. The intent of that threat might be judged by the total inadequacy of fifty such heroes to substitute for some three hundred staff familiar with the territory. Again, management pulled out of a meeting with union officials on 12 February when they learnt that local union officials would be part of the union delegation. Negotiations have now moved to London and since it is an unofficial strike that means that local staff will not be represented.

Post Office Management's tactics seem a classical example of how not to resolve an industrial dispute; indeed, its entire strategy most raise considerations of a wider hidden agenda.

One striker interviewed by a Belfast Telegraph reporter in the second week of the strike said he had already had to borrow money from his brother to meet the needs of himself and his family. 'It's starting to bite for us', he said, 'we didn't go into this lightly. It's the coldest time of year, why would we choose to do this unless it was the last resort? We are determined to stick it out because there are people's jobs at stake here.'

The so-called 'business community' rail about their potential loss unmindful of the more intense poverty being endured by the strikers and their families, but are now forced to a realisation of the importance of the postmen and women to their business. But support among the general public is strong.

To their very great credit the postal workers have risen above the rotten sectarian values that the political bigots stitch into all kinds of activities in Northern Ireland. The strike started when postal staff from north, west and south Belfast walked out reportedly after an incident involving a worker from the Shankill Road district. Because postal workers have been murdered by sectarian killers and, in the nature of their job are vulnerable to sectarian attacks, it is customary for Catholics and Protestants to work 'Protestant' areas. Nowhere would this evil necessity be more pointed than in the 'Catholic' Falls district and the 'Protestant' Shankill areas. On the Tuesday following the start of the dispute the strikers marched together on both the Falls Road and the Shankill Road uniquely demonstrating that the class war can transcend the squalid sectarian war and the people in these hard-line areas cheered them.

Anywhere else a few hundred strikers marching up and down the road would have little significance; in Belfast, and especially in the areas in which they choose to march, it probably did more to advance real peace and understanding than all the current vaporising of the politicians. ■

RM



Tourism: sea, sand - and land speculation

We all need a break from time to time but do we ever stop to consider the impact and negative effects on the local communities where we choose to spend our hard-earned leisure time? Do we stop and consider what kind of holiday the people who are servicing our needs on our holiday get, if at all?

The majority of employment opportunities created by tourism worldwide for local populations is that of the low-paid service sector kind. Rarely regular work, and for a few months of the year only with no health insurance or pension contributions and no promise of job security. No thought of a holiday for them - just will there be enough money to last through the lean months, to feed the family, buy new school clothes and books for the kids, or fuel for the winter?

The following observations are based on eight years of being domiciled in a part of south west Turkey.

The small town in whose administrative area I live is but one example of what is happening at an ever-increasing rate in many areas of Turkey and other parts of the world too - a headlong rush to develop anywhere, anyhow, the primary criterion to make as much money as possible in as short a time as possible and never mind the consequences. As everywhere, the few get richer whilst some of the poor sell family land during the boom expecting a one-time sale to provide benefits and long-term security for this and the next generation, expectations far exceeding realistic possibilities in many cases. Teenagers are sent to study at one of the many tourism schools or colleges in order to learn English well enough to enter the world of work in the service sector.

Traditionally, farming was the major occupation in this area, mostly small owner-occupier farms with a few animals. Crops are cotton, maize, sesame, citrus fruits and salad crops. Plus there has always been a small fishing community. Electricity arrived about forty years ago, at about the same time as a tarmac road from the nearby small market town. At that time tourism was virtually unknown, more a backpackers' destination for those prepared to camp out or have access to only basic facilities. Now this has become a destination of choice. A week or two of guaranteed sun, cheap accommodation, food and booze, family holidays, adventure, discos and dancing. Tree-covered mountainsides with fabulous sea views are being cleared to be crowded instead with concrete holiday villages. Rivers, reed beds and formerly remote coves are being polluted by the influx of too many people too much of the time.

Marinas, golf courses, all-inclusive hotels and the inevitable infrastructure needed to connect them to highways and airports; huge road widening projects, tunnels through mountains - great for GDP and jobs in the short term, catastrophe for the environment in the long term.

Now, however, the latest developments move in another direction. Prime farming land is being turned into housing estates for incomers as it is in other areas currently seen to be 'good value' (i.e. cheaper than Western Europe), e.g. Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania etc, etc. The western working class, or some of them, can now afford to saddle themselves with a second mortgage/home, can invest in property in order to cash in later or offer their property for holiday let and probably pay no tax on earned income in either country. There is a feeling of well-being, having succeeded in obtaining a level of affluence once only dreamed of, an affluence entirely dependent on the system continuing to keep them in paid work for years to come. The incomers are perceived as wealthy, their 'second home' here being much bigger and more luxurious than the locals' single, existing and often shared, home. The difference in average wages

the visitors have unlimited money to throw around if they don't question the prices quoted or constantly comment on how cheap everything is in comparison with western Europe; a mix which causes problems of rip-offs and frauds, imagined and real, followed by mistrust on both sides. Resentment is growing. In a national, daily Turkish newspaper there was an article recently referring to ghettoization which said, roughly translated, 'Don't be surprised to wake up one morning to find GO HOME BRITS scrawled on your wall.'

This aspect of 'foreigners', i.e. Europeans, letting their property through the internet or privately but admitting only to owner-occupation (although the truth is clear to others in the neighbourhood) has begun to be a bone of contention with local hotel, boarding house and restaurant owners who see their own business potential declining and income reduced as a consequence of unfair competition. Legitimate businesses have overheads not encountered by private individuals and undeclared income in the capitalist system is seen as theft and unfair advantage.

Outside the central area (where most development has taken place and little farmland remains) some families are keen to sell land to cash in before the bubble bursts but they can only sell it once. Once sold there is no possibility to farm it and herein lies another problem. Why would anyone want to sell good productive farmland? The farming sector is suffering from the unfair market place and falling prices for producers. Tomato crops are being ploughed into the ground. The area once prized for cotton sees less of it grown year by year. Foreign subsidised imports are cheaper for the textile industry. Unless they have a large family to work for free the farmers can't afford to pay pickers (last year at £4 a day) and the crop is left to rot. Some farmers and/or their children are moving into the tourism sector and allied occupations, occupations with low pay and no security. Government, however, has policies regarding tourism numbers etc., as do governments the world over, all seen as large £, \$ or Euro signs. It's the fastest growing industry and therefore to be prized and commended. The money comes into the country; where it goes after arrival is not of primary importance. Laws have been relaxed allowing (encouraging?) the sale of land which was formerly protected from development, even in environmentally sensitive areas.

The rich get richer, the poor - well, we know about that one....

According to received wisdom, for 'richer' read 'more money', 'more buying power', 'ownership' and for 'poor' read 'less money', 'less buying power', 'dependence';



*Above: a typical holiday village.
Below: traditional farming methods are still employed in parts of Turkey*



between host country and the home country is such that it adds to the illusion of everyone in Europe being wealthy. Both sides are guilty of being unaware of the other's actual living costs. The incomers aren't familiar with the real (lower) monetary cost of things here or of the actual wages to be had and the locals think

a scale of measurement based on one factor only.

A brief scan of television advertising by the tourism agencies of a number of countries shows a large representation from those 'poorer' countries. As is to be expected, only the positive side is promoted, the advertisers seeking to trick potential travellers into seeing only what the advertisers want them to see and often carefully protecting them from seeing the 'real' country when they arrive by arranging suitable tours and escorted visits which skirt the worst areas, i.e. the areas where the majority of the population have to live and work. 'Incredible India' portrayed as rich in culture, diversity, history; 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' steeped in ancient culture with a rich variety of wildlife and welcoming nationals to serve all your needs; 'Jordan'- history, architecture, wild, exciting landscapes and outdoor activity; 'The Maldives' destination for outstanding hospitality, crystal clear sea and mouth-watering cuisine. No mention or sight of the teeming millions living in abject poverty in huge slums with no access to clean water; or of undemocratic repressive regimes, or of sensitive environments being degraded to build first-world standard accommodation and golf courses, or of human rights abuses. Just bring us your money and let the ever-increasing divide grow some more.

Who's to blame? The 'rich' working class of the West? No, they're guilty of having been duped by the system they live under to believe that they have a good life, even while they're complaining about working too many hours, worrying what will happen to their pension, trying to live up to the expectations thrust on them by the capitalist media. The poorer working classes of the countries now being subjected to tourism can hardly be blamed either for trying to improve their lives and living conditions. Why shouldn't they have a piece of the pie?

Both sections of the working class are to be blamed for one thing though and that is for not recognising that they aren't on different sides, they are one and the same. They all need employment, a job or a handout on a regular basis. Without this they are finished. No holiday. No home. No food. No clothes. No nothing. They are to be blamed for not recognising it is the capitalist system itself that is to blame, that causes the divide between rich and poor, of whatever level, that actively works to set one section of the working class against another, to prevent them from working together against the system. How else could such a pernicious system prevail? When the working class of the world eventually understand this we'll be well on our way to achieving our goal. ■

Janet Surman

Here's to Success!

Do you think everyone has an equal chance of success in life? That whatever family circumstances you were born into make little or no difference to the prospect of your getting on in the world? If so, think again. Danny Dorling, a Professor of Human Geography, was interviewed in the *Guardian* of 8 February. Where you are born, he claims, is the main thing that determines your status, health and wealth in later life. And by the end of your first two decades, your future is mostly decided:

'By 18 or 20 your life is largely mapped out for you. You'll either have interesting jobs where you use your mind your whole life, or your life will be working in a servile occupation.'

In addition, inequality in Britain has increased: in 2000, the wealthiest 1 percent owned 23 percent of the wealth, compared to 18 percent in 1990.

This is all very well, and certainly Dorling's website at <http://www.worldmapper.org> is worth a look. But Socialists have news for the good professor: what determines your standard of living, your control over your life, etc. is which of the two main classes you belong to. The overwhelming majority of

people are members of the working class: selling their mental or physical abilities for a wage or salary (or else depending on another family member who does so). A small minority are members of the capitalist class: they own enough property, whether in the form of land or shares, so that they do not need to work for a living. The contrast between interesting jobs and servile occupations is a division within the working class. The capitalists, as millionaires and billionaires, do not have to get a job - though they often have some cushy number with a title such as Managing Director or Chair of the Board, where they make sure that the interests of shareholders in a company are being looked after properly.

These classes are not castes: it's certainly possible for a person to move from one to another. Members of the working class do occasionally become capitalists, largely through a sizeable slice of luck. But in almost all cases, the class you are born into determines whether you will grow up as an exploiter or a wage slave. So, if 'where you are born' determines how your life will pan out, that has to be seen as a matter of class, not of geography.

PB



Cooking the Books (2)

What is capitalism's true course?

Is capitalism inherently anti-human-welfare or is it just bad policies that make it that way?

An article in the *Financial Times* last year (11 October) by Raymond Baker and Jennifer Nordin entitled "How dirty money thwarts capitalism's true course" put the case for the second view. According to them, capitalism's "true course" is to take into account ethical considerations, what Adam Smith called "moral sentiments", when pursuing profits. Unfortunately, they say, these days this is no longer the case (but was it ever?). "Global capitalists" have chosen to put "maximising profits" before "pursuing lawful and just business transactions", with the result that a "dirty money" structure has grown up consisting of "tax havens, secrecy jurisdictions, abusive transfer pricing, dummy companies, anonymous trusts, hidden accounts, solicitation of ill-gotten gains, kickbacks", etc, etc.

They ask themselves: "Why has so much unethical behaviour become business as usual? One explanation is greed, pure and simple. But this does not adequately explain the phenomenon and demeans many in business who believe they are operating in an ethical manner. An overriding commitment to maximising gains, taking priority over principles comes closer."

Not just "comes closer", we'd say, but is the whole explanation. Capitalism runs on the basis of firms seeking to maximise profits which are then accumulated as further capital invested in further profit-making. As Marx put it, "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!" (Capital, Volume I, chapter 24, section 3). But Becker and Nordin are right that this has nothing to do with personal greed on the part of individual capitalists. It's something that is built-in to the system which those having to take decisions about economic matters have to abide by or risk the business they own or manage going under. Which is why the authors' vision of a "free market system with a sense of justice and fair play" is no more than a pipedream.

A more realistic assessment of

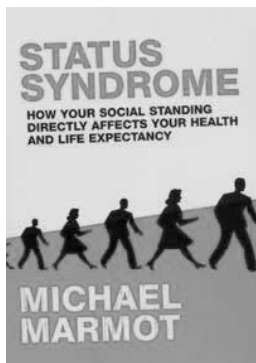
capitalism was given by Robert Newman in an article in the *Guardian* (2 February):

"Capitalism is not sustainable by its very nature. It is predicated on infinitely expanding markets, faster consumption and bigger production in a finite planet. And yet this ideological model remains the central organising principle of our lives, and as long as it continues to be so it will automatically undo (with its invisible hand) every single green initiative anybody cares to come up with. Much discussion of energy, with never a word about power, leads to the fallacy of a low-impact, green capitalism somehow put at the service of environmentalism. In reality, power concentrates around wealth. Private ownership of trade and industry means that the decisive political force in the world is private power. The corporation will outflank every puny law and regulation that seeks to constrain its profitability."

This is well said. A green capitalism is just as much a pipedream as an ethical capitalism or, as we have been saying for ages, a capitalism reformed to benefit the workers. The only possible capitalism is the one we've got: a profit-maximising one.

Get Rich, Get Well

Michael Marmot: **Status Syndrome.** Bloomsbury £7.99



Sir Michael Marmot is Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College, London. The author is not a socialist - if anything he is something of an establishment figure, a doctor working as an epidemiologist

(that is a medical statistician) - but he is very much concerned with health and how it is affected by the kind of society we live in. And he makes his case with polished logic, humanity, and humour. This is not a dry-as-dust book of statistics, but a critical examination of the relationship of society to health.

The basic premise is that matters of disease and mortality follow a gradient that has been statistically proven to be hierarchical. Those at the top of the hierarchy have less illness and live longer and as we go down the hierarchy illness increases and life gets shorter. No surprise there, One would immediately conclude that this is purely a matter of economics: the rich live better than the poor. But there is more to it than that. For instance in a Whitehall study of English civil servants, at the ages of forty to sixty-four those at the bottom of the hierarchy have four times greater risk of dying than those at the top.

Taking it as read that absolute poverty has very definite effects on health, Marmot puts the question in true socialist style, 'what is poverty?', and quotes Adam Smith's definition that poverty is relative to the standard of what is considered necessary to exist in the society in which you live. The level of what can be considered as poverty is changing all the time and varies from country to country, between rich and poor nations. Therefore the state of health of the absolute poor in say North America may be better than that of the absolute poor in Gambia. But as you go up the ladder health and mortality also vary in direct relationship. In other words those at the top in a rich country will live longer and have less disease than those at the top in a poor country, and this applies to all the gradients in between. Why? Are there other factors than money involved?

Marmot answers this question by identifying the missing factor as that of control. It is the amount of control you have over your life. He illustrates how this can vary by whatever position you occupy on the social ladder. He then shows how this is related to the amount of stress you are under and backs this up with medical expertise from his training as a doctor to show how physiological and neurological stress can affect health. This is especially connected with heart disease, one of the biggest killers of all.

To quote, "The importance of money for health depends on how much money you had to begin with. If you have little to begin with more money will improve health by meeting basic needs of food, shelter and

sanitation. Above that level, when the problems of privation have been solved how much money you have is not as important as how much you have relative to others in society. It is this relative income that determines what you can do with what you have. We need a richer understanding that poverty and wealth are not only about money."

Marmot raises all the objections that could be raised to his arguments and knocks them down one by one. On the genes versus environment battle he demonstrates how environment can shape genetic influence, and he is particularly scathing on the pro-genetic argument that the rich are where they are because they are genetically programmed to be successful, and demonstrates conclusively that advantage comes from social background, i.e. that where you come from largely governs where you end up. He punctures the league table myth of school results, and demonstrates that league tables are a very accurate indicator of where the school is situated in society. All of this is backed up with statistical evidence.

Neither does he think that poverty and social hierarchies are inevitable. They can be changed. Well, it seems that he thinks there will always be a hierarchy of some sort, but that the gap can be narrowed. At heart he is a reformer who thinks that the answers come with government action, but then he wouldn't be a sir if he was a socialist, would he? Never mind, this is a cracking book and a very good read, which backs up the socialist case from an impeccable source. Reading this book, you are left in no doubt that capitalism is bad for your health.

CYR

Radical London

"Fagin": **Reds on the Green: A Short Tour of Clerkenwell Radicalism.** Past Tense Publications, £2.00.

It was water that named Clerkenwell; a village with several wells, one of which, the Clerk's Well, that gave its name to the area. The River Fleet ran through, from its sources on Hampstead Heath to where it enters the River Thames near Blackfriars Bridge.

First mentioned in this brief account of Clerkenwell, is the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, where Wat Tyler and the rebel peasants ransacked the Savoy Palace in the Strand, home of John of Gaunt, then the Fleet Prison, crossed into Clerkenwell and set fire to the Priory of the Order of Saint John. In 1665 refugees from the Plague, and in 1666, from the Great Fire of London, moved northwards from the City to Clerkenwell. By the late 17th century, there had been an influx of craftsmen into the area, including many watchmakers and locksmiths. Clerkenwell

Clerkenwell workhouse in the early 19th century



soon became a slum in which thousands of poverty-stricken workers scraped an existence. Parts of the area were notorious for beggars, casual labourers and prostitutes. In the 1800s, the police rarely went into the part of Clerkenwell known as the Rookeries.

Clerkenwell Green became famous, or maybe infamous, for meetings and demonstrations. In 1838, when the Tolpuddle Martyrs returned from their transportation to Australia after being pardoned, some of them were welcomed by a large demonstration on the Green. Indeed, it was the heart of the radical political scene in Victorian London, and was the central venue for public meetings, demonstrations and clashes between Chartists and the recently formed Metropolitan Police Force. In November 1867, there were two demonstrations to protest against the death sentence on three Irish Fenians in Manchester, who were later hanged at Strangeways Prison. In 1882, a large cache of Fenian arms were discovered at St John Street, nearby.

The pamphlet *Reds on the Green* notes that in 1871, there were meetings supporting the Paris Commune, and for the Commune's duration, a red flag hung from the lamp-post on the Green. In 1884, the Social Democratic Federation held meetings there. By the end of the Victorian era, it was a major centre for regular soap-box speakers, as well as a venue for open-air radical meetings and demonstrations.

The author gives a brief account of a number of radical mavericks, such as Dan Chatterton and the anarchist-communist Guy Aldred, who were born and grew up in Clerkenwell. Mention is made of The House (no. 37 Clerkenwell Green), built in 1738, where William Morris and Eleanor Marx addressed crowds from the balconies of the building, and which, since 1933, has housed the Marx Memorial Library. Mention is also made of a certain V Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, who used the offices of SDF's Twentieth Century Press to edit the paper *Iskra* in 1902. (It is noted that Lenin established a state-capitalist dictatorship.)

The pamphlet concludes with an Appendix of recommended pubs to visit in Clerkenwell. It is well illustrated and is obtainable from: Past Tense Publications, c/o 56A Info Shop, 56 Crampton Street, London, SE17.

PEN

Dictator revealed

Simon Sebag Montefiore **Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar.** Orion, £9.99.



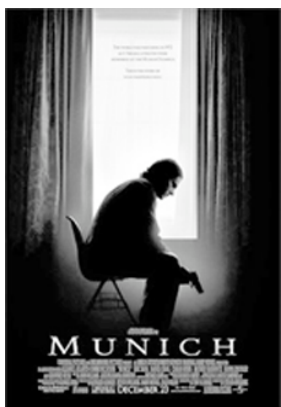
Montefiore's blockbuster is a mighty, novel-like biography of Stalin and the evil apparatchik that attained the economic and political dominance of a ruling class in Russia following on the Bolshevik coup d'etat of 1917. But don't look for

explanations of the Bolshevik phenomenon or why someone like Lenin, closely familiar with the writings of Marx, Engels and the pioneers of scientific socialism, should lay the foundations for the establishment of an empire at least on a par with the concurrent social evil of Hitler's Nazi Germany.

All things within the wide ambit of the awful world of Joseph Stalin's Russia are

Munich (2005)

Directed by Steven Spielberg
Written by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth
Based on Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-terrorist Team by George Jonas



Early in the morning of 5 September 1972, Palestinian terrorists stormed the quarters of the Israeli delegation to the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, killing two athletes and taking nine

others hostage. In the botched German police raid that followed, one policeman, five of the eight kidnapers, and all nine hostages were killed. The three surviving kidnapers were released by Germany after the hijacking of a Lufthansa passenger jet the next month. Steven Spielberg's latest pseudo-historical film, Munich, tells the story of the Mossad hit squad charged with tracking down and killing the terrorists thought to be responsible for the Munich massacre.

To head the squad, Israeli prime minister Golda Meir personally selects her former bodyguard, Avner. Joining him are Hans, a former antiques dealer who forges the group's documents; Robert, a toymaker who builds their bombs; Carl, the "worrier" who erases evidence from the crime scenes; and Steve, the Jewish-supremacist getaway driver. Though none of the five men have prior training as assassins, they successfully engineer the shootings and bombings of some half dozen of their eleven targets. Much of their intelligence is purchased from Louis, a shadowy French anarchist who helps them in the mistaken belief that they are not government agents. Louis's father was a French Resistance fighter during the war but is now disillusioned with statism. "We paid this price so Vichy scum could be replaced with Gaullist scum, and the Nazis could be replaced by Stalin and America ... We don't work with governments," he says, as if complicity in an assassination is

somehow justified when no state is involved.

After the first few killings, the hit squad begin to have doubts about whether what they are doing is right. The mild-mannered Robert has trouble reconciling his behaviour with his sense of identity as a Jew ("Jews don't do wrong because our enemies do wrong... We're supposed to be righteous.") and later as a human being. Avner frames the dilemma in more practical terms, noting that they have been given no proof that any of their targets had any hand in the Munich incident, and moreover that for every terrorist they kill a new and more fanatical one steps in to take his place. Only Steve remains resolute in his devotion to their task. "Stop your agonizing!" he barks to the others. "It's counterproductive." However, in the end the other squad members are unable to come to terms with their actions. Three of them are killed - one probably by suicide - and Avner eventually returns home to his wife and child with deep emotional scars.

That *Munich* does not endorse any political point of view comes as somewhat of a surprise from Spielberg, an ardent supporter of Israel. The film's purpose is simply to show the effects of politically motivated violence, both on its victims and its perpetrators, and to demonstrate its futility. For this reason, it has come under attack by both the left and the right, the former for humanizing the Israeli assassins, and the latter for making uncomfortably close comparisons between the Palestinian terrorists and the Israeli counter-terrorists. What socialists will find distressing about the film, however, is that it offers only the shallowest of analyses of the socio-economic causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and likewise does not point to any particular solutions. These flaws are especially disappointing considering that screenwriter Tony Kushner describes himself as a "historical materialist socialist". Some characters in the film see the conflict as a religious and racial issue, but the film never uses historical materialism to trace these views to their socio-economic source, nor socialist theory to show that the Israeli and Palestinian assassins, as members of the working class, have more in common with each other than with their respective government leaders. The best we get is some unresolved moral agonizing and the failure of religion and patriotism to assuage the assassins' guilty consciences.

explicable to Montefiore in terms of an ill-conceived notion of Marxism. His research is punctilious to the extent where he can report dialogue between some of the most nefarious characters to (dis)grace European history between capitalism's two world wars. With minute precision he reports the economic lunacies of the forced collectivisation period, the mass murder of literally millions of peasants, the grim destruction of the lives of men, women and children who are made enemies because they are not deemed to be friends; here and there is the profanity of humour within this coterie of evil men with power over life and death who themselves are beholden to a master with power over their life and death. And all this is put down by Montefiore as a consequence of a contamination by 'Marxism', a claim with as much justification as blaming god for the ravages of a tsunami; a claim unsupported by the pointed absence

of any of Marx's writings from the generous bibliography.

The fact that the author knows nothing about Marxism, while clearly doing no service to that subject, perhaps rescues the narrative from a taxing analysis that might have impeded this grim, gossipy biography of men and women striving for power with the tenacity of private entrepreneurial billionaires because power in state capitalism, like money in 'western' capitalism, is truly a universal medium of exchange.

Stalin is an easy read, perhaps a little tedious in its replication and its 'facts' coloured often in that they are the post-Stalin 'justifications' by Stalin's surviving accomplices or relatives of both friends and foes still extant. In summary, Montefiore is an good writer, a good storyteller and a lousy historian.

RM

letters continued

We don't understand the logic of your position: why vote for something you know is pointless? We suspect, though, that you have a "vanguardist" approach and were just opportunistically using the No campaign to attract a following and that by "socialism" you mean some sort of national state capitalism - Editors.

Right about Venezuela

Dear Editors

I read your November issue about Venezuelan president Chavez. I think the left is wrong to support Chavez. He and his supporters want to keep capitalism but reform it so that the part played by state is increased. Their ultimate goal may be establishing a Cuban-style state capitalism in Venezuela accompanied of course by political dictatorship.

I think socialists should expose this reformist bourgeois leader and his supporters and call for working class power in Venezuela. A multi-party socialist state in which the working class rules over the society and expropriates capitalists and petty bourgeoisie and establishes common ownership of means of production and distribution of wealth is the only revolutionary answer to all the poverty, inequality and political dictatorship that capitalism causes at the present time in all countries of the world.

I also condemn those members of the murderous capitalist ruling class of the United States that plan for terror on Chavez.

Down with capitalism! Freedom, equality, worker power!

SIAMAK HAGHIGHAT (by email)

We generally agree except that we wouldn't talk about a state or the working class existing in socialism - Editors.

Given this nebulous treatment, there is the danger that viewers will be led to conclude there is no solution to conflicts such as those in the Middle East. But perhaps at least some will be stimulated into thinking about the real source of political violence, whom it benefits, and how to stop it once and for all.

TRISTAN MILLER

WSM FORUM

- Want to talk about what you've just read?
- Can't make it to a meeting?
- Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the forum via www.worldsocialism.org

Middle-East Diary



One of the most recent and rather curious examples to appear on the nationalisation scene, is the Israeli General Zionist (Conservative) Party. They want to nationalise the various Israeli water-schemes, the Health Service and the Labour Exchanges.

Strangely enough the Mapai (Labour) Party, who have been in power since 1948 are bitterly opposed. Through their domination of the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut (roughly analogous to the T.U.C. but also owning and controlling the major part of Israel's industry) the Mapai control most of Israel's economy and are extremely loath to give up their political plums!

The General Zionists, on the other hand, want nationalisation measures to break the Mapai Party's hold on the state machine, all of which we can well understand, sectional struggles amongst the Capitalist class being a regular feature of Capitalism. The tragedy is that Israel workers take sides in this struggle between these parties (both of whom are only interested in perpetuating Capitalism), instead of organising for Socialism.

Two Classes in Israeli Society

In March of last year the *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review* (25.3.55) informed its readers that

"Israel has become divided into two nations . . . an upper crust and a lower layer. The privileged crust is composed of a variety of substantial and mixed elements who enjoy a privileged position in the country. They are made up by the plutocracy of some three hundred families, by the Government 'aristocracy' which

includes a wide range of officialdom, the Histadrutocracy with its manifold operations, the business pressure groups entrenched in the upper reaches of the General Zionists, the old Kibbutzim, such workers' organisations as the Dan and Egged Bus Co-operatives, the upper reaches of such institutions, as the Jewish Agency and of the main political parties-Mapai, the General Zionists. . . ."

"*The four per cent.*: These are the people in the swim. They can get things-flats, cars, trips abroad, the comforts and conveniences of life, or the profits of business, or the positions of power, according to the category to which they belong. . . ."

"Newcomers since 1948 comprise 60 percent of the population and occupy one percent of all Government posts and virtually none in the high grades."

The article goes on to point out that the personal consumption budgets of the above mentioned 300 families is "around £50,000 per year per family at a time when the income of the highest official is less than a tenth of this amount".

All of which was pointed out by the Socialist Party of Great Britain years ago and only goes to prove our contention, that national struggles-whether of the Zionist (Jewish Home) category or otherwise, are not in the interest of the working-class.

From an article by Jon Keys, *Socialist Standard*, March 1956

Meetings

Manchester One-Day School

Housing - Health - Poverty

Speakers: **Mike Foster** (Birmingham)
Ric Best (Lancaster)

Saturday, **25th March**, 1-5pm
Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, next to Central Library

Clapham

Saturday, **18th March**,
11am to 5pm

BOOK AND MUSIC TAPE SALE

Socialist Party Head Office,
52 Clapham High St, SW4
(nearest tube: Clapham North).

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the

last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Whip Who Cracked

It can't all be fun, being a Blair Babe. When Labour came to power in 1997 quite a few of those female MPs were spoken of as

future Prime Ministers. With nice, expectant smiles they clustered around their leader, still aglow from his promise that "A new dawn has broken, has it not?" But since those intoxicated days a cruel reality has taken over as one Babe after another has slid down the greasy pole.

Ann Taylor was sacked from the job as Chief Whip, apparently because of her inept manner of telling Blair what to do and say - which would have been some way beyond the job of simply offering him advice. Estelle Morris dismissed herself from the Department of Education because it was all too much for her; she worried so cripplingly about decisions that in the end she disabled herself from taking any - apart from her resignation, that is. Beverley Hughes had to go from the Home Office after denying that she knew about fraudulent asylum applications from Romania and Bulgaria when there was conclusive evidence, which eventually washed her away, that she did know. Ruth Kelly's hold on the job of Education Secretary looks increasingly fragile; apart from anything else, the fate of the latest clutch of changes in education looks more uncertain by the day.

And then there is the present Chief Whip, Hilary Armstrong, who has always been one of the more vociferous and combative Blair Babes, but who upset Blair when she lost a crucial House of Commons vote through her own misguided efforts. It happened when the Commons defeated the government on amendments to the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill. Armstrong miscounted the votes in favour of the unamended Bill and told Blair that it was safe for him to go home; in the event, with the aid of rebellious Labour MPs, the government lost - by just the one vote.

Aristocrat

Armstrong was a leading light in the 1997 Blair Babes, apparently looking forward to a bright future. It is different now, after eight years of New Labour's version of controlling British capitalism. "A disaster where women are concerned," was how one of her colleagues described her. "She has no respect in the parliamentary party...She is seen as someone who crawls to Downing Street and regards the parliamentary party with contempt," was the opinion of one peeved MP. Such ratings probably don't register with her; she is, after all, a kind of Labour Party aristocrat, inheriting her seat - Durham North West - from her father, who was also a Chief Whip in a Harold Wilson Government in the days before bouncy media types had titillated Labour's women with a saucy brand name like Blair Babes. She has said that her father's diaries informed her that a Whip leads a hard life, although her rise to the Cabinet was rather easier than it usually is for others; she was selected as the candidate for Durham North West at her first attempt and was appointed as Chief Whip after only a brief spell as a junior minister for local government in John Prescott's cumbersome monster of a department covering Environment, Transport and the Regions. There are comforts in the patronage traditionally associated with an aristocracy and clearly Armstrong has taken advantage of them.

The office of the Whips came into its own with the polarisation of the parties consequent on the 1832 Reform Act. Before then parliamentary business had been the concern of the Speaker; the Whips, using a social network centred on exclusive London clubs like Brooks and Whites, were supposed to "give advice" to MPs on how they might think about voting. The pairing system, now an important part of the Whip's work (as Armstrong, after her disastrous miscounting, must now know) was largely left for the MPs to arrange themselves. After the Act the Whips took on these duties, as well as developing links between MPs and the government. This was, they said, a matter of "continuity" - a word ominous rather



Beverley Hughes



Ruth Kelly



Ann Taylor

than reassuring.

Heath

The late Ted Heath, who was Chief Whip in the Conservative governments between 1955 and 1959, described the work as "above all, to hold the parliamentary party together" and in more detail: "I was determined to get away from the generally held view . . . that the Whips were a gang of ignorant bullies, forcing Members of Parliament to vote in certain ways, all too often against their wishes." There are, of course, other responsibilities. Heath recalled one, not untypical, early morning incident when he telephoned an absent MP whose vote was needed, to be told by the MP's sleepy wife that he was, as usual, at the Commons. Such chance events, said Heath, helped the Whips keep an eye on Members with long-term matrimonial problems and so avoid a scandal. He did not also say that such wayward MPs might be effectively reminded of their obligations to vote as the party wished by a little prudent blackmail.

In his memoirs *The Course of My Life*, Heath gives some indication of what is implied by the phrase "to hold the parliamentary party together". His time as Chief Whip coincided with the Suez invasion; he had serious reservations about this, in particular about the secret agreement between Britain, France and Israel which encouraged Israel to attack Egypt and so provide a spurious justification for the Anglo-French attack. But when a Tory MP who had abstained in the Commons vote on the war asked him outright if there had been such a secret plot, Heath "looked (him) straight in the eyes and said nothing. He understood completely". But it seems that such adaptability of principles on Heath's part was only achieved at some cost. Before he joined the Whip's office Heath was known as a gregarious, convivial Member. The



Estelle Morris

years devoted to "holding the party together" - suppressing his own responses to events in order to stifle potential rebellion and to manage the government vote - had left its mark on him. He was on course to become Prime Minister but he had become an unbending, obsessive man with an apparent mission in life to be as rude and contemptuous to as many of the people he called his colleagues, as possible. Iain Macleod, who was one of his bitterest enemies in the Tory party, damned him as "totally unable to make a speech that anybody can listen to . . . no feeling for words at all, no feeling for the rhythm of language".

Armstrong

Heath would have been appalled to the point of apoplexy at the confusion which led to Hilary Armstrong losing the vote on the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill, and in such humiliating circumstances. Of course she has had what might be called her successes, which means she has wangled, or cajoled, or bullied, MPs into voting against their first inclinations and to support the government on issues like the attack on Iraq, with its loss of tens of thousands of lives. Such achievements in the cause of British capitalism have not softened the antagonism towards her. When she is full cry in the Commons she makes her points - if that is what she is doing - in a voice which has earned her the nickname of Squawker. When Michael Howard, then Tory leader, taunted



Hilary Armstrong

Blair by reading extracts from Stephen Pollard's highly embarrassing biography of David Blunkett, Armstrong's contribution to the debate was to throw the book across the despatch box into the groin of a Tory front bencher (who reacted as if he had been shot there. Well, this was the House of Commons and not a school playground).

Armstrong's blunder on this Bill was only one of a series of recent defeats for the government which, with other events such as the result of the by-election on Dunfermline and West Fife, seem to have persuaded many Labour MPs, up to now myopically loyal, that their best hope of survival at the next election lies in timely rebellion. In the face of this cynicism Armstrong has a desperate struggle to hold the parliamentary party together - a struggle in which she will employ as much cynicism as have the rebels. Of all the dirty jobs in politics that of the Chief Whip is among the dirtiest, most contaminating. And that goes for much of what capitalism demands, day in and day out, to hold it together. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

Still Accumulating

In last month's column we reported on how in India capitalism was repeating the process that Karl Marx had analysed in Capital, under the heading of the primitive accumulation of capital; now an identical procedure is being carried out in China. "Several people have been injured in the latest violent clash between villagers and armed police in southern China. ...China reported 74,000 demonstrations involving more than a 100 people in 2004." (*Times*, 16 January) These demonstrations are by farmers protesting at the seizure by the government of land that they have tilled for generations. The seizures are extremely violent as shown by the death of three protesters gunned down by the police in the previous month.

The Helheim Glacier, southeast Greenland, now one of the fastest moving glaciers in the world. Total ice loss from the ice sheet increased from 96 cubic kilometers in 1996 to 220 cubic kilometers in 2005 (source: NASA).



A Disastrous System

Under the headline "World has only 20 years to stop climate disaster", the *Times* (31 January) reported on the document Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change. This reported on the conference hosted by the Met Office in Exeter last year. The release of carbon dioxide is causing the polar caps to melt and many areas face disastrous flooding. As every government in the world represents the interests of the capitalist class, who in their mad drive for profits are polluting the atmosphere, the future looks disastrous unless we can get rid of capitalism.

Same Old Story

Under the headline "People die of famine in nation that exports food" the *Times* (18

January) expresses astonishment over events in Kenya. "The British aid agency Merlin found that 27 per cent of children around the town were malnourished - nearly twice the 15 per cent emergency level." Their astonishment is because: "Kenya is a food exporter. Grain silos are still full from last year's harvest." Their misunderstanding is because they think malnourishment is caused by drought rather than capitalism, after all in the 19th century during the Irish potato famine Ireland was exporting food. It's the same all over the world throughout history, if you have money you eat, if you're poor you starve. That is how capitalism works.

Some Mean Cities

Capitalism is a dangerous society. How dangerous often depends on what part of the world in which you live. More important than that though is the class to which you belong. According to recent figures if you are a man and live in the Gaza Strip your life expectancy is 70.5 years. If you live in some other areas of the war-torn Middle-East it is even lower, but even more hazardous is trying to survive in the working class area of Calton in Glasgow. "In Iraq, life expectancy is 67. Minutes from Glasgow city centre, it's 54." (*Guardian*, 21 January). The message seems clear for all potential parents - don't have your child reared in a war zone, but if you can't manage that, at least avoid a working class area in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham or Newcastle. Capitalism is a killer society, no matter where you live.

The Uncaring Society

We live in a harsh, brutal society; but even by its standards the following report is a shocker. "A postal worker rode in a subway train around New York for six hours before a commuter noticed he was dead" (*Times*, 25 January). The 64-year-old Vietnam veteran had joined the subway after finishing work at 1am and his train had covered the 15-mile circuit six times before he was discovered. In the rat race that is capitalism human beings become callous towards others, but probably a

contributing factor to this piece of inhumanity was the knowledge that eye contact in the New York subway can prove to be dangerous at certain times.

Education Is A Commodity

Everything that is produced in capitalism takes the form of a commodity even education. "A detailed look at half a million pupils will show that bright children from the poorest families are often fated to perform below their potential. Success at primary school can soon become irrelevant as children repeatedly fail to get places at the country's top schools, the study by the Centre for Market and Public Organisation will say." (*Observer*, 5 February) Everything that is produced - housing, clothing and food - is distributed according to your wealth. Why should education be any different in a buying and selling society?

All Right For Some

Every day we read in the newspapers about poverty, world hunger and crime, but it is not all doom and gloom inside capitalism. Take the case of billionaire Larry Ellison, reputed to own about \$17 billion, his lawyer reported to a San Francisco court that Ellison owned a \$194 million yacht. "But most intriguing is the money his accountant set aside for what are described as "lifestyle" expenses: \$55,000 a day." (*Times*, 7 February) \$55,000 a day? Yes \$55,000 a day. We definitely need a revolution!

Larry Ellison's \$194 million yacht Oracle



Free Lunch

by Rigg

