

Socialist Standard

Death of the Pope
The Warsaw Pact
2005 General Election
Profit System
Wilfred Owen
Profile on Callaghan

May 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1209 £1

Time to get rid of our Gremlins



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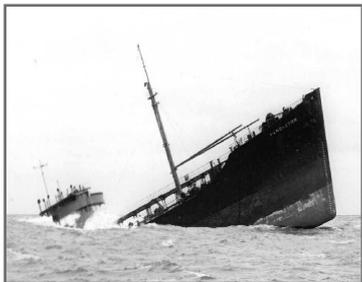
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“The myth of the 'Cold War' enabled each of the two capitalist superpowers to control its real enemy - its own working people - by intimidating it with news of the transgressions of the other”

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Pact, page 8

What about the real issue?

By now you will perhaps have heard a fair bit from the mainstream candidates in this month's General Election. They will have waffled on about services, jobs, crime, and how things will improve, if only they are put in power.

They all talk about money - spend more, spend less, tax it, borrow it, lend it, find it - but they never talk about where it comes from. They never talk about the basic rules by which it is used. They just assume that money is being made, and that they can adapt their policies to the rules of the money-making game. That is, they assume capitalism.

They defend a society in which the majority of the population must sell their capacity to work to the tiny handful who own most of the wealth. They defend a society in which things can only happen if there is a profit to be made. In short, they subscribe to the law of no profit, no production.

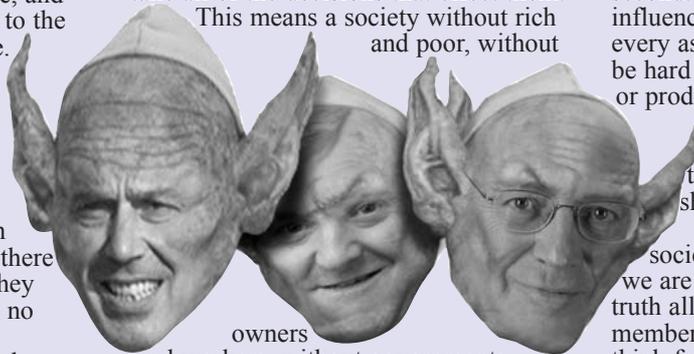
One thing is certain, and perhaps you'll already be of this opinion. Whichever candidate or party will win brings about no significant changes to the way things are. And in between elections we have little or no say in the important decisions, the 'real issues' that concern us.

Politicians are fond of telling us that we must take responsibility for our own actions and that we must see to it that our world is a fit place for our children to grow up in. But how can we seriously do

anything about it when the real decisions are not in our hands? Because of the way things are organised at present, none of us are allowed to take part in the really important decisions that effect us - the ones about our schools, about health and housing, peace and pollution, and the distribution of wealth

What the Socialist Party urges as the alternative to this insane set-up is a truly democratic society in which people take all of the decisions that effect them.

This means a society without rich and poor, without



owners and workers, without governments and governed, a society without leaders or the led.

In such a society, people could cooperate voluntarily to run all of the world's natural and industrial resources in their own interests, freeing production from the artificial constraints of profit and establishing a system of society in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. Socialist society would consequently mean the ending of buying, selling and exchange, an end to

borders and frontiers, an end to force and coercion, waste and want and war.

Today we have the technology, the resources and the know-how to satisfy everyone's needs. That fact is well established. However, we cannot utilise society's assets sensibly because of the profit-driven requirements of the market-system. In a society in which the fundamental need of production is profit, our needs will always come a poor second. The profit system exerts such an influence in society that it impinges upon every aspect of our lives, and you'd really be hard pressed to think of some service or product that is not balanced against cost - something to muse on when you're waiting for the bus, the police or visiting the local shops.

You may consider that the society we urge sounds nice, but that we are demanding the impossible. In truth all we are asking is that you, as members of the waged and salaried class, think for yourselves, value yourselves and your fellows higher, expect more for your children and grandchildren. Is it not the case that our world would be a better place to live in if we had a real democratic say in the decision-making process and real democratic control over the means and instruments for producing and distributing the things we need to live in comfort? Is it not high time that we took back control of our destiny from the profit-mongers and the masters of war?

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Nanotechnology: the end of Scarcity?

The Greek philosopher Democritus, doubtless toying with his tea, first imagined cutting up a piece of cake until he arrived at a fundamental piece he couldn't cut (Greek a-tom, uncut). Then, much later, Rutherford tried to cut it anyway. Then Richard Feynman wondered what would happen if, instead of cutting atoms, you simply stuck them together like Leggo. In theory, he mused, you could build anything out of anything. And then a futuristic science writer brought the idea to the public's attention with the 1986 classic *Engines of Creation* (now downloadable as a complete PDF from <http://www.foresight.org/EOC/index.html>). And so was born nanotechnology.

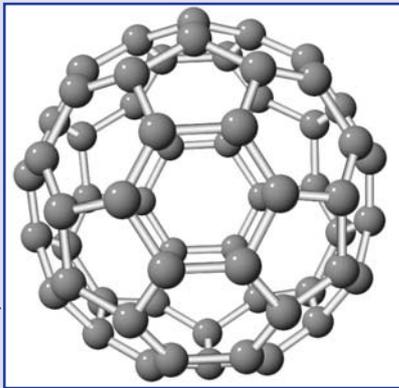
"Nanotechnology Technology that operates on the scale of a nanometre, which is a millionth of a millimetre. To give you some idea, your fingernails probably grew about six nanometres in the time it has just taken you to read this paragraph."
Independent on Sunday,
March 13, 2005

Five years ago few people had heard of it. But then Prince Charles, with his finger on the pulse as usual, announced his personal fears that nanotechnology might accidentally turn the world into a huge dead swamp of gunk. This idea of runaway replication (the 'grey-goo theory', reminiscent of Kurt

Vonnegut's 'ice-nine' in his 1963 novel *Cat's Cradle*) was first proposed, and then recently rejected by Drexler himself as alarmist (*New Scientist*, June 12, 04). However, it doesn't take much to start a scare, and the environmentalist lobby have already begun making demands for legislation over this 'Frankenstein' technology, and new laws are on the way (*New Scientist* Oct 9, 2004)

New laws, and the technology is not even in its infancy, it's still a growing foetus. But the worry is that nanoparticles are already cropping up unannounced in consumer products like suntan lotion before anybody's really sure they're good for us. Capitalism is not willing to wait, it wants profits now, any way it can. Nanoparticles are presently only good for filtering, so they go in face creams.

But this is nano at its most trivial. The real achievement is in construction. We already have nanotrees, nanotubes,



A Buckminsterfullerene molecule, or 'Bucky Ball'

nanobots and buckyballs, strange 60+ atom molecular cages harder than a diamond. Buckytube compounds are 5 times less dense than steel but 30 times stronger, while bonding them to polymers could lead to a new generation of superlight car and aircraft composites up to 20 times stronger. Drexler

envisages such aircraft with engine trouble gently parachuting to earth instead of crashing. Meanwhile costs are plummeting. In 2002 nanotubes cost €300 per gram, while in 2004 it was €30 (*New Scientist* Sept 18, 04).

Even this is nothing but an hors d'oeuvre. The main course, and the cause of Charles Windsor's sleepless nights, is replication. If nanomachines can self-replicate, they could in theory eat the world if they got out of control. But they, thinks

Drexler, why would we design them to do that? What we want is constructive replication - houses, cars, machinery, clothes, even food - grown in vats, silently, unaided, without fuss and without waste. The ability to replicate any material means the end of material scarcity for the planet.

Drexler is well worth reading, even now. But in amongst his infectious enthusiasm there was a big hole waiting for the question that he didn't ask. What would capitalism do with this technology? Free food? Free houses? Free everything? Hardly! Markets would collapse, and power elites with them. Nanotechnology would instigate a social revolution whether anyone wanted it or not. So perhaps it's just as well that replicating nanobots are still a long way from losing their virginity.

'Nanotechnology: small science, big deal' is at the Science Museum, London SW7 (0870 870 4868) to 31 August.

How would socialism deal with the impending energy crisis?

At present, if socialism had to guarantee an average western standard of living to everyone on the planet, global energy needs would approximately quadruple. Although there are many ways in which capitalism wastes huge amounts of energy, socialist society would still be looking for effective carbon-free sources, and one of these is, inevitably, the nuclear option. While the implications of this option under capitalism gives no cause for confidence, it may be that an advanced nuclear programme, uninfected by the profit motive, could be viable. Capitalism's problem, apart from the tendency to skimp safety and disposal costs, is the threat of uranium being enriched and used as a weapon. Consequently, two new ideas on the drawing board will probably not go any further, but in money and war-free socialism they might well find a new lease of life.

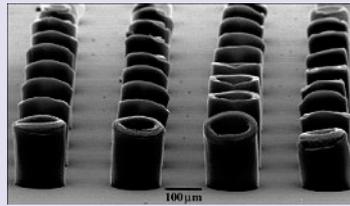
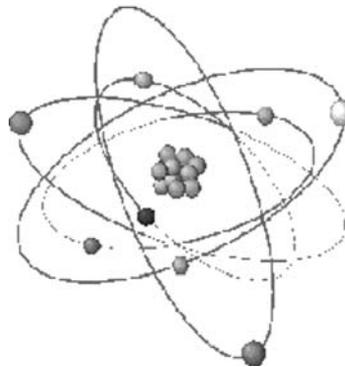
Nuclear Power to take away (from *New Scientist*)

Small sealed reactors that can be delivered to anywhere in the world are being developed by the US Department of Energy. The idea behind the small, sealed, autonomous reactor (SSTAR) is that conventional nuclear

stations produce about a gigawatt of electricity, making them unsuited for remote locations which have neither the technological infrastructure to refuel or maintain them or the national grid to distribute that much power.

"In a SSTAR the nuclear fuel, liquid lead coolant and a steam generator is sealed inside the housing, along with steam pipes ready to be hooked up to an external generator turbine. A version producing 100 megawatts would be 15 metres tall, 3 metres in diameter and weigh 500 tonnes. A 10-megawatt version is likely to weigh less than 200 tonnes." When the fuel is exhausted after 30 years, the unit would be collected for recycling.

To make it work, the uranium has to recycle itself into plutonium 239, effectively making the reactor a fast-breeder. In this circumstance, reliability is a crucial factor, and if any faults develop alerts can be sent over satellite radio channels to the D of E or to an international agency overseeing the reactors. Despite the 'forest of alarms' built into the unit, there is no real guarantee that a rogue state couldn't break in and steal the plutonium. The D of E hopes to have a working prototype by 2015. This column expects to see that ambition firmly spiked.



Nanotubes

Red Snapper

Sound bites and unsound nibbles

A moustachioed demagogue". *Labour MP Oona King's election team on George Galloway. Guardian, April 12th.*

The tension, the atmosphere [in Israel] looks like the eve of the civil war." *Ariel Sharon on the current situation in Israel. Independent, 12th April*

All my life I was defending Jews, now for the first time I'm taking steps to protect me from Jews." *Ariel Sharon again, Independent, April 12th*

I love a fight...I love coming out to Tories' seats and roughing them up a bit. That is what elections are all about." *John Prescott, Guardian, March 19th*

You can walk down the street and see who's working class and who's middle class. It's in the way we drive, the way we are, the way we dress. I am not getting back into whether I am middle class - clearly I am!" *John Prescott again, Guardian, March 19th*



Cooking the Books (1)

Islamic Bankers

One of the measures announced in Gordon Brown's pre-election budget was a concession to Islamic banks.

"Under Islamic law", explained *the Times* (17 March), "the receipt and payment of interest is forbidden, so Sharia products are structured differently. Islamic deposit accounts are operated on a profit-sharing arrangement, under which the bank invests customers' money in Sharia-compliant investments and then shares profits with customers".

This meant that the money received by depositors was taxed as a dividend. Gordon Brown's concession consists in treating it from now on, for tax purposes, as interest.

The Christian Church, too, once used to condemn interest. Or rather, it condemned usury since the word "interest" derives from the Mediaeval Latin word "interesse" which was one of the ways round the ban: "interesse" was the compensation that could be charged if the money lent was not repaid on time.

R. H. Tawney, in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, explained that what was condemned

was "that which appears in modern economic text-books as 'pure interest' - interest as a fixed payment stipulated in advance for a loan of money or wares without risk to the lender . . . The essence of usury was that it was certain, and that, whether the borrower gained or lost, the usurer took his pound of flesh". This is exactly the position preached by backward Islamic clerics today, as is one of the get-out clauses: No man in mediaeval times, wrote Tawney, "may charge money for a loan. He may of course take the profits of partnership, provided that he takes the partner's risks".

It is on this basis that Islamic banks operate. They pay depositors a share in the profits made from investing the money deposited. But,

economically speaking, that is what the interest paid by non-Islamic banks to their depositors largely is anyway. Under capitalist conditions, "interest is simply a part of profit", as Marx showed in Volume III of *Capital* (the beginning of chapter 22). What else could be the source of the money to pay interest on investments than the surplus value produced in the profit-seeking section of the economy?

Islamic law is quite compatible with capitalism as it

does not condemn making profits, only sharing them in the form of fixed payments. It only objects to bondholders not shareholders.

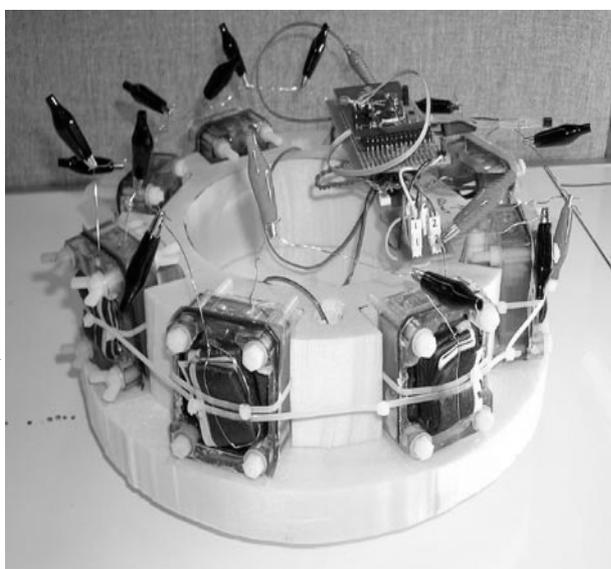


Peace be upon the profit...

Pathfinders Extra

Who would do the dirty work in socialism?

While conventional socialist views on cooperation and division of voluntary labour deal quite well with this question, there is no need for people to do the unpleasant work if a machine could do it instead, and a new development presents an intriguing possibility. Step forward - at 10 cms per hour - the insect-munching Ecobot. While there is nothing very new about robot technology, their dependence on a power supply means there always has to be a human somewhere in the system to feed it. But now a new



Ecobot in 'action'

generation of release and forget robots may be possible, powered by the common housefly, whose exoskeleton can be broken down into sugars used to produce electricity. Although Ecobot is at present astonishingly slow, and its method of trapping the flies (using large amounts of human dung as bait) decidedly unattractive, it can last an impressive five days on just eight large flies. Uses would include any type of routine maintenance, perhaps most appropriately in the sphere of agriculture, potentially releasing humans from many of the most tedious tasks.

The Pope: 'a conscientious defender of the established order of class privilege'



The Death of John Paul II

The Pope's funeral drew the devout from around the world and deification now seems likely. But how much of a sinner was this potential saint? John Bisset investigates the dark side of Pope John Paul II

Being brought into a discussion on the death of Karol Wojtyła, alias Pope John Paul II, with a few elderly ladies while waiting for a bus, I commented that they would be wiser contemplating the hundreds of thousands he had sent to their deaths than mourning the passing of this enemy of their class. The ladies were visibly shocked, said I was out of order and that I shouldn't speak so irreverently of someone so holy. I tried to explain my remark, but they were having none of it.

Like countless millions in all countries, they had undoubtedly been caught up in that media-generated flood of sentiment that swept around the world when news of the Pope's death was broadcast; ready to defend the claims made by announcers on the TV news and in the 20-page papal death exclusives the press was churning out, that a living saint had died. One hundred and fifty world leaders were going to Rome to pay their respects to one of the "greatest men" who had lived, so I was in no position to pass sacrilegious judgement.

Days later the Pope's funeral was reported as the biggest in history. It had attracted 70 presidents, dozens of prime ministers, the leaders of fourteen religions, nine kings and queens and countless other dignitaries. Joining this farcical parade of the infamous were 4 million devout followers of the Catholic Church who had descended on Rome from all over the world.

The very fact that 150 world leaders, the heads of the executive body of world capitalism, were keen to attend this funeral must have suggested something. Karol Wojtyła was on their side and was clearly perceived as being a man who promoted their case. Had he been a critic of the profit system, had he publicly criticised the world's corporate elite and the

governments who defend their interests by any means, they'd have spat on his grave. As it turned out, this was like a big mafia don's funeral at which the gangster fraternity had turned out to pay their last respects to a fellow enemy of law and order.

John Paul's 28 years in the Vatican were certainly controversial. He lived through interesting times, as the saying goes, and like any Pope worth his salt involved himself in world political affairs when it was convenient to do so and made acquaintances with many world leaders, yet rebuked none of them.

He, for instance, referred to Chilean dictator, Pinochet, and his wife as "an exemplary Christian couple". When this enemy of Chilean democracy, who had killed tens of thousands of his opponents, was arrested and charged with crimes against humanity, the Pope waded in on his

“what was the Vatican if not undemocratic, unaccountable and bureaucratic?”

defence demanding his release, stating that as a Chilean leader at the time of his crimes he was entitled to immunity - a kind of papal infallibility for fascists.

Throughout South America, John Paul sided with the forces of reaction, supporting right wing elites and restraining any priest who saw themselves as on the side of the impoverished masses. The papal nuncios to the Chilean and Argentinean military dictatorships he promoted to cardinals. In Central America, he reproached members of the clergy who had sided with the Sandinistas and promoted to the status of cardinal one archbishop who



Far left: Josemaria Escriva. Deified by the Pope, he was 'The saviour of the Spanish church', according to Hitler. Left: papal collaboration with fascism

had opposed them.

Few news reports on the Pope's death did not refer to his time in the Vatican during the dying days of the Kremlin's empire. Some reporters were even bold enough to claim that it was his intervention in the Polish political scene in the 1980s that eventually led to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The rise of Solidarity and working class militancy in Poland at the beginning of the 1980s panicked governments around the world. The 'communists' of eastern Europe feared a growing threat to their rule, while the governments of the West saw the mobilisation of an angry section of society that could only inspire militancy in their own countries.

While John Paul wished to see the end of Stalinist rule, he was keen this should not be via violent revolution and, moreover, at the hands of left wing sections of Polish society, but by the right. Here he had the backing of the USA. In 1980 John Paul granted an audience to a group headed by Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and in the coming years the Vatican would find tens of millions of dollars to finance Solidarity's struggle.

Make no mistake; the Vatican was not openly supporting the demands of the workers in their struggle against an undemocratic, unaccountable Stalinist bureaucracy. After all, what was the Vatican if not undemocratic, unaccountable and bureaucratic? Instead, its aim was to contain the movement, to see it had the guidance of nationalistic and right-leaning Catholic ideologues and to ensure its confrontation with the Polish leadership did not get out of hand and win larger international support from workers.

Many news commentators referred to the 473 beatifications under the JP papacy, a figure that is twice the number of saints made in the previous 400 years. One can only assume that with more social problems facing humanity than at any time in its history the Pope thought we needed an increase in the number of saints to pray to for help in solving them.

However, among those beatified and elevated to the ranks of the saints by John Paul II was the anti-Semite Pope Pius IX and Pope Pius XII, the latter being the same Pius who collaborated with the fascist regimes in Spain, Italy and Germany. Pius XII ordered the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany to steer clear of political activity, to close its political parties and to stifle its newspapers. Hitler would refer to this Papal move as "a great achievement" and of enormous advantage in the "fight against international Jewry". Under Pius' watchful eye, the Catholic Church went on to collaborate in the "racial certification" of all Germans and

refused to openly condemn Hitler when it was known that millions were being sent to the extermination camps.

Also elevated to sainthood was Josemaria Escriva, the founder of the hierarchical and clandestine Opus Dei in Madrid in 1928, and described by Hitler as "the saviour of the Spanish church", along with Mother Theresa who, when questioned on how her opposition to contraception in Calcutta was leading to unnecessary infantile deaths, countered that even a child who breathed only a few hours meant another soul for heaven. For Mother Theresa, suffering was a blessing from the almighty, for it enabled carers to reveal their love for the afflicted.

One scandal the press tended to steer clear of - and one humiliation John Paul was keen to ride out on behalf of Catholicism - was the sexual abuse scandals concerning priests and Church officials. Since the 1950s, 4,450 catholic clergy in the US alone have been accused of molesting children. The allegations have persisted down the years in spite of a

"the Pope became just another reactionary agent of oppression, like all of his predecessors"

Vatican decree in the 1960s which threatened anyone exposing child sex abuse within the Church with excommunication. John Paul continued the cover-up, issuing an edict demanding Church secrecy in child abuse allegations. The Pope's ruling on the matter was felt to be so conclusive that one leader of a Spanish seminary persuaded his scholars that he had the Pope's blessing to masturbate them.

John Paul's complicity in attempting to conceal sexual exploitation in the American, Irish, Austrian and other Churches, and his undermining of the importance of the allegations once they had come to world attention, merely emphasized the Vatican's double standards on issues of sexual morality.

While covering up the excesses of a sexually frustrated clergy who found it impossible to adhere to the vow of chastity, John Paul was ever ready to pronounce papal verdicts on homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, divorce, abortion and the use of birth control.

In recent years, in spite of a growing Aids epidemic which now infects tens of millions in impoverished countries, the

Vatican withdrew its support from those organisations that distributed free condoms. The head of the Vatican's office on the family, Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, propagated the lie that the Aids virus can pass through microscopic holes in condoms, and John Paul referred to the use of condoms as a 'culture of death'. In El Salvador, after a long struggle by the Church, packets of condoms were printed with the warning that they did not protect users from the spread of HIV and, in Nigeria, the archbishop of Nairobi proclaimed that condoms actually caused Aids.

Undoubtedly, millions who looked to the Catholic Church for guidance, who declined the use of protection during sex, were handed a death sentence. Perhaps millions of women were forced, by fear of the flames of hell, to bring young families into a world of abject poverty and early death through disease and hunger.

Whilst many saw JP as a champion of democracy and human rights, a one-man Amnesty International as one commentator suggested in the press, the truth is he was a conscientious defender of the established order of western-style class privilege, even if he did once refer to elected governments as the spreaders of "nihilism". He might have lambasted as an atheistic dogma what many refer to as "socialism" (state capitalism) in the Encyclical Centesimus Annus, whether it existed in Eastern Europe or Central America, but this seems to be his only reason - "socialism" was associated with atheism and therefore was a serious challenge to rule from Rome

More importantly, the Pope headed an organisation with 1.3 billion followers who were encouraged to put their trust in a god and to pray to this god to solve the major problems of the day, thus diminishing people's faith in their own ability to sort out their own problems and undermining the likelihood of workers uniting and organising with a common objective. Accordingly, the Pope became just another reactionary agent of oppression, like all of his predecessors. And the Vatican's reactionary credentials are nothing recent. Indeed, it has been part of the foundation of reaction since the start, whether it was urging the masses to obey the Caesars, supporting the feudal hierarchical order, opposing the Protestant reformation or siding with the capitalist class against the workers, determined always to stifle the anger of the oppressed with promises of reward in heaven for their sufferings if they struggle on uncomplainingly, and an eternity in the sulphurous pits of hell if they organised to better their lot. ■

JOHN BISSETT



1961 and construction of the Berlin Wall begins

The 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Pact

This month marks the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Warsaw Pact, the political and military alliance of the so-called 'socialist' countries in Eastern Europe. Signed on 14 May 1955 it bound together in a 'defensive alliance' Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania. East Germany joined in 1956, while Albania started distancing itself from 1962 onward and withdrew altogether in 1968.

The Russian government claimed that the Warsaw Pact was established as a response to the incorporation of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1955. In practice, however, it acted as a faïade for maintaining political and military control over East European countries 'liberated' from German occupation and a cloak for intervention in the affairs of its 'allies' (in effect its satellites), as occurred in Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Norman Lowe points out that for many writing during the 'Cold War' era, NATO was "the West's self-defence against communist aggression" (*Mastering British History*, p. 529). But while there was great tension and antagonism after the war the notion that Russia was waiting for the opportunity to invade Western Europe, an

action that would have achieved nothing short of total self-annihilation, must be viewed with scepticism.

President Eisenhower, for example, consistently held the view that the Russia posed no military threat to Western Europe. Instead, he saw NATO's primary role as to 'harden' European people in their opposition to 'communism' and "to

“the alleged 'war' between the two power blocs was orchestrated to control public opinion”

corral its allies and to head off neutralism, as well as deter the Russians" (Frank Costigliola, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, p. 244). In 1999, the Guardian reviewed newly declassified British government documents including a 1968 Foreign Office joint intelligence committee analysis. Its summary of the analysis states: "Russia had no intention of launching a military attack on the West at the height of the Cold War and in stark contrast to what Western politicians and military leaders were saying in public about the 'Soviet threat'" (1 January 1999). But if the Russian military threat

didn't really exist what was the basis of the 'Cold War'?

An important pre-condition for the perpetuation of capitalist class dominance is the unconditional 'obedience' of ordinary working people. In a non-authoritarian society perhaps the most effective way of sustaining obedience is by inducing fear of a perceived external threat that intimidates ordinary people into giving unquestioning support to their governments in return for protection from the apparent threat. Western governments conceived the 'International Communist Conspiracy' and the 'Cold War' as elaborate fairy tales, grossly exaggerating the threat of Russian military intentions to instil fear and intimidate Western public opinion.

These fairy tales have their origins in the Russian Revolution of 1917 when the Bolsheviks seized power and established state capitalism masquerading as 'socialism.' This event made conflict between Russia and western capitalism inevitable and within months of this seizure of power fifteen countries invaded Russia in what was hailed as a heroic mission inspired by a desire to secure self-determination for the Russian people. But on examination the motive behind this invasion had little to do with altruism, being instead driven by pure self-interest epitomised in three principal concerns. Firstly, the revolution had rendered a vast area - in excess of 15 percent of the world's landmass - 'off-limits' to Western capitalist expansion. Second, the new Russian State represented a dangerous example of an alternative to free market capitalism that threatened to inspire people to engage in struggles to establish 'communism' in other countries. Thirdly, the new Russian regime practising state capitalism would



The division of Europe during the Cold War

inevitably challenge free market capitalism in future spheres of influence.

Free market capitalism

The United States emerged from the Second World War as most powerful nation in the history of the planet and set about shaping a world in which capitalism and particularly US capitalism could flourish unhindered. The US State Department and Council of Foreign Relations constructed an image of the post-war world that comprised the regions "strategically important for world control" to be subordinated to the needs of free market capitalism. Each region was assigned a role with emphasis placed on Middle Eastern oil and on the economically underdeveloped countries to be permanently assigned the role of a source of raw materials, cheap expendable labour and markets. Vital to this vision was that post-war reconstruction should install foreign governments willing to embrace the 'right' business philosophy; a requirement that brought Western capitalism into conflict with the state-controlled capitalism of Russia and its newly-conquered Eastern Europe territories.

An expanded Russian Empire represented an unacceptable challenge to western capitalism and its plan for hegemony. The annexation of Eastern European countries barred free access of capitalist powers to whole regions expected to provide raw materials, investment opportunities, markets and cheap labour in precisely the same way as the 1917 Russian Revolution had frustrated earlier intentions to exploit pre-revolutionary Russia itself. State capitalism was an unacceptable constraint on capitalism's free development, fostering an unwillingness to co-operate or complement capitalism in the established industrial countries. Its centralised 'command economy' was incompatible with western and particularly US plans to construct a global

model based on private investment and 'free markets' dominated by corporations. Free market capitalism prefers a stable, unrestricted world where countries are 'open' to the free movement of capital and conditions conducive to unfettered worker exploitation and the maximisation of profits.

The threat of 'communism'

The existence of a 'Soviet Bloc,' claiming to be the ideological antithesis of capitalism was an anathema to the capitalist West. The source of concern lay

not in Russian military strength, but rather the fear that working people might be seduced by the propaganda appeal of 'communism' and attempt to establish Russian-style state capitalism in other countries that would exclude Western capitalism and remove further territorial from their control. As US strategic planner George Kennan put it in October 1947: "It is not Russian military power that threatens us, it is Russian political power" (*Strategies of Containment*, pp. 356-57). The ideological underpinning for a perpetual conflict was expressed by the United States National Security Council in its resolution 68, which constructed a vision of a world divided into two diametrically opposing forces representing 'absolute evil' on the one side and 'absolute good' on the other. 'Communism,' it asserted, was unimaginably evil, intent on world domination and must be everywhere challenged to defend the 'free world'. The US was given responsibility for leading this struggle, thereby granting itself the absolute right to defend or advance the interests of free market capitalism anywhere in the world under the pretext that any intervention would be another phase in the struggle to prevent the 'cancerous spread of communism.'

The ultimate objective of western governments was to force Russia and its satellites to return to their economically underdeveloped status, leaving vast new territories, raw material and cheap labour ripe for exploitation. But until this could be achieved the struggle for economic domination would continue in the undeveloped countries and the need to combat the evil of 'communism' would serve as a justification for action against any movement that might gain control over large masses of people, as happened in Vietnam. Such movements are dangerous to western capitalism if they are indicative of a preference for capitalist development independent of western control.

Limiting western aggression

Russia also represented one further challenge to free market capitalism. As well as excluding the 'free market' from its territories, Russia, like its western counterparts, seized every opportunity to exploit potential targets regularly using Warsaw Pact countries to offer support to targets of US subversion. These Russian ventures imposed unacceptable limits on Western aspirations in undeveloped countries, attracting widespread condemnation from Western politicians and media and excellent propaganda to sway public opinion against 'communism' and to reinforce the belief that US 'protection' was necessary to combat the Russian menace.

Essentially, the 'Cold War,' of which the Warsaw Pact and NATO were the visible symbols, set the parameters on a system of joint global management. The myth of the 'Cold War' enabled each of the two capitalist superpowers to control its real enemy - its own working people - by intimidating it with news of the transgressions of the other and as a justification for repression in its own sphere of control. But beneath the ideological rhetoric there was also a tacit understanding that each should be left to control its own sphere of influence. So while free market capitalism led by the United States would wage war and expand into what became known as the 'Third World', the Russians would maintain control over its East European satellites. This accounts for the West's refusal to assist the people of Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and explains why the Russians made no great effort to aid Vietnam or to assist the emerging nationalist groups that challenged US domination in Latin America. Despite the rhetoric, the alleged 'war' between the two power blocs was theatre, orchestrated to control public opinion.

Though the reasons for the final collapse of the Russia are complex, it was evident that by 1980 internal problems and economic stagnation were heightening and control over the Eastern European countries was rapidly dwindling. When the rotten edifice of Russian authoritarianism started collapsing in Eastern Europe in 1989 the facade of the Warsaw Pact shattered and officially dissolved in Prague on 1 July 1991.

The 'Cold War' ended in a perhaps inevitable victory of free market capitalism over state controlled capitalism. But while the 'Cold War' ceased to be a valid pretext, Western capitalism has been quick to discover new pretexts, of which the 'war on terror' is simply the latest, for a continuation of policies that are nothing more than an expression of its institutional needs. So though the justifications have changed the real struggle, driven by capitalist class interest, to secure the free movement of capital and unrestricted access to markets and raw materials continues unabated with working people everywhere the undisputed victims.

STEVE TROTT

VOTE EFFECTIVE - VOTE ALTERNATIVE

 In May 2005, this is the most important general election ever. Or was that in 2001? Or in 1997? Or 1987? The big political parties want to convince us about this because we may then be persuaded to vote for one or other of them, under the impression that by choosing between them we are making a difference to this social system. Vote for this party and our future is secure; vote for the other party and we put everything at risk. Here, for example, is Neil Kinnock in 1987:

"Every election is a time of decision. But this General Election ... faces the British people with choices more sharp than at any time in the past fifty years".

To which the "British people" sharply responded by emphatically rejecting Kinnock and his party.

Here is John Major in 1997:

"British people now have the

opportunity of a prosperous future. But that prosperity cannot be taken for granted... If we relax for one moment, our hard won success will slip away again".

By "relaxing" Major meant voting for the Labour Party, which was what the "British people" did, ensuring that Major

himself slipped away into well-merited obscurity.

Finally, here is Blair in 2001:

"This general election is in many ways even more important than

the last... Now is the chance to build the future properly..."

Blair did not say why, after four years of Labour government, the future had still not been built "properly" but he obviously did not need to elaborate in that way because the electorate returned his party to power by a hefty margin. So how are things now, after the threats and the promises? Whether in gratitude or fear, the workers

will vote for capitalism again with the only uncertainty the pattern of their voting.

Blair and Howard

One factor which is likely to affect that pattern is the developing awareness that there is no significant difference between the Labour Party and the Tories. Because of this, solid Labour supporters who helped elect Blair in 1997 and 2001 now feel themselves disfranchised. Another factor is that, like so many of his predecessors, Blair has been exposed as a trickster and a liar, so that he is no longer the easeful vote harvester he once was.

On the other side, Michael Howard is looking more and more like a man who is desperately trying to throw off his past; for example wearing his customary oily smirk he urged us on TV to "Let the sunshine break through the clouds of disappointment we all feel". The problem for Howard is that his time as a Tory minister is not remembered for being at all sunny. As Home Secretary he was in the habit of using his time at the rostrum in Tory conferences to excite the ugliest of prejudices - and not just about crime. In this election, as Tory leader he has tried to exploit racist neuroses about immigration by promising to establish a Border Control Police, forgetting the time in the 1990s when, according to the Public and Commercial Services Union, he

Our Candidate's Manifesto

As is our usual policy, we are standing one token candidate in the general election, in the Vauxhall constituency in South London, to challenge all the pro-capitalist parties and ensure that the voice of socialism is not entirely lost amidst the recriminations of the professional politicians about how to run capitalism.

The Socialist Party is contesting this election as a part of our campaign to establish a new system of society: one based on 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.

That is our sole object.

By common ownership we don't mean that everyone should have to share a toothbrush, but that in a society built upon our mutual effort, we should all benefit and have a say in how it is run.

We currently live in a system of society based on a tiny number of people owning the productive wealth of our world, organised and run by a handful of bosses for their benefit. Their profits come first, our needs come second.

In Vauxhall nearly half of all workers are employed in administering business as compared with only a quarter in social services and looking after ourselves (derived from 2001 Census).

It seems we're so busy taking care of business that we don't have time to take care of ourselves.

Because of this we have endless problems of poverty, poor services and all the issues politicians love to spend time telling you they can solve, if only given the chance.

We don't believe any politician can solve these problems, as long as the flawed basis of our society remains intact. In fact, we believe only you and your fellow workers can solve these problems.

We believe that it will take a revolution in how we organise our lives, a fundamental change. We want to see a society based on the fact that you know how to run your lives, know your needs and have the skills and capacity to organise with your fellows to satisfy them.

You know yourselves and your lives better than a handful of bosses ever can. With democratic control of production we can ensure that looking after our communities becomes a priority, rather than something we do in our spare time.

We all share fundamental needs, for food, clothing, housing and culture, and we have the capacity to ensure access to these for all, without exception.

If you agree with this aim, then we ask you to get in touch with us, get involved and join in our campaign to bring about this change in society. Together, we have the capacity to run our world for ourselves. We need to build a movement to effect that change, by organising deliberately to take control of the political offices which rule our lives, and bring them into our collective democratic control.

Our candidate makes no promises, offers no pat solutions, only to be the means by which you can remake society for the common good.

Danny Lambert The Socialist Party Candidate

The campaign office is our Head Office at 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN. This will be open every day and evening during the election period. So, if you want to help call in (the nearest tube station is Clapham North) or phone 0207 622 3811 or email spgb@worldsocialism.org

If you don't live in Vauxhall and want to show that you reject the policies of the profit system and understand and want the real socialist alternative, the way to do so is to write "SOCIALISM" across your ballot paper.

The Socialist Party is also standing a candidate in the Deneside ward in the Durham County Council elections also being held on 5 May. Details and offers of help to: Steve Colborn, 46 Ivy Avenue, Seaham, SR7 8NF.



The economy

However those who voted in the Blair governments have no more cause for satisfaction. There have been Labour Home Secretaries who have exceeded Howard in their punitive response to those crimes which capitalism places outside the law. A succession of Criminal Justice Acts has tightened the screw on offenders while nourishing the ambition of those Home Secretaries to become party leader. Detention - imprisonment - without trial, or even being told the reasons for being in prison, has become established. Blair's sound bite about being tough on crime and on the causes of crime has been discredited as the causes of crime - poverty, stress, alienation, social disability - remain.

actually hampered immigration controls by slapping on a recruitment freeze. Howard has told a heart-wrenching story about his mother-in-law dying of an infection she picked up as a hospital patient but during the last Conservative governments all was not well with hospitals for there was a shortage of nurses and doctors and waiting lists - for anyone unable to afford anything better - were a problem then as they are now. Schools also suffered, being cut back on their teachers, books and other equipment. The last Tory government, under John Major, descended into such chaos that when they were defeated in 1997 it was almost an act of mercy by the voters.

Blair's claims that under his government the British economy has been in controlled health have been exposed by the collapse of the Rover car company. The company was losing millions of pounds and cars are not manufactured in order to provide the workers with a wage stable enough for them to make assumptions about their future. The bottom line - to use an irritating, although apposite, phrase - is that if there is no profit there is no employment, even if that mean thousands of workers being transferred from a just



tolerable level of poverty to one of abject degradation. That is the basis on which capitalism organises its wealth production and no government can affect it.

Alternative

Blair's popularity has been seriously eroded by the exposure of his lies over the causes of the war in Iraq. But this was by no means the only example of a politician lying because none of them could readily admit to their impotence to control the events of capitalism. For them the only way out is through deception, at times to the extent that they begin to believe their own lies - as, it is rumoured, is the case with Blair. What this amounts to is that there is a basic unity among the parties which stand for the continuance of capitalism, which can only be solidified by every vote for those parties. But there is no need to waste the vote in that way for we have the means of basically changing society so as to eliminate the problems which now disfigure it. The Socialist Party is standing alone as a party which aims at the capture of political power by the working class, to abolish capitalism and replace it with a society based on common ownership of wealth production and distribution and making that wealth freely available to everyone. That is Socialism - the only alternative to capitalism and its political parties.

IVAN

The Profit System

Very few people would deny that the present state of the world leaves a lot to be desired. Humanity staggers from one crisis to the next - from war to famine to slumps to repression . . .

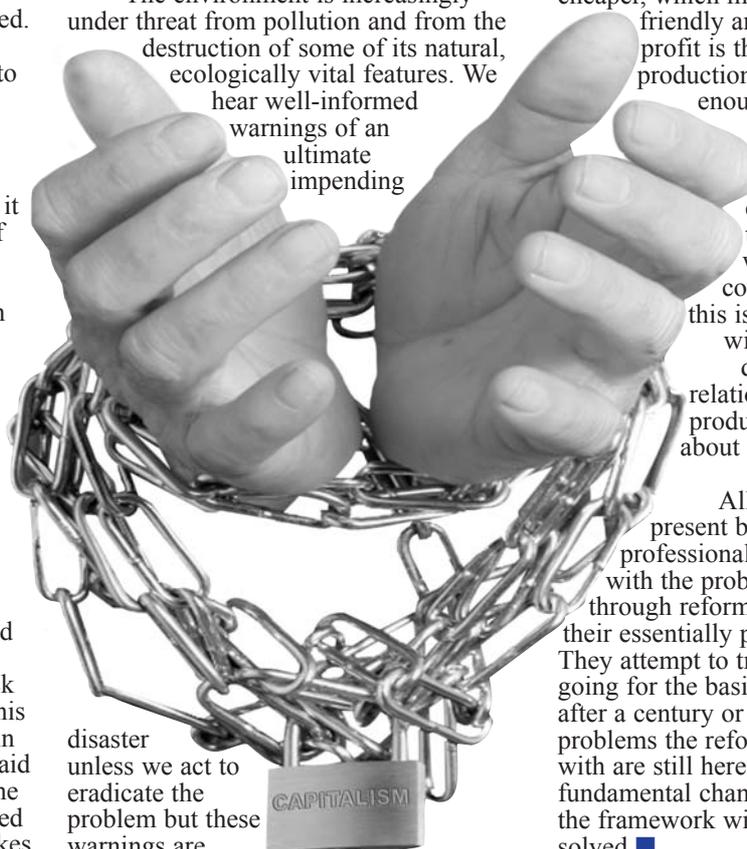
Capitalism has developed a huge productive capability but its social organisation and relationships cause extremely serious problems and render it incapable of meeting the basic needs of its people.

A vast amount of the world's resources is expended in the production of weapons of war, from bullets and bayonets to nuclear and chemical weapons. Alongside these weapons are the armed forces which every state organises, clothes, feeds, trains and deploys. This is a massive waste of human effort; it is all intended to be destructive and none of it to create anything useful to human beings.

In a world which could produce more than enough to feed and care for its population millions are homeless and tens of millions die each year because they don't have enough to eat or for lack of proper medical treatment. None of this is necessary. It happens while farmers in Europe and North America are being paid to take land out of cultivation; from time to time even food that has been produced is destroyed or allowed to rot. This makes sense to the profit motive; in terms of

human interests it is wildly insane.

The environment is increasingly under threat from pollution and from the destruction of some of its natural, ecologically vital features. We hear well-informed warnings of an ultimate impending



disaster unless we act to eradicate the problem but these warnings are always met with the objection that to save

the environment can be a costly, profit-damaging business. Yet it is not necessary for industry and agriculture to pour out noxious effluents into the air, the earth, the rivers and the seas. They do this today because pollution is seen as being cheaper, which means more profit-friendly and to a society where profit is the dominant motive for production that is justification enough to override human welfare.

These are a few examples of how capitalism works against the interests of the world's people. In contrast, as the articles in this issue explain, socialism will have fundamentally different social relationships, motives for production and concepts about the interests and security of human beings.

All the programmes at present being advanced by the professional politicians for dealing with the problems of capitalism through reforms must fail because of their essentially piecemeal approach. They attempt to treat symptoms instead of going for the basic cause. That is why, after a century or more of reformism the problems the reformists claim to deal with are still here. A far more radical, fundamental change is needed to create the framework within which they can be solved. ■

traumatised by a recent gassing incident later featured in verse, Owen was blown up, rendered temporarily unconscious and subsequently diagnosed as suffering from "shellshock".

By 1917, a more scientific attitude had been adopted towards this phenomenon. The Somme offensive the previous year had yielded 30,000 such cases and as they clearly couldn't all be "degenerates" or "cowards", a new term, "Neurasthenia", had come into vogue. The importance of immediate therapy being recognised, this was provided in nearby field hospitals; not it should be noted, from any humanitarian considerations, but solely to enable the less serious cases, around two thirds overall, to be speedily "cured" and returned to the trenches for another dose of the same.

Owen, as a more severe case, was invalided home, hospitalised in Edinburgh and set about creating the poems that would eventually secure his reputation. In *Dulce et Decorum Est*, an ironic comment on the famous line by the Latin poet Horace, that it is "pleasant and honourable to die for one's country", Owen recounted the plight of an unmasked Tommy caught in a mustard gas attack, concluding:

"In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me guttering, choking,
drowning.
If in some smothering dream you too
could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him
in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in
his face,
His hanging face like a devil's sick of
sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the
blood
Come gargling from the froth-
corrupted lungs,
Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent
tongues,
My friend you would not tell with
such zest
To children ardent for some desperate
glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori."

The "old Lie"? During his prolonged convalescence, Owen encountered various viewpoints, dissenting and otherwise, on the conduct of the War but there is no evidence that he ever developed any understanding of the underlying reasons for its having been waged in the first place. Nevertheless, however inadvertently, Owen has, as it were, "landed a direct hit". It does require a lie; a veritable pack of them in fact, to persuade the artisans, the farmhands, the clerks in one country that their own best interests are suddenly and mysteriously at variance with those of their direct counterparts in another and to spontaneously quit their respective workplaces, dole-queues, semis and slums to participate in the act of mutual slaughter that is war. Always "freedom", "democracy", "ways of life", "national pride" are at stake and,

remarkably, "God" is ever on their side. Specific to the 1914 affair, German "militarism" had to be rebuffed and "plucky little Belgium" supported.

The truth is decidedly less exotic. Wars are always and only waged for entirely commercial reasons - access to raw materials, markets, trade routes and strategic positions from which to defend them all. In short, to consolidate existing profits and aspire to the accumulation of others. The present globally-dominant economic system, capitalism, features within each country, the ownership of the means of wealth - the land, factories etc. - by a tiny parasite minority, from which it follows therefore that any profits will accrue only to that minority. The overwhelming non-owning majority; those who do the fighting and the dying, effectively get nothing. Would any worker, apprised of this, raise even a peashooter to their lips? Hence the need for the "old lie".

Germany did not become unified until the 1870s, by which time the bulk of the world's exploitable resources had been colonised by longer-established nation states like Britain and France. To develop and expand, therefore, required attempting to "muscle in on the action", precisely in the way that criminal organisations have long engaged in feuds over bootlegging, gambling and drug-trafficking rights. World War I was only ever a sordid large-scale turf war between rival "families" within capitalism's mafia - although by the time the politicians, the media, the clergy and the educationalists had spun their lies, old and new, very few people saw it as such.

Ignorant of the real causes of the War, Owen could only see its solution in terms both abstract and impracticable, if

not downright silly. In this he was not alone. Some held that the war was a "natural tragedy" to which the only responses could be of sorrow and compassion; others that it represented merely the periodic erupting of some innate human predisposition towards aggression. Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells believed the war would "exhaust itself", enabling wise and devoted people (like themselves, presumably), to step in and "rebuild Society". Owen himself considered that when the war machinery had "choked itself to a halt", then "art" and "beauty" could be deployed to "help refresh the human spirit".

Accordingly, he hoped to avoid being returned to the Front, but his hopes were not to be realised. In due course, he was deemed "cured" and returned to France nicely in time to participate in the final decisive attack on and through the

Hindenberg Line. For bravery under fire he was awarded the Military Cross but as this particular incident involved him also single-handedly exterminating numerous "Fritzes", the actual text of his citation tends not to be quoted by those who would portray him as the "Poet of Pity". He himself perished at St. Souplet just one week prior to that supreme exercise in pretentious cant - "The eleventh hour of the eleventh day, etc., etc." - that was the signing of the Armistice.

The September 1914 issue of the *Socialist Standard*, observing the entirely "business" nature of the war embarked upon, both extended the hand of friendship to the workers of all countries and declared that there was nothing at stake "to justify the shedding of a single drop of working class blood". This uniquely-principled stance, maintained throughout, is one of which socialists can feel immensely proud. More importantly, a solution, concrete, practicable and eminently sensible, was offered. Since wars arise solely from conflicts of interest between rival groupings of capitalists, and are merely an extension, a more turbulent or intense phase of this ongoing struggle, then it follows that their eradication lies with the universal replacement of private ownership with common ownership. If the world's natural resources and means of producing wealth were the property of Humanity at large, what possible reason for conflict would, or could, remain?

Wilfred Owen's poetic voice was an exceptional and developing one, prematurely stilled. Who knows to what heights it might have soared? His poems depict their subject matter in ways that are once beautiful and repulsive and are, albeit unintentionally, a damning indictment of



St. Souplet, the place of Owen's death

class-divided society. Furthermore, they serve as a dire warning to any testosterone-fuelled youth "ardent for some desperate glory", that the net result of "taking the shilling" might just be the sudden and catastrophic loss of his testosterone-producing faculties.

As much, however, as his poems deserve to be read, to be appreciated, to be cherished, they do merely observe; they neither investigate nor solve. This requires the altogether more prosaic process of examining and understanding the underlying reasons for war. ■

ANDREW ARMITAGE

When Johnny Comes Marching Home

In many movies after the second world war there was a scene where the local boys came home to their little US town. The band played, hats were thrown in the air and the old frosty school mar'm could be seen to shed a secret tear.

It is a beautiful fantasy and if you add Van Johnson, Elizabeth Taylor and whoever happens to be the present teen dream to the scene it could play for ever today. There is only one snag, it is not true.

Some of the homeless people that try to beg money from you on Waterloo Bridge fought in the Falklands. Some that will try to tap you in the future fought in Afghanistan or Iraq.

From North America we read in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (19 February): "Since Vietnam, we've learned that there's on average a 12 year delay between returning from war and begging on the streets," Linda Boone of the Washington-based National Coalition for Homeless Veterans told me. She said governments should start getting ready for vast numbers of beggars and vagrants, all created by war. It is a well-known phenomenon, albeit one that governments have never properly acknowledged: After any war ends, the number of people living on the streets increases dramatically.' Does this mean that the Elizabeth Taylor and Van Johnson characters ended up sleeping rough, surely not!

From the same article we learn that "in Britain, the government has estimated that a quarter of the people 'sleeping rough' - on the streets - are military veterans. If you want to find someone who fought in the Falklands war, you'd best look in the tunnels beneath Waterloo Bridge."

The facts seem obvious to us - Johnny, stay at home and read your *Socialist Standard*. ■

RD

Limping home: a scene from the American Civil War film 'Shenandoah'



I'll Do It!

This is the Year of the Rooster, but also the Year of the Volunteer - you may have seen the TV ads for the website www.yearofthevolunteer.org. This is a government-run scheme, aimed at "encouraging active citizenship", but if we leave aside the government involvement, the whole volunteering set-up is both interesting and positive from a socialist viewpoint.

Some people volunteer because they believe or hope that it will be useful for their careers, but the vast majority do so because they see themselves as genuinely contributing to the well-being of their fellow humans. Voluntary activities include almost everything from helping people to make phone calls or fill in forms, teaching English or the use of computers, helping blind people get to appointments, befriending and supporting those with HIV, working for St John's



Ambulance or the Samaritans, counselling people with all sorts of problems, even working as a Special Constable. And all this is done unpaid, in the volunteers' own time, often in

addition to paid employment, and with no reward other than the satisfaction of helping.

In the light of this, how can anyone object to socialism on the grounds that in a society of free access nobody would wish to work? If people's consumption is not dependent on their work, the argument goes, why would someone want to work at all? One answer, as we have seen, is that even under capitalism people work voluntarily, probably not even regarding what they do as work, as it is not employment. This is not because they are saints or angels but because they do not want to see others suffering or in difficulties. And helping others means helping yourself too. Age Concern carried out a survey of elderly volunteers, which found:

"Volunteering benefits older volunteers in many ways, including making new friends, gaining self confidence, losing weight and living healthier lives.

"More than half (51%) of the over 65s who took part in Age Concern's report said volunteering improved their health and fitness and 62% said volunteering helped reduce stress" (From the above website).

So there you have it: even in a society of pressure and alienation voluntary work can be good for you. Just think of the pleasure of work in a world where there are no bosses, no dangerous workplaces and no production of useless rubbish. ■

PB

Fifty Years Ago

The First of May

"Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad
-turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than
all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you."
WALT WHITMAN

It is sixty-five years since half a million people poured through London, "an interminable array with multitudinous banners," on the first International May Day. No celebration, no insubstantial pageant this: column upon threadbare column they came, signifying and expressing labour's strength and labour's aspirations, with an eight-hour day as their rallying call. For sixty-five years it has continued, but the columns are small now. And the eight-hour day? They have it and, so generous is life to the working class, work overtime.

May Day is workers' day, the day of our class. However hollow the cries and futile the demonstrations, it remains the anniversary of protest, a continual reminder of exploitation and subjection. "Class" is the reason and the theme of May Day - class in its fullest, truest sense. The working class is not the labourers or the artisans or the machine-minders: it is all people to whom wages are life. The working class is international: so is its cause. Among the cries and chants and slogans of May Day, only one has meaning: "Workers of all countries unite!"

Class consciousness was never more needed than now. Sixty-five years have seen war, dereliction, fear and disaster; today mankind is under a shadow without precedent. The working people of the world have it in their hands to end poverty, fear, hatred and war. Nationalism is not their interest but their rulers'; submission is taught, not conceived. That is where the tragedy of the May Day processions lies. The hundreds of thousands who paraded their rights in 1890 lined the streets again seven years later, still threadbare, still of one mind - to cheer and wave streamers for their Queen.

To the Socialist, class-consciousness is the breaking-down of all barriers to understanding. Without it, militancy means nothing. The conflict between the classes is more than a struggle for each to gain from the other: it is the division which reaches across all others. The class-conscious working man knows where he stands in society. His interests are opposed at every point to those of the capitalist class; his cause can only be the cause of revolution for the abolishing of classes. Without that understanding, militancy can mean little. It is not mere preamble that the Socialist Party's principles open by stating the class division in capitalism: it is the all-important basis from which the rest must follow.

(Front page article by R. Coster, *Socialist Standard*, May 1955)





Cooking the Books (2)

Britain's bonanza farms

On 22 March the government published a list of firms and individuals in England receiving subsidies under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy in 2003 and 2004. The figures showed, said *the Times* (23 March), that:

"The biggest landowners, including members of the Royal Family, a clutch of dukes, and agrifood companies, are able to pick up hefty amounts of cash under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)".

The CAP is based on guaranteeing farmers a given price for their products. If market prices fall below the guaranteed price then farmers are paid a subsidy to compensate for the shortfall. The aim was to ensure an adequate and stable internal supply of food and other agricultural products, and involved levying tariffs on imports. In this it was successful, too successful in fact as farmers ended up producing "too much" so that, as this meant that market prices fell, the amount that had to be spent on subsidies increased. Non-agricultural sections of the

capitalist class - and EU countries like Britain with a comparatively small agricultural sector - protested and called for the CAP to be reformed.

One step in this direction was the "set-aside" scheme, introduced as from 1993, under which farmers are paid not to grow food. Cutting back production serves to bolster prices, and so the profits that farmers make, resulting in a reduction in the total subsidy bill (the cost of paying farmers not to grow food being less than the cost of making up the difference between the market and the guaranteed price).

The website of the lobby group UK Agriculture (www.ukagriculture.com) describes how set-aside works:

"Set-aside is a term for land that farmers are not allowed to use for any agricultural purpose. It was introduced by the EEC in 1992 as part of a package of reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy to prevent over production of food crops. It applies only to farmers growing crops.

In the first year of the scheme farmers had to set-aside a minimum of 15% of their cropped farmland for the harvest year of 1993. By the year 2000 the figure had dropped to 10% of cropped land but the amount changes each year according to EEC requirements.

In 1999 there were approximately

550,000 hectares of land in set-aside. This represents an area of countryside about 75km by 75km, twice the size of the area enclosed by the M25 around London.

In exchange for not planting crops on set-aside land farmers are paid a subsidy by the EEC to counter the loss of income that results from not utilising the land for productive use."

What is omitted here is that set-aside was compulsory only for the larger, more productive farms. So to them went most of the subsidies for this; which will have contributed to "the hefty amounts of cash" paid to the big landowners and agribusinesses. *The Times* calls this "obscene", but that's because it represents the interests of other sections of the capitalist class who resent having to pay the extra tax. Of course this was disguised as concern that "the food bill for the typical British family of four is some £600 higher per year than it would otherwise be". Perhaps, but the abolition of the CAP in favour of free trade in food would not make the average wage and salary worker better off by that amount, instead would exert a strong downward pressure on wage levels.

To socialists what is obscene is that farmers, and the most productive at that, are being paid not to grow food in a world where billions are undernourished, if not starving.

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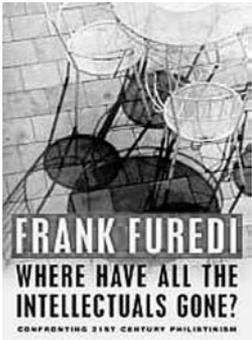
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Defending Modernism?

Frank Furedi: Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone? Continuum, 2004.



Frank Furedi takes the opportunity in this book to rail against the modern 'cultural elite' and their 'dumbing down' of political, educational and artistic standards. He forcefully argues that an all-pervading desire for 'inclusivity' - leading to the

flattery of interest groups - has replaced more hard-headed conceptions of scientific rigour, critical thought and above all, standards, as the driving force for decision-makers in the modern world. Today, he argues, participation (or the appearance of it) is seen as the key issue, while the role of the 'intellectual', as arbiter of taste, independent critical analyst and robust generator of original ideas, has been compromised and diminished.

This is interesting and provocative, particularly as Furedi - currently Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent - is better known as the leading theoretician of the Trotskyist political current which called itself the Revolutionary Communist Party until a few years ago, notable for their annual 'Preparing For Power' conferences and their glossily superficial *Living Marxism* magazine. That his views now seem to have more in common with those routinely expressed in the opinion columns of the *Daily Telegraph* clearly isn't something he feels the need to apologise for. Strangely enough, Mick Hume, the erstwhile editor of *Living Marxism* (or 'LM' as it became, in a needless concession to the postmodernist culture and 'dumbing down' Furedi now ironically rails against), happens to be a broadsheet columnist spouting similar views to Furedi himself. This does nothing to diminish the prevalent view on the British left that their organisation was a rather bizarre cross between a cult and a sect with a tendency to say anything controversial if it could get them some media attention.

For all that, Furedi's book is well worth reading. He is a thought-provoking writer and something of a critic of the present 'postmodern condition', where everything seemingly has a value of some sort and banality is elevated into an art form, where science and reason are merely another perspective on the world, and where all attempts at fundamentally changing society are doomed to failure, are dangerous - or both. Here he is tilling fertile ground, and his writing is stimulating and energetic.

A large part of the book focuses on the way in which public policy in the major capitalist states is currently using 'inclusivity' and 'widening access' as bogus ways of enfranchising the disenfranchised, whether it be in political life, the arts, or Higher Education. This involves the recognition and flattery of 'identities' (ethnic, gender, sexual, national) and the promotion of the idea that everyone creates

their own reality, a reality which is of equal worth to anything else in society - and all this at the expense of the rigorous, independent pursuit of vision and standards characteristic of the intellectual approach Furedi thinks is in the process of disappearing from public life.

There is an element of truth in this, even if some of Furedi's hobby-horses lead him astray periodically. For instance, the current agenda for 'widening access and participation' in HE is little to do with abstract social engineering but the response of successive governments to the demands of the labour market, including the demands of employers for more vocationally-focused university courses and for the creation of intermediate awards like Foundation Degrees. Indeed, this seems an odd point to need to make to someone who has spent most of his life calling himself a Marxist. Furthermore, even if Furedi is a half-decent sociologist he is certainly not much of an educationalist, as his comments on modern methods of teaching and learning, accreditation of prior learning and other issues tend to show, for here he is unreliable and his approach lacks the type of rigour and engagement with serious study he otherwise insists on.

But where Furedi's book misses the mark most noticeably is in his defence of the 'intellectual' as embodying everything that was good about Enlightenment ideals and modernist conceptions of progress. This is a partial, one-sided analysis and it is tempting to suspect that what Furedi really wants to defend is modernism, science and rationality itself against postmodernism, relativism and our seemingly irrational age. But this has already been done by others quite recently, such as by Francis Wheen, so Furedi has cast around for a new angle that only serves to distort the picture, robbing it of clarity.

Society doesn't need a new phalanx of intellectuals at all, it needs a reaction against reaction and a confidence that humankind generally can look beyond the fragments of the postmodern condition and collectively work towards a vision of how the world ought to be.

DAP

At the Coalface

The miners' strike. David Peace: GB84. Faber and Faber £7.99.



The author (above) describes this novel as 'a fiction based upon a fact', the fact being the 1984 miners' strike (on which see the *Socialist Standard* for March 2004). In a brutally honest style, told from the

viewpoints of several different characters, and interspersed with excerpts from the fictional diaries of two striking miners, Peace paints a vivid portrait of the strike and its eventual defeat.

A great deal of research underlies the book, and Peace brings out the extent of the ruling class' preparations for the strike and their determination to beat the miners into submission. Government fixers and corrupt undercover police are shown doing their dirty work. The divisions and hostilities within mining communities are displayed, and even some working miners are shown in an almost sympathetic light - one says he'd have been on strike had there been a ballot in favour of strike action. As the strike continues, the NUM become increasingly desperate in attempting to hide their financial assets overseas and out of reach of the government's stooges, while the Coal Board and the Tories seek to undermine the strike by getting almost all activity in support of it declared illegal and subsidising the back-to-work movement. There are suggestions that the police ranks are being boosted by soldiers, and the extent of police brutality is made plain.

The NUM leaders are depicted as pretty paranoid (though possibly with reason) about being bugged and being infiltrated. 'The President' comes over as an increasingly pathetic figure, harking back to his supposed defeat of the Heath government in 1974, and repeating the mantra that support from the wider trade union movement would ensure success. But as the numbers of working miners gradually increase and NUM funds are gradually leached away, he is unable to accept that defeat is ahead, nor that the failure to call a ballot was in any way responsible. The true heroes and victims, however, are the striking miners and their families. In the face of dreadful financial hardship, media lies, state violence, the threat of blacklisting and the inevitable petty quarrels of people under stress, they struggle to maintain solidarity and to keep the fight going. As families and friendships fall apart, they still remain committed.

David Peace's novel gives an unforgettable account of a major working-class struggle, and, despite the complexity of its structure, is well worth reading.

PB

The commons of South London

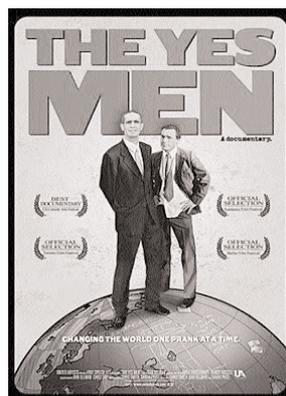
Down With The Fences: Battles for the Commons in South London, 36 pages, £2; Past Tense Publications, c/o 56 Crampton St, London SE14, November 2004.

"The law condemns the man or woman Who steals the goose from off the common But lets the greater villain loose Who steals the common from the goose."

Most of the text of *Down With The Fences* was the basis of a talk given to the South London Radical History Group. Many of the open spaces in London - commons, woods, greens and parks - exist because they were preserved from development by collective action: by rioting, tearing down of fences or by legal action.

Film Review

The Yesmen, Cornerhouse, Manchester, (now available on DVD).



Less overtly manipulative than *Fahrenheit 451* but in a similarly subversive vein, *The Yesmen* is an attempt to wake up the public to all the corporate crap that is going on around the world in the

name of the WTO. The film shows Andy and Mike, The Yesmen, impersonating or "correcting" the identity of their targets, 'turning up the volume' on the aims of the WTO by exaggerating them to ludicrous extents. This is illustrated perfectly by their brief rundown of the rise of the textile industry in 19th century America thanks to "involuntarily imported labour" in the South, or by their proposal that the poor eat their own shit via recycled burgers.

The publicity blurb is promising enough, and the stunts are well represented but a lot of coverage is given to redundant talking-through, lengthening the introduction and giving more background detail on the preparation for the corporate leisure suit with huge phallic appendage than was strictly necessary. The first half of the film is taken up by the Yesmen's talk at a textile conference in Tampere, leaving the camera to trail unevenly along to two other events which are less well covered in the second half.

This unevenness of treatment is a shame, because the idea behind the Yesmen is a good one, and could be an effective way of breaking through the hard capitalist coat of unthinking obedience to The Market. Of course, it is vastly entertaining to follow Andy and Mike as they prepare to take on a textile conference in Finland, stopping off in Paris to pick up little extras like the finishing touch for the manager's leisure suit, and as they meet up with fellow activists around the States for other stunts. The underlying idea that subterfuge in the form of chameleon-like parodies will challenge those in power in the economic arena, or at least wake up a few conference goers, is laudable but hard work; in the capitalist world too many of these expensive 'conferences' are attended by too many real 'yesmen' and, unsurprisingly, there are few hostile reactions to the outrageous proposals that Andy and Mike make. Even the appearance of Andy on CNBC masquerading as GATT representative 'Granwyth Hulatherbi,' spouting about the might of the rich compared to the poor who are wrong "because they are poor", fails to ring any alarm bells with the producer, even after the broadcast has gone out.

The one moment of hope comes when the Yesmen go to Sydney to address a meeting of the Certified Practising Accountants Association of Australia. Andy, speaking again as a WTO representative, has gone for the serious approach, telling it

straight - almost - by giving a rundown of shocking statistics and facts about corporate globalisation. He explains that the WTO has realised what has happened and is now going to close down in its current form, and start up in a new direction to try and right its wrongs by helping people, not business. The accountants lap it up and seem genuinely excited by this prospect and eager to do their bit. Although this interest from such a normally conservative crowd could be explained by the uncritical reaction that the Yesmen's parodic interventions usually get, it could also be more proof that humanity would embrace a more humane society, given half the chance.

LF

Obituary

Ronnie Edwards

We are saddened to have to report the death of our comrade Ronnie Edwards in March. When we learned of the seriousness of his illness the shock was all the greater because he had looked in fine health at the party's Centenary Celebration in London last June. He had joined the party in Glasgow in 1966 when only seventeen and immediately threw himself in to the branch's activities in the city and elsewhere in Scotland.

In 1973 Ronnie moved to South Yorkshire. His brother Freddie soon joined him and both quickly got involved with local comrades in organising party activities in and around Leeds and Doncaster which led to the formation of the former West Yorkshire branch. Ronnie was still doing all he could for the party until only a few months ago when illness laid him low.

The party has lost yet another stalwart, and we extend our deepest condolences to his wife Winnie, son Josh, and to all his family north and south of the border.

VV

Africa: A Marxian Analysis.

A 30-page pamphlet on Africa, mainly reprints of articles from the *Socialist Standard* and mainly written by socialists living in Africa. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- state and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- colonialism and capitalism
- religion, race and class
- Sharia law in Nigeria
- the education system in Ghana

Available from The Socialist Party. £1. (£1.35 by post, send cheque payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" to 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN).

According to the pamphlet, between the 16th and 19th centuries, much of the open land, commons or woods south of the River Thames in London was enclosed for development, usually by rich landowners, or sold off for house building. Despite its name, the common land was rarely if ever actually land held in common. It was almost always land owned by the Lord of the Manor, on which over time local people had come to exercise some rights. But these rights often had no legal weight; they were just part of an unwritten social contract.

Of the "commoners", the pamphlet notes that some of them

"could become wealthy individuals themselves. Thus later struggles sometimes developed into struggles between different local rich persons. Gradually as capitalism developed, slowly replacing a society of complex vertical social obligations and customs with one based entirely on profit, the impetus was on for landowners to replace traditional land use with intensive agriculture. This demanded the clearing of woodland and the exclusion of the poor from the commons."

This process did not take place without massive upheavals. The enclosures increased resistance. The pamphlet describes the wave of rebellion for Sydenham Common, and the conflict on Westward Common in Barnes. Richmond Park, Streatham Common, Woolwich Common and South Lambeth Common are also mentioned. As late as the 1860s, there were struggles over access to Wimbledon Common.

By the 1850s, reformers were articulating the need for urban parks, to "relieve the stress and overcrowding of the city for the millions (of workers) packed into built-up areas". It was also hoped that by converting some open spaces and commons into landscaped parks, they would be made respectable "for the aspiring working classes". For example,

"In South London, Battersea Fields, until the 19th century a place of bawdy working class recreation, including animal fairs, stalls, drinking, etc. became Battersea Park. Local vicar Reverend Fallon proposed building of the modern park to encourage the poor to reform and 'become orderly'. As part of the process in 1852 all persons 'trespassing' on the park with animals or barrows were ordered to be nicked."

Stockwell Green was used for local recreation, often rowdy, until a local toff bought it and built railings round it. Wandsworth Common, as part of the wastes of the Manor of Battersea and Wandsworth, was largely enclosed and reduced in size, and split in three by the new railway lines in the 1840s. The pamphlet mentions numerous other open spaces, commons and parks in southern London, and the various battles and conflicts over their ownership and access. It notes, however, that the struggles described in South London were not unique. Through the 16th to the 19th centuries there were thousands of local battles against the enclosure and development of open spaces. And although not mentioned in the pamphlet, it should be noted here that in a socialist society all the land, and not just commons or parks, would be the common possession of society as a whole.

PEN

Edinburgh and Glasgow branches Day School **SOCIALISM: DREAM OR REALITY?** Saturday 14th May 1pm to 5pm

1.00 to 2.15pm The Dream of Socialism

Ever since the break-up of primitive society the notion of a society without owners and non-owners has persisted. The dream of a more equalitarian society has persisted through the ages. Dick Donnelly (Glasgow Branch) considers some of these ideas and how they relate to modern society, with its hard-nosed attitude towards human behaviour.

2.15 to 3.30pm Can We Abolish World Hunger?

It is reckoned that millions of workers are dying inside capitalism. Paul Bennett (Manchester Branch) asks how do socialists cope with the notions of anti-globalisation and single-issue politics? In a world where war and world starvation is the norm how can a human being deal with the nastiness of modern society and offer an alternative?

3.30 to 4.45pm Is There An Alternative To Socialism?

In this session Brian Gardner (Glasgow Branch) looks at various attempts to patch up capitalism. He pays particular attention to recent notions about anti-globalisation and attempts to deal with world hunger through various ideas about taxation and wiping out debts. How practical are these ideas?

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be available during the sessions. At all these sessions a speaker will open up for 20 minutes and the rest of the session will be taken up with questions and discussion. **COMMUNITY CENTRAL HALLS, Youth Wing, 304 MARYHILL ROAD, GLASGOW.**

Those requiring overnight accommodation should contact R.Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel 0141 579 4109 or **Email** richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Edinburgh Branch

West Lothian Socialist Discussion Group meeting will be on as usual. at The Lanthorn in Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston 7.30 till 9.30 tea/coffee served.

Contacts:

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk
matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk
ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

The topics to be decided will consist of usual of short discussions from current activity as well as:

May 11th

The Real Class Division

We're supposed to be moving towards a more equitable society. Well how come class division is worse than ever?

May 25th

Could We Organise Things Without Money?

When everything has a price it is supposed to be easy to count costs. So what happens when you take price out of the equation?

Edinburgh Branch ***The G8 Summit***

Speaker and title to be announced .

3pm to 5pm, Sunday 3rd July, Quakers Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terr (above Victoria St.)
contact email

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk
matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk
ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

This meeting will be held on the day after the protest march against poverty in Edinburgh, Saturday 2nd July. We intend to have a literature table at the march, and circulate and sell the *Socialist Standard*. Also, we will distribute a special leaflet to advertise Sunday's meeting.

This is an early call for all volunteers to make themselves available and just to generally spread the word. Check-out up to date info for Edinburgh Branch and West Lothian Group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewsFromNowhere>

Manchester Branch **meeting**

Monday 23rd May, 8pm
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill,
City Centre
Discussion on Poverty

Lancaster Branch meeting

Monday 2nd May, 8pm
The Gregson Centre,
Moor Lane, Lancaster
What areas of science would be stopped in a socialist society?

WSM FORUM

Want to talk about what you've just read?
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Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.
Join the WSM forum via www.worldsocialism.org

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 Dark Side of Sunny Jim



“Jim Callaghan's lips quivered, his hands shook, he had no idea what hit him”

It is not entirely clear why the late Lord Callaghan should have been known as Sunny Jim because there was a lot more to him than a supposedly genial, unflappable favourite uncle. While there are people who are grateful for his care for them when they were in trouble there is also a significant number who remember him as a thug and a bully. These are the people who came to know that beneath the surface Sunny Jim concealed an iron determination and excessive venom against anyone who crossed him. Hugh Dalton, who was the first Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1945 Labour Government, at first assessed Callaghan as “first class though with no manners and ruthless ambition”, an opinion which he modified later to “obviously a trimmer and doesn't seem to have any deep convictions”. Roy Jenkins, another Labour Chancellor, described him as “an aggressive pike eating up the minnows, with a brooding air of menace”; Barbara Castle, who was grievously mauled by him over the proposals for trade union “reform” in *In Place of Strife*, saw him as a menace on dry land: “a snake in the grass”. What all these opinions, sometimes contradictory, add up to is that Callaghan was clearly well suited to a career in politics at the highest level. And so it turned out, because he held all the major governmental jobs - Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary and finally Prime Minister. This was pretty well unique, although that cannot be said about the fact that, by the standards which judge capitalist politicians, he failed in all four jobs.

Import duties

Callaghan was not unique in his politician's readiness to reel off sound bites which he came to regret. One of these was his assurance that, after one of the more minor crises, the outlook for the British economy was set fair: “steady as she goes” was how he put it. This was intended to

remind everyone that he had once been in the Navy and to comfort them with the image of a great liner being nudged into safe harbour, with captain Sunny Jim placidly in control on the bridge. What actually happened was that when, only a couple of days after the election, it became clear that British capitalism was in one of its recurring crises Callaghan's response was typical, desperate panic. One of the wheezes he hurriedly implemented in October 1964 was a temporary 15 per cent increase on some import duties which, far from solving the trading problems of British capitalism, provoked outrage and threats of retaliation abroad. In response the British government had to promise that the surcharge was only temporary and then, a few months later, to reduce the rate to 10 per cent. How calm and collected was Callaghan through all this? In November 1964, at a conference of ministers at Chequers, George Wigg recalled “Jim Callaghan's lips quivered, his hands shook, he had no idea what hit him.” Prime Minister Wilson commented “I'm having to hold his hand. His nerve isn't very good these days”.

Another wheeze, thought up by the unpredictably fertile brain of Callaghan's advisor on tax Nicky Kaldor, was the Selective Employment Tax (SET), reputedly a measure to re-distribute labour in a structural reform which would eliminate all those nasty problems which had bedevilled the British economy for so long. The SET was a tax on employers for every employee; manufacturing industry then received a rebate plus a premium for every employee. Agriculture received a rebate of the tax while the service industries did not get anything. This complexity was imposed in a hurry such as to belie its stated purpose of permanently reshaping British industry. One minister described its introduction to the Cabinet: “...bewilderment and consternation. Nobody could quite follow what he (Callaghan) was saying.” In any case SET was virtually abandoned as part of the measures taken in conjunction with devaluation in 1967.

Resignation

Devaluation was supposed to be yet another radical step to improve the international trading position of British capitalism; after the event Harold Wilson declared: “It will be a relief to our people...they will feel that at last we have broken free...” But the Cabinet had been arguing about it almost since the day Labour got into power. Callaghan's attitude was uncertain but he warned:

“we must not underestimate the catastrophe of devaluation. It would be a political catastrophe as well as an economic one.”

Ten days later he announced that the catastrophe had arrived; the pound was to be devalued and soon afterwards he resigned. This has been misconceived as the act of an honest politician accepting responsibility for a mistake. In fact Callaghan had wanted to give up being Chancellor for some time and in any case he was careful, and tenacious, enough not to resign from the Cabinet. What he did was to swap jobs with another member of the Cabinet, moving to the Home Office while Roy Jenkins took over as Chancellor.

Directly Callaghan became Home Secretary in November 1967 he was up against the problem of a prospective large intake of immigrants from Kenya who had

the right to come here because they held British passports. Immigration controls on people from the British Commonwealth were already in operation, having been introduced by the Conservative government in 1962. At that time the Labour Party strongly resisted the Act, as proclaimed by Hugh Gaitskell as far back as 1958:

“The Labour Party is opposed to the restriction of immigration as every Commonwealth citizen has the right as a British subject to enter this country at will.”

Immigration

This appealed to some Labour supporters as a principled stand but it quickly crumbled when it was confronted with the threat of losing votes on the issue, so that during the 1964 election Labour made it clear that they would keep the 1962 Tory Act in operation. The issue came to something of a climax in that election when Labour lost Smethwick, and with it their prospective Foreign Secretary Gordon Walker, to a Tory who ran an openly racist campaign. By the time Callaghan got to the Home Office plans were already under way to rush through legislation to overturn the historic right of British passport holders to enter this country freely. Labour's Commonwealth Immigration Bill went even further than the 1962 Act; it was clearly an attempt to appease any racism among the voters, as it protected the right of entry of most white Commonwealth citizens while denying those rights to Kenyan Asians. This cynical piece of racist legislation was effortlessly seen through Parliament by Sunny Jim, who did not see any reason to resign over this latest example of a policy reversal.

In spite of all that had gone before, in his early days as his Prime Minister Callaghan seemed to be almost invulnerable. With amazing sleight of hand he kept his government going although it was in a minority in the House of Commons. In line with the policy of depressing working class living standards by holding wages down he saw off a strike by the firemen and persuaded the miners to accept a pay deal without a fight. There seemed no end to what he could accomplish by way of disciplining the workers in the interests of their employers - and all this, according to one aide, without trying to “break into the Guinness Book of Records for the amount of work done in twenty-four hours”. But of course this could not, did not, last. The so-called pay policy went a step too far with an attempt to impose a limit of 5 per cent on rises, which was particularly hard on the lower paid workers. Denis Healey, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, later admitted that “we in the Cabinet should have realised that our five per cent norm would be provocative as well as unattainable” - and that was how it turned out.

Road haulage and oil tanker drivers went on strike for 25 to 30 per cent increases; local authority manual workers claimed 40 per cent and the Ford Motor Company agreed a rise of 17 per cent. This was followed by the series of strikes written into history as the Winter of Discontent. Callaghan called the election of 1979 “a sea change” when in fact it was an expression of disillusionment with the Labour Party, bringing the Thatcher government to press on with policies which Callaghan and his ministers had begun. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

SPORT IN A SICK SOCIETY

"To amuse or recreate oneself, by active exercise in the open air; to take part in some game or play; to frolic or gambol." *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. That is an



adequate description of sport before the advent of capitalism, it is wholly inappropriate today. Jose Canseco the former batsman of the Oakland Athletics tells all in his expose of modern baseball, *Juiced*. "Why did I take steroids? The answer is simple. Because myself and others had no choice if we wanted to continue playing. Because Major League Baseball did nothing to take it out of sport," he wrote. "Before they were sworn in, the committee heard emotional testimonies from parents of promising young baseball stars who had killed themselves while taking steroids. Health officials say that suicidal tendencies are one of the side-effects of steroid use" *The Times* (18 March). Just another example of capitalism destroying everything it touches, even baseball.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR

"A bishop in eastern Spain has cut his parish priests' stipend by 30 per cent after his dioceses lost up to €10 million (£6.8 million) on the stock market. He advised them to find the difference by putting collection boxes in their churches" *The Times* (1 April). Really good thinking, Bishop. But how does that fit up with the usual homilies you give the poor about "do not thirst after the material things of life". It seems that it is a good idea for

priests to tell punters but not necessarily a good one for the punters to tell the priests.

WELCOME TO THESE REFUGEES

A great deal of publicity is given to desperate workers travelling half the world to get a job in the UK but little is said of another group of immigrants who are welcomed with open arms to these shores. "Seven of the top richest billionaires in Britain come from overseas, according to *the Sunday Times* Rich List out tonight. The survey reveals that foreigners outnumber Britons at the top of the list, with steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal topping the table with an estimated wealth of £14.8 billion. Chelsea Football Club owner and oil magnate Roman Abramovich drops to second place, but his wealth has held steady over the year at £7.5 billion" *The Scotsman* (3 April). Why do we never hear about restrictions of movement or of the introduction of Identity Cards for these people?

A NICE LITTLE EARNER

The death of the Pope was supposed to fill the world with grief according to the newspapers, but there was one group of entrepreneurs that were rubbing their hands in glee. "With Pope John Paul II's funeral expected to draw up to 2 million people, at least one consumer group is accusing cafes, restaurants, grocery stores and hotels near St Peter's Square of boosting prices to gouge tourists and pilgrims. ... Orlando Salvio, a waiter at a restaurant near St Peter's. said businesses are eager to cash in. 'Here everyone is happy - they're sad in a way, but happy in another,' he said. 'Obviously, the business owners are the happy one'" *Yahoo News* (4 April). A papal death can be good business for some.

NOW HE TELLS US

"Former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said Wednesday that oil was one of the reasons for the US-led invasion of Iraq, a Swedish news agency reported. 'I did not think so at first. But the US is incredibly dependent on oil,' news agency TT quoted Blix as saying at a security seminar in Stockholm. 'They wanted to secure oil in case competition on the world market became too hard'" *Canoe network: Cnews* (6 April). So eventually a spokesman for the capitalist class gets round to saying what socialists have been saying all along.

DYING FOR PROFIT

"The drug industry received a pasting this week and it wasn't entirely undeserved. MPs accused it of cultivating a reliance on medicine in the UK by over-promoting products and trying to find new markets by categorising more and more people as in need of treatment. ... we have been sold the idea that a drug is miraculous, only to be scared silly months later and told that



Vioxx: what's your poison?

it might kill us. The recent withdrawal of the anti-arthritis drug Vioxx, once hailed by doctors as safe and now linked to thousands of deaths, is a case in point" *The Times* (9 April). "Over-promoting" and "finding new markets" is looked upon as good marketing strategy inside capitalism. A few deaths is hardly going to stop the drive for bigger and bigger profits. Sorry about your mother, by the way.



The only cure for the capitalist headache

Free lunch

by Rigg

