

# socialist standard

August 2014  
Vol. 110 No. 1320  
£1.50

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

## The Old Lie

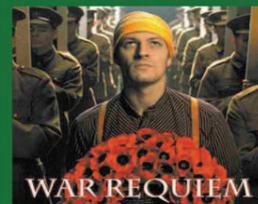
### The Great War 1914 - 18



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# socialist standard

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**RATES:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

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# Introducing The Socialist Party

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

We use every possible opportunity to make

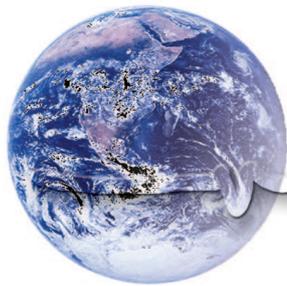
new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections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

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

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

**If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.**



# socialist standard

AUGUST 2014

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## Editorial

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### World War One – A disaster for the working class

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FIFTY YEARS ago, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, the general opinion expressed by commentators was that it was not something to be spoken about in favourable terms. It was a terrible tragedy not a glorious historical episode.

In those days anti-war sentiments were more widespread than today. Maybe because many were still alive who remembered its horrors. Maybe because the main war going on at the time – in Vietnam – was particularly unpopular. In any event, the Military Wives would have stood no chance of topping the charts at Christmas.

Today things are different. Historians have been found to eulogise the war as necessary and just. From the point of view of the British ruling class this is true. All its war aims were achieved. Competition from German capitalism was crushed and its attempt to build a railway from Berlin to Baghdad was thwarted. German colonies in Africa passed under British control as did, on the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the oilfields of Mesopotamia (now Iraq). The British ruling class had every reason to be satisfied with its outcome.

So it is natural that a historian with their interests at heart such as Max Hastings should revive the arguments used at the time to justify British participation in the War. Rather surprising is the position of another pro-ruling class historian, Niall Ferguson, who argues that Britain should have stayed out and let the Continental Powers fight it out amongst themselves. This was in fact the position taken up by some members of the Liberal government at the time.

From the ruling class point of view Hastings clearly expresses their interests better. If the British state had not joined in, it would have not acquired Germany's colonies nor the oilfields of Mesopotamia. And if German capitalism had won British capitalism would have faced a strengthened competitor on world markets and a threat to its Empire.

But what about the workers? Although they had no interest in the issues at stake – colonies, markets, trade routes, investment outlets – many were persuaded to support their respective ruling classes, in France and Germany as well as in Britain. A large number went willingly to the slaughter without needing to be conscripted. This was a measure of the general lack of a socialist or a class consciousness. Not considering any alternative to capitalism most workers in the combatant states were persuaded to identify with the interests of their rulers.

Is the situation any different today? Nationalism and a lack of class consciousness are just as widespread now as they were in 1914. This means that workers today could also be manipulated. Glorifying the First World war as necessary and and those whose lives the state sacrificed to achieve the ruling class's war as heroes is part of the process of keeping this possibility alive. To combat this is why we are publicising as still relevant the anti-war and anti-capitalist position we took up in 1914.

War - what is it good for? Absolutely nothing for the working class.

## Drinking from the skulls

ON THE centenary of the War that didn't end all wars it was always inevitable that patriotic pundits would be parading across the small screen to explain why the Great War was necessary and why carping critics who say otherwise are plain wrong.

Historian Ian Harris went one better recently by arguing that war has in fact been good for us. Why? Because 'war made states, and states made peace' (*New Scientist*, 23 April).

Setting aside current ungentlemanly excesses in Ukraine, Gaza, Nigeria, Syria, Iraq and other hotspots, Harris describes a historic trend away from war which, by a twist of circular reasoning, he attributes to war itself. So upbeat is he on the theme that he claims 'war may be so good at delivering peace and wealth in the long run that it finally seems to be putting itself out of business.'

If this sounds familiar, it's because it's based on the Steven Pinker argument about the historic decline in violence (see the *Socialist Standard* special issue, November 2013), with the difference that it takes the neo-Hobbesian 'ignoble savage' thesis that humans must be ruled by strong states and adds a kind of teleological Pangloss to it. It's a bit like saying that rape and wife-beating forced societies to make laws protecting women, therefore rape and wife-beating were ultimately good for women.

There is never a shortage of right-wing loonies who, regarding any anti-war statement as pinko propaganda, will argue that war is good because it drives technology, as if we would never have invented the plough, the fridge or the space satellite if it weren't for an inbuilt urge to murder each other. Harris isn't that kind of loon, so in his own words, 'what sort of person goes around saying that thousands of years of mass murder have had positive consequences?' His answer is, somebody who looks at the evidence. Our answer is, somebody who needs to look a bit harder at the evidence.

For a historian, Harris is surprisingly vague about dates. Consider the statement that 'the Stone Age, we now know, was a rough place'. The source this statement links to is a study of 350 skulls in Britain, of which a surprising number had been bashed in. He goes on to describe how, ten thousand years ago, with few behavioural restraints, homicides were therefore a regular fact of life. But which Stone Age is he talking about? Ten thousand years ago was the end of the Paleolithic period of hunting and gathering (HG), followed by the development of farming in the Neolithic. The skulls, however, date from between 4,000 and 3,200BC, meaning that whatever skull-bashing was going on, it was certainly going on in the post-HG Neolithic period, a fact made very obvious even in the title of the original article ('Muggings were rife in New Stone Age', *New Scientist*, 11 May 2006).

Why talk about violence in the HG period using evidence from the much later farming period? In order, surely, to support the Pinker argument that HG violence was at epidemic rates. Indeed, he goes on to claim that 'by many estimates, 10 to 20 percent of all the people who lived in Stone Age societies died at the hands of other humans'.

This 'appalling toll' simply doesn't make sense. Imagine a group of 30 HG individuals of whom half are male, and follow the common assumption that violence was almost exclusively between males. 10 to 20 percent means a death rate of

between 3 and 6 males out of 15, year on year. What group could withstand this rate of loss? In 5 years at most the supply of males would be exhausted. Assuming female mortality is included, the situation gets even worse, because of the loss of breeding potential. Had we really behaved like this in the Paleolithic, we would have died out like the Neanderthals and the lately-discovered Denisovans.

But Harris presses on with his conviction that the life of hunters and gatherers was nasty, brutish and short, and states that 'Ten thousand years ago, there were only about 6 million people on Earth. On average they lived about 30 years and supported themselves by hunting and gathering, on the equivalent of less than \$2 per day in today's terms'. Leaving aside the silliness of giving HGs a dollar allowance as if they were in the same squalid situation of poverty as today's 'bottom billion', the life-span estimate involves the ploy of using a mean instead of a modal average, thus taking no account of high rates of child mortality. On other estimates, Paleolithic humans who made it to age 15 had an average modal lifespan of 72 years ([www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/gurven/papers/GurvenKaplan2007pdr.pdf](http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/gurven/papers/GurvenKaplan2007pdr.pdf)).

Why is it so important to blacken the name of the Paleolithic in this way? Because if the longest period of human existence on the planet was in truth relatively peaceful and lacking in organised violence or warfare, as Marx and Engels thought and many anthropologists still think, then the Panglossian theme of Harris and Pinker is utterly undone. If there was no war in the Paleolithic, as the evidence in fact suggests, then there has not been a steady decline in violence from the dawn of humanity. Instead what happened is that farming and the invention of property society unleashed a holocaust upon a species which had known a million years of peace. If today this same property society has developed to the point where, as Harris hopes, it might be able to contain the problem of war, then it is only solving a problem it created in the first place.

But can it even do that? What's stopping the next world war is that, given nuclear arsenals, the costs for any aggressor currently outweigh the gains. But that assumes all leaders are rational, which clearly some are not, and it also assumes the gains won't increase, which clearly they will as states become ever more desperate in their competition over resources.

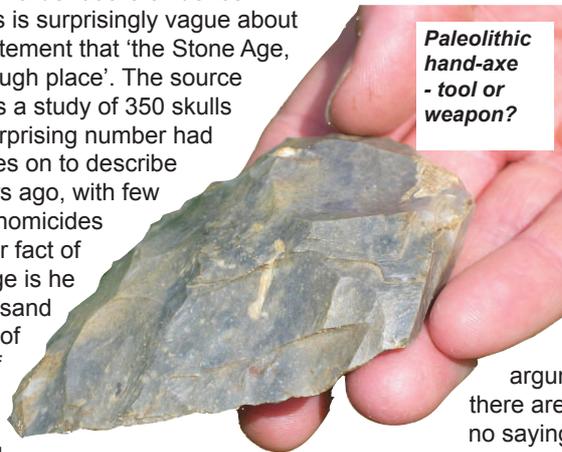
Ever since the fall of Soviet 'communism' there has been a Western feel-good factor among populations who grew up under the shadow of the bomb. Harris has tapped into this feeling that 'the worst is over' and is attempting to find a positive spin on a dark past.

But the assumption of a continuing trend towards total peace is the same probability fallacy as the boom-time argument that there will never be another slump. In reality, there are wars all over the place, all of the time, and there's no saying when a black swan event might crop up to send the world into a new abyss.

Marx, looking at the same history, didn't simply cross his fingers and hope for the best, nor did he try to put a positive spin on the indefensible and obscene. Instead he said this: 'When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production ... then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous, pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain.'

Competition over property caused war in the Neolithic, and still does today. We are now in a historic position to abolish war by abolishing property and sharing the world. Meanwhile to give the state, built on mountains of skulls, the credit for abating the worst excesses of its own evil nature is like giving the psychopathic bully a peace prize for not beating us up more often.

**PJS**





THE THEATRE Royal, Stratford East, London revived in February this year the anti-war musical entertainment *Oh What a Lovely War* to coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The original production by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, Charles Cilton, and Gerry Raffles opened at the same theatre in March 1963. Littlewood's Theatre Workshop was notable for left-wing and proletarian productions such as Brecht's *Mother Courage, A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney, Brendan Behan's dramas and the musical play *Fings Ain't What They Used T'Be* by Frank Norman.

The 2014 production was directed by Terry Johnson, writer of *Insignificance*. Production design was by Lez Brotherston who wrote 'Joan Littlewood wrote it as a piece for a bunch of actors presenting a story, rather than very real characters. It was very Brechtian.' Littlewood indeed used Brecht's ideas on the politicisation of theatre to better convey the realities of war, using minimal props and Brecht's half-curtain for rapid scene changes. Littlewood like Brecht was searching for truth in the dramatic realisation of soldier's stories. Littlewood was influenced by the Expressionist techniques of Meyerhold in Russia, Erwin Piscator's use of newsreel in Germany, and the Theatre National Populaire use of bare stage and pinpoint lighting. She combined a European aestheticism with a deeply English love of popular theatre evidenced in the Pierrot costumes. *Oh What a Lovely War* is a pierrot show with songs, battles, a few jokes and is anchored in a seaside tradition. The presence of music-hall is evident in the way the MC (Shaun Prendergast in the 2014 production) chats to the audience as they come in.

*Oh What a Lovely War* is sourced in the songs of the First World War, Barbara Tuchman's *August 1914*, Haig's diaries, memoirs by Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves plus Alan Clark's 1961 military history *The Donkeys*. Clark identifies the High Command of French, Rawlinson and Haig as responsible for the virtual destruction of the old professional British Army in 1915. Clark's book title originates with Falkenhayn's *Memoirs* where it is written 'Ludendorff: 'The English soldiers fight like lions', Hoffman: 'True, But don't we know that they are lions led by donkeys.' The play clearly portrays working-class lions being exploited by upper-class donkeys, the main villain being Haig whose contempt for the working class is clearly evident in his diary entry 'mostly gamekeepers and servants' after hearing 13,000 men were killed in three hours during the battle of Passchendaele where they gained one hundred yards.

The working class soldier is central to the play, everything is viewed from his perspective and sympathy for the working class soldier is paramount. We wrote in the *Socialist Standard* of August 1964 that it was a 'witty and savage denunciation of the murder of a generation.' In a letter to Littlewood and Raffles on 5 June 1963 Bertrand Russell wrote 'a statement on war such as I have not experienced... I wonder that it has been allowed on a London stage.' The newsreel panels in the show

are grim statistics of the casualties in the so-called 'Great War': 10 million dead, 21 million wounded, 7 million missing, the battle of the Somme July to November 1916 – 1.5 million casualties. The 1963 programme read: 'In 1960, an American Military Research Team fed all the facts of World War One into the computers they use to plan World War Three. They reached the conclusion that the 1914-18 war was impossible and couldn't have happened. There could not have been so many blunders nor so many casualties.' We wrote in the *Socialist Standard* of August 1964: 'When war broke out in 1914 it was much vaster and grimmer than anything the Victorians had seen, something for which people were totally unprepared.'

In Act Two the MC announces 'Part two of the War Game, find the biggest profiteer' and we have a scene of British, French, German, and American Munitions Manufacturers with a Swiss banker, which identifies international capitalism as the cause of the First World War and the ultimate beneficiary: 'two peace scares in the last year. Our shares dropped forty per cent, caused a flutter on Wall Street' and 'I'm a patriot, but I'm also a businessman; my stockholders must have dividends.' The suffragette and anti-war left-wing communist Sylvia Pankhurst makes an appearance reading a letter from Bernard Shaw: 'The men of this country are being sacrificed to the blunders of boobies, the cupidity of capitalists, the ambition of conquerors, the lusts and lies and rancour's of bloodthirsty men who love war.'

American capitalist Henry Ford was honest when he said 'Tell me who profits by war, and I will tell you how to stop it.' *Oh What a Lovely War* contributes to an anti-capitalist and an internationalist outlook but needs some socialist rigour so we say, as we did in 1914, 'Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism.'

**STEVE CLAYTON**





## Heard the One About the Comedy Vicars?

YOU DON'T get to be a vicar or a priest by scouring the 'situations vacant' column in the paper or by being sent along by the Job Centre for an interview. No, those who enter the church as professional god-botherers get the job by answering a 'calling'. A 'calling', apparently, is a sort of divine personal assurance to those who are sufficiently spiritually advanced that they have been chosen to explain the Almighty's plans to the rest of us, and how we are to behave in carrying them out.

What happens is that the voices in the heads of the chosen ones (which turn out to be God talking to them) explain that they have the qualities required to become professional, pious, interfering do-gooders and, that rather than working for a living, they could breeze along fairly comfortably by jumping onto the Jesus bandwagon.

It's pretty much the same with all religions, and, as the voices come from God himself, they can have absolute confidence that God's concerns and prejudices are exactly the same as their own.

It's quite surprising then, that in spite of him choosing his agents on Earth so carefully, and the countless hours they then spend talking to each other in prayer and discussing angels and hellfire etc (or whatever it is they talk about) that God and his clergy are unable to make an iota of improvement in our lives. Take the problem of hunger. All we need is another simple

## FREE LUNCH



## Why the profit system must go

Millions of people no longer bother voting since nothing changes. And nothing ever changes because, no matter who gets elected, those given power always leave capitalism to continue.

If you seriously want to see an end to unemployment, long working hours for inadequate pay, a rapidly deteriorating health service, zero-hour contracts, insufficient decent housing for those who need it, grotesque inequality, the rising cost of living, insufficient and unaffordable nursing homes for the elderly, and numerous other economy-based problems, then you

have to get rid of capitalism.

Capitalism enables a tiny few to own all the vital assets (natural resources, factories, power stations, transport systems etc) which provide all the food, goods and services we need. And through this ownership — and with assistance from politicians bought with big party 'donations' and personal bungs — this capitalist elite are able to profit by forcing everyone to buy from them, even though it is working people (forced to toil for a wage) who do the actual labour.

Production within a real socialist economy will be carried out solely to meet needs. Money will then be obsolete, since when we all collectively own what we produce, everything produced is ours, and you don't have to buy what's already

yours. There will then be free access to what is needed. This socialist system has never existed anywhere before.

Work within moneyless socialism will be far easier, since without production for profit, there will be no unemployment (or employers). Additionally, millions of people currently doing fundamentally unproductive money-related work (banking, insurance, sales, accountancy, welfare benefits, taxation, cash manufacturing etc) will also then be available to contribute something of real benefit to society. The capitalist demand on people to work as hard and long as possible, in order to maximise their profits, will be gone forever.

**MAX HESS**

miracle like the loaves and fishes one — on a slightly larger scale, admittedly. But do we get one? Do we hell. No, we get nothing but excuses about sin, and the shifting of the blame onto the devil. Why can't we have a miracle to get rid of the bloody devil? Get the job done properly once and for all? If you were God that's the first thing you would do isn't it? You have to wonder, is he really all he's cracked up to be?

No wonder the churches are empty. Some vicars though do have a plan to improve things. Religion, they have decided, is not funny enough. According to the *Guardian* (1 July) a London comedian has set up a comedy workshop which the vicars are flocking to in an attempt to liven up their sermons.

They don't give any examples of what we can expect from the comedy clerics but we could supply a wealth of 'randy vicar' and 'what the actress said to the Bishop' type gags if they need them, that would get the punters rolling in the aisles. There are also some hilarious ones about how we are all sinners, and about Adam and Eve and the talking serpent too. And if these are not funny enough, they could always borrow a few from Islam. There's the one about Muhammad performing a miracle by splitting the moon in half, for example, or the one where he flew to heaven on a winged horse. Pure comedy gold. It's the way they tell 'em.

On second thoughts it's best to leave Islam out of it. Sometimes these stories are not funny but tragic. In another one from the *Guardian* (26 June) an ex-Muslim in Nigeria has been incarcerated in a mental health institution and forcibly medicated for 'insanity' after explaining that he had lost his belief in God.

Someone once said that God obviously had a sense of humour. Well, he's certainly a bloody joker.

NW

## The falling rate of profit (1)

IN HIS much talked-of book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (to be reviewed next month) Thomas Piketty has a section headed 'Back to Marx and the Falling Rate of Profit' where he accuses Marx of holding that 'capitalists accumulate ever increasing quantities of capital, which ultimately leads inexorably to a falling rate of profit ... and eventually to their own downfall.' Earlier he had said that Marx's theory 'implicitly relies on a strict assumption of zero productivity growth over the long run.' Since Marx's 'law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall' is based precisely on a long-run growth of labour productivity this is a bizarre accusation.

A clue as to what is behind it is a passage elsewhere where Piketty equates 'economic growth' with 'growth in output per capita, which is productivity growth'. So it is this that Marx is accused of ignoring. It is true that Marx does not employ this concept but it is not true that he was unaware of it, as in section 5 of chapter 25 of Volume I of *Capital* on 'The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation' (which Piketty himself cites) Marx does compare the rate of increase of profits and the rate of increase of population for the period 1853 to 1864. He even quotes from the Registrar General's report on the census of 1861 that 'rapidly as the population has increased, it has not kept pace with the progress of industry and wealth.'

In any event Marx would not have regarded total output per capita as a measure of productivity at national level. He would have defined this rather as total output divided by the number of productive workers.

What Piketty appears to be trying to do is fit what he thinks is Marx's view into his own categories. He lays down as a 'first fundamental law of capitalism' that the share of income from capital in national income = the rate of return on capital multiplied by ratio of the stock of capital to national income. This last, known in conventional economics as the capital/income ratio, or the stock of capital expressed as a multiple of national income (or output, the same thing), is obviously affected by the rate of growth of national income.

Piketty is accusing Marx of assuming an unlikely very high and rising capital/income ratio. According to his first fundamental law of capitalism, the higher is this ratio the higher too is the share of income from capital in national income. If, for instance (as Piketty points out Marx assumes in some of his examples), the stock of capital is ten times annual national output and the rate of return on capital is 5 percent, then capital's share of national income is 50 percent. Piketty adds that if the capital/income ratio 'is extremely high, then the rate of return on capital must get smaller and smaller and closer and closer to zero, or else capital's share of income will ultimately devour all of national income.' This was why, according to him, Marx had to assume a falling rate of profit.

Piketty says that the only way out of this difficulty is a reduction in the capital/income ratio brought about by an increase in the growth of national income per capita. But Marx does not need rescuing by introducing this since he never held the theory Piketty attributes to him. Marx did hold that there was a slow long-run tendency for the rate of profit to fall (though not for the reason Piketty gives) but he also listed a number of counteracting tendencies too. This meant that there was nothing 'inexorable' about it.

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# China's Ghost Towns

RETAIL PROPERTY including housing is estimated to account for around 20 percent of mainland China's gross domestic product (GDP). China has used more concrete in the last three years than the US did in the whole of the 20th century, enough to build a road 5m wide from Canary Wharf to the Moon. Much of this concrete usage has gone towards swathes of empty houses. The number of empty homes in China reaches 50 million, twice the number of homes there are in the UK. More than one in five homes in China's urban areas is vacant. Official estimates said that in mid-2010, 18 percent of all households in Beijing owned two or more properties.

The Hong Kong-based brokerage firm, CLSA, spent a year on the ground in China, examining more than 600 projects across a dozen cities. Their research suggests that there is a problem of excess capacity in the real-estate market in third-tier cities. China's vacancy rate for property is rising and expected to exceed 20 percent between 2016 and 2017, largely buoyed by over-investment. Every industry from cement to shipbuilding is plagued with over-capacity. Too many blocks of apartments and shopping malls paid for with too much debt, frequently financed by the shadow banking system. China's growth has been about the largest credit expansion in modern history.

Local governments in China are in a perpetual cash squeeze because they have to hand over a bulk of their tax revenue to the central government and because the central government often orders localities to build all sorts of infrastructure projects

but neglects to assist with funding. With taxes collected centrally and then redistributed to local governments, land has become the principle source of income for provincial officials, who normally can expect a redistribution of only 50 percent of fiscal revenue after paying 85 percent of the municipal purse. Grandiose land projects, therefore, are ripe money-making schemes for officials. Because the State and therefore the Party owns all of the land in China, local governments solve their funding problems by seizing land from their poorest residents, giving them a paltry sum in return, and then they sell the land to developers, essentially flipping real estate on a massive scale.

'This creates bubbles, because the prosperity of properties and cities ultimately comes from the accumulation of people, but developing real estate alone doesn't create jobs—so [these new towns] don't attract laborers or their families. As a result, only the land per se is 'urbanized,' and so become the 'ghost towns' that we see', says Pan Yingli, a professor of finance at the Research Center for Modern Finance at Shanghai Jiaotong University. 'Local governments borrow a lot of money [to build these towns] but [these towns don't create] the industries or population to produce enough fiscal income to pay them off. These debts become bad loans and add to the risks for the banks. And the banks' solution to this is to extend maturities—in other words, to lend them more money to pay off their old debts.' ([theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/01/chinas-erie-faux-european-ghost-towns/282872/](http://theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/01/chinas-erie-faux-european-ghost-towns/282872/))



**The city of Kangbashi**, built for a population the size of Pittsburgh, is nearly empty. It was built a decade ago to house around a half a million people. At the time the region, known as Ordos, was rich from selling coal and sits atop one of China's largest coal deposits. But today, coal prices are at an historic low, and Ordos is in so much debt that it had to borrow tens of millions of dollars from a local developer just to pay the salaries for its city employees.

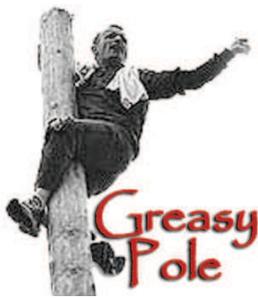
Some make the case that these cities are being built to cover the expected internal migration from China's countryside to the cities. The country's urbanisation rate increased from 17.4 percent to 46.8 percent between 1978 and 2009 and is expected to grow to 64 percent by 2025. According to these voices, they're just a little premature in building those cities.

'I'm not so sure if we have a lot of these ghost cities, but

there's clearly a lot of empty real estate' in smaller cities, said Maarten-Jan Bakkum, senior emerging market strategist at ING Investment Management. The longer these homes stay unoccupied, the less likely they will ever be occupied, Bakkum said. 'If it stays empty too long, decay is very fast and the quality is not always good,' he said. 'You have the risk of these areas of cities or maybe even complete cities that will stay empty forever and will slowly fall apart.' ([cnbc.com/id/101678673#](http://cnbc.com/id/101678673#))

Closer to home, in Ireland, we see a similar example of capitalism in action. There, too, profit-driven developments built in the wrong locations and created a series of ghost housing estates where nobody wants to live ([news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8653949.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8653949.stm))

**ALJO**



# Pray silence for the veterans

CONFRONTED WITH overwhelming evidence of their impotence to deal with capitalism's persistent barbarities our Members of

Parliament are prone to disguise their discomfort behind what their Whips call 'a wall of noise'. Except that when a Member whose 'service' in the Commons qualifies them to be known as a 'veteran' considers that there is a matter of sufficient gravity to justify their rising to speak it is customary for them to be heard in respectful silence – apart from a few grovelling 'hear hear's'. No matter that the veterans' past does not justify them claiming any exceptional insight into those barbarities. There is, for one, Peter Tapsell, MP for Louth and Horncastle whose unbroken presence there has given him the title of Father of the House, known by one observer as 'the grandest of grandees' who does not speak so much as 'intone superbly' – which he perhaps employed when he was once severely critical of his late leader Margaret Thatcher.

## Baldry

But Tapsell has decided that he will not be there after the 2015 election, which brings us to Tony Baldry, who is 20 years younger than Tapsell but has been MP for Banbury in Oxfordshire for over thirty years. He recently persuaded the government benches to be silent when he rose to put a 'question' to David Cameron about Ed Miliband as a teenager delivering election leaflets which promised that Michael Foot would take a Labour government out of the European Union. As Miliband sat squirming Cameron seized his chance. Ignoring the fact that capitalist politics is a process of the parties trying to reshape the confusion between their past and the present he bellowed: 'If as a 14-year-old that was his idea of fun obviously, you know, we have to, you know, make room for everybody'. Which had the Tories choking on their false laughter. As Baldry knows, feeding dummy questions to the party leadership is often essential to the hopes of an ambitious MP.

## Banbury

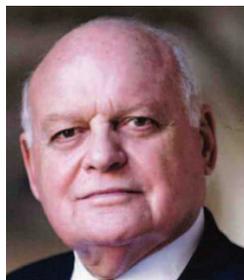
He got involved in politics while a student at Sussex University, with its reputation as a hot-bed of left wing turbulence. By the time of the general election of February 1974 he had begun his serious involvement in a political career, holding a series of jobs as Personal Assistant (in other words spin doctor) to Tory ministers including none other than Margaret Thatcher – before she had earned the title of The Iron Lady. His reward for this in 1979 was to be selected to stand for the Conservative Party at Thurrock where he did well enough against an entrenched Labour majority to be later selected to succeed the retiring Tory MP at the very different Banbury in Oxfordshire. The scale of his victory there in the 1983 election, with his previous experience, put him in line for promotion and he held a succession of promising jobs including another for Thatcher (his role as the persistent servant and assistant to all those luminaries caused his civil servants to stick the name

'Baldrick' on him). The Banbury Tories were reputed to be devoted to him and the voters went along with this, giving him a majority of over 18,000 in the 2010 election.

Baldry has done well out of the system through which our governors congratulate themselves. He was made a Privy Councillor and in 2012 he was knighted so that we should acknowledge him correctly as The Right Honourable Sir... And then he was appointed as the Second Church Estates Commissioner, responsible for answering MP's questions about the Commissioners. All of which is designed to induce in us a state of comfortable admiration for those who claim to make themselves responsible for modelling our behaviour under the stress of this society of privilege and property. In the case of Baldry, as in so many others, it is not so straightforward for there is a maze of interests – financial and political – which have to be taken into account.

## Ibori

His time in the higher reaches of government and the law has been punctuated by a series of diverting and complicated events. In one example in 1997 he wrote in support of awarding the CBE to London solicitor Sarosh Zaiwalla. He did not mention that he had recently benefited from a large personal loan from Zaiwalla; in consequence he had to apologise to the House of Commons. In February 2010, as a barrister instructed by Zaiwalla, he wrote to David Miliband who was then Foreign Secretary, warning that a police investigation of James Ibori, who had been president of the Delta State in Nigeria, would 'damage British interests in that country'. At the time Ibori's assets in Britain, including houses



Above: Tapsell and Baldry. Right: Ibori.



and motor vehicles worth some £17 million, were being frozen as he was facing charges of theft of public funds, abuse of office and money laundering. At Southwark Crown Court in April 2012 Ibori was sent to prison for 13 years and much of his assets, described by the head of the Crown Prosecution

Service central fraud squad as being acquired 'at the expense of some of the poorest people in the world', were confiscated.

## Food Banks

That original question from Baldry is typical of his compliant support of the government. On the issue of the cuts in welfare benefits he consistently opposes any suggestion about easing the misery and despair which they aggravate. Instead he offers an almost Dickensian version about the division between the deserving poor and the un-deserving. The most catching idea he offers, based on events in Merseyside, is that anyone who is starving and has to resort to begging at their local Food Bank, should instead undergo a course in cookery and nutrition – at 50p a session – with the idea of making what little food they have sustaining and affordable. At the end of the course they will be rewarded with a book of recipes. His principle that 'I think everyone is agreeing that as a nation we have to get welfare spending under control' ignores the crucial fact that poverty and its symptoms are disastrously out of control of the victims. If he survives long enough in the raucous uproar of the Commons, Baldry will become a veteran to match Tapsell. With about as little to show for it.

IVAN

# Why the war was not worth shedding a single drop of working class blood

*The introduction to our new pamphlet Strange Meeting: Socialism and World War One which brings together articles published in the Socialist Standard at the time.*

**A**lthough the First World War (28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918) was not quite the bloodiest in history, it must surely be a leading contender for the most futile, wasteful and calamitous. That is not to say that nobody benefited from it, for wherever and whenever there is human tragedy you may be certain that there will be capitalists ready to make a profit from it. In the case of WW1, the expanding demand for ever more efficient and lethal weapons, and rapid technological advance, led to the creation of at least twenty-one thousand new millionaires and billionaires in the USA alone via the arms industry.

With the advent of its hundredth anniversary, establishment apologists will be seizing every opportunity to justify this truly appalling war in the name of remembrance, seeking to glorify this callous implementation of state violence as a laudable defence of freedom and democracy, neither of which most of the combatants would ever have enjoyed in their lifetime. In reality, the recurring purpose of war is the preservation of the particular financial and territorial interests of one set of capitalist powers against the encroachment of their equally ruthless rivals seeking a different outcome.

Substituting ‘power and markets’ for ‘freedom and democracy’ in every history book would yield a narrative embracing far greater clarity and veracity.

In pursuit of capitalist self-interest, members of the working class are routinely regarded by their rulers as a disposable commodity. They are all too easily seduced into compliance with war by appeals to patriotic duty and cynical promises for a brighter future, only to discover that the ‘land fit for heroes’ is a mirage.

Unlike the French and German armies, the UK units of the Territorial and Regular Army consisted entirely of volunteers. So effective was the British recruitment campaign that between July and September 1914, the number of volunteers rose from one hundred thousand to over four hundred thousand. When Lord Kitchener was appointed Minister of War in August, he announced the formation of a new army (Kitchener’s Army). Within five months numbers

increased by well over a million; nevertheless conscription was introduced in January 1916.

The new army was first deployed at Loos and in 1916 fought at the Battles of the Somme – the initial catastrophic assault on 1 July, unfondly remembered as the ‘Big Push’. Lasting until 19 November, the amount of territory gained was a paltry seven miles of muddy terrain. The four and a half months of brutal exchanges resulted in a combined total of almost a million casualties, the British and Commonwealth losing nearly sixty thousand men on the first day to move forward less than a mile. When Commander-in-Chief Douglas Haig finally called off the attack, the first day objectives of Bapaume and Serre were still three miles distant.

The original four hundred thousand volunteers formed part of the British Expeditionary Force, the ‘Old Contemptibles’. The horrendous carnage reaped during the many bloody battles of WW1 serve as a grim reminder that, so far as the ruling élite are concerned, the ‘Old Contemptibles’ were the ‘Old Expendables’. According to the French Army Commander, General Phillipe Pétain ‘success will come to the side that has the last man standing’. Given the large number of animals also sacrificed, he should have added ‘or pigeon, or horse, or dog’. His gloomy prediction was made in 1916, the year that the Battle of Verdun was fought between the French and German armies. In the space of ten months around a million or so soldiers were killed or wounded and the French forces finished up back where they started.

It has been well said that in time of war truth is the first casualty, an observation emphatically endorsed by all governments in the course of WW1. The state propaganda machine immediately sprang into action, ably assisted by the loyal cohorts of the press. Especially by Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*, which, in view of its mass circulation and mostly conservative readership, was a useful outlet for promoting the official line. Indeed, Northcliffe himself was to be the director of propaganda in enemy countries and became known to the

Germans as ‘the Minister for Lying’ (the Allies were dubbed ‘the All-Lies’.) As early as September 1914, a War Propaganda Bureau was set up utilising the literary talents of respected luminaries such as H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling.

Earlier still, on 8 August 1914, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed by parliament. This afforded the government enormous powers, enabling them to take over the coal mines, railways and shipping. Newspapers and magazines or any other publication could be censored or shut down and any land, factory or workshop placed under state control. A list of restrictions was issued for public digestion. No one was permitted to buy binoculars, purchase brandy or whisky at a railway refreshment room, give bread to horses or chickens, stand a round of drinks in a pub or use invisible ink when writing abroad – an immense relief to all those in the habit of doing so at home. Publicans were allowed to water down beer, a practice widely assumed to have preceded the government edict. Any civilian in violation of the new laws could be put on trial. To ensure maximum daylight for the production of essential supplies such as food and munitions, British Summer Time was introduced.

Women, whose skills and potential had hitherto received scant attention from the state were suddenly deemed vitally important – that is to say, important to the war effort. They were speedily recruited for jobs in government-owned munitions factories (munitionettes), in farming (Women’s Land Army), as fire-fighters, as bus conductors and for various non-combatant roles in the WAAC, WRNS and WRAF or the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY). Needless to say, as soon as the war was over the government was keen for them to return to their ‘traditional’ role as homemakers.

Reporting of the war was strictly controlled to ensure that only ‘good news’ was shared with the general public. A Ministry of Information was established and also a War Office Press Bureau. Any reports from the front were suitably watered down before being released. In

essence, the 'news' consisted of a mixture of silence, distortion, half-truths, fantasy and misinformation (downright lies). Ludicrous rumours, purporting to be evidence of inhuman atrocities carried out by the Germans, were circulated by the various propaganda agencies. Special magazines were published that reinforced the picture of the war that the state wished to portray, drawing



in readers by titillating titles: *The War Illustrated*, *The War Pictorial*, *The Illustrated War News*.

To stimulate recruitment to the army and boost morale on the Home Front a series of posters was commissioned that directly appealed to patriotism and duty. Ironically, the best remembered image, that depicting the pointing finger of Lord Kitchener, may not have been used. It was originally printed as a front cover for *London Opinion* magazine, 5 September 1914 and would have been seen by many people, but doubt has been cast that it was reproduced as part of the poster campaign. The official war slogan was 'Your King and Country Need You', but other posters were produced with the specific intention of invoking a sense of guilt and shame. One such example showed a little girl on her father's knee asking: 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?'

Music and song were also employed most effectively, appealing to a range of emotions. Comfort and reassurance: *Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag*; nostalgia: *Keep The Home Fires Burning*; duty: *Goodbye Dolly, I Must Leave You* and pride: *We're The Soldiers Of The King, My Lads*. Those would be performed nightly at music halls by strutting self-satisfied entertainers, oblivious to the conditions at the front. Their smug theatrical displays of flag-waving chauvinism prompted an

enraged Siegfried Sassoon to write one of his most scathing poems:

I'd like to see a Tank come down the stalls,

Lurching to rag-time tunes, or 'Home Sweet Home',

And there'd be no more jokes in Music-halls

To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume.

All possible means were employed to generate anti-German sentiment – even board games and toys – and in 1916 a film was released entitled 'The Battle of the Somme'. Sanctioning its showing was a massive risk as it contained footage of actual battles, including troops being killed, though much of what was shown was staged behind the front line. It was calculated that the shots of British soldiers cheerfully advancing would inspire a mood of optimism that trumped any negative reaction. It was judged to be a success, but almost certainly it proved to be a double-edged sword. By the end of 1916, 'bad news' was also starting to filter through the propaganda smokescreen and public perceptions were changing.

**Left: *The War Illustrated*. Below: conscientious objectors**



Regrettably, these changing perceptions did little to soften the hostility towards anyone who opposed the war. Indeed, the burgeoning resentment of those unfortunate enough to have lost loved ones – in some cases an entire generation of male family members – often led to the adoption of even more uncompromising attitudes. Men eligible for military service, but choosing not to enrol, were commonly ostracised by their own families. The longer the war went on, the more aggressive became the intolerance of conscientious objectors, conscription dodgers and deserters.

At the commencement of the war things were not too unbearable for them, since everyone believed it would all be over by Christmas. Few paid attention to the contrary opinion voiced by Lord Kitchener. Also, prior

to the 1916 Military Service Act, those who did not volunteer were in no way breaking the law. But after conscription was made compulsory for all fit men between the ages of 19 and 41, an exemption certificate was required to escape it. The grounds for exemption were few and some were more readily granted than others. There were four basic categories: 1) men required for alternative work on behalf of the state, 2) the prospect of serious hardship due to exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position, 3) infirmity or ill health, 4) conscientious objectors.

The reasons for conscientious objection were various; some objectors were pacifists, often but by no means always through religious conviction. Some were politically motivated and some by a combination of these and other factors or who remained unconvinced about the validity of this one particular war. Every conscientious objector was obliged to appear before a tribunal to face cross-examination. This procedure was rarely sympathetic and the questions were designed to trap the petitioner into giving an uncertain answer. A favoured technique was to demand a rational answer to a hypothetical question about an irrational situation. One such question that was very often triumphantly invoked asked 'Would you save your mother if a German was going to kill her?'

Much of the unpleasantness sustained by objectors was fanned by the role played by women's organisations like the Mother's Union and the zealous, high-profile support of the national war policy by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. The Mother's Union and some other women's associations encouraged their members to persuade anyone of call-up age to enlist without delay and were an integral part of the government recruitment drive. One of the cleverest, but most insidious posters produced by the state propaganda team declared: 'Women of Britain say – GO!' Such was the impression made by this and other similar slogans that it was not unusual for a mother to shun a non-serving son out of shame.

Shortly after the start of the war, Admiral Charles Fitzgerald founded the Order of the White Feather, which Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst enthusiastically embraced. The feathers were meant to be presented only to those positively identified as young men avoiding military service. But so indiscriminate did their distribution become that the authorities were forced to

requisition special badges bearing the legend 'King and Country' for civilians working in state industries or government departments. Also, those servicemen discharged through injury or sickness were issued with the Silver War Badge. Unfortunately they failed to prevent challenges and sometimes physical attacks being directed at the wrong targets, with a White Feather once famously presented to a holder of the Victoria Cross.

Fenner Brockway, a pacifist member of the Independent Labour Party and later a Labour Party MP, claimed to have received enough white feathers to make a fan. There were some cases, however, of men deciding to enlist subsequent to White Feather embarrassment.

The treatment of conscientious objectors was undeniably harsh, and universally so. In the UK alone they numbered over sixteen thousand, though most were not absolutist and elected to do some form of voluntary service such as ambulance driving or agricultural work. Six thousand were given prison sentences and generally endured brutal treatment, abuse and extremely poor conditions. A number were sent by the army board to France, where they were classified as being on active service. Under French military regulations 36 were sentenced to death, later reduced by Earl Haig to ten years' penal servitude, but some were released as early as 1919. No conscientious objector was ever executed in Britain but 41 died in custody as a result of inhuman treatment.

There were a thousand women conscientious objectors as well and since they included a high percentage of absolutists, half of them were sent to prison. Interestingly, most of the soldiers who fought in the trenches were better able to understand and respect the stand taken by the conscientious objectors than those civilians who behaved so vindictively towards them at home.

Between 1914 and 1920 over three thousand British soldiers were sentenced to death for 'cowardice', 'desertion', 'striking an officer', 'falling asleep on sentry duty', 'casting away arms', 'refusing to obey an order' or various other violations of military regulations. Of these, 306 were executed for purely military offences. A further forty were shot for committing offences of a criminal nature, including murder, in addition to breaking military laws.

Many of the 306 charged and found guilty of purely military violations were among the estimated eighty thousand British soldiers who were

suffering shell shock, a condition not recognised by the courts martial. Some were simply overwhelmed by sheer fatigue or, unable to cope with the sustained mental pressure of unrelenting conflict, lost their nerve. While it is true that they were granted legal representation of a sort, the trials rarely lasted longer than half an hour, often no more than twenty minutes, and no appeal was allowed. Military justice was assuredly swift.

Surprisingly, most of those executed were volunteers which, by itself, is sufficient to suggest that they were hardly unwilling to do their 'duty'. Following a prolonged campaign all of the 306 were posthumously pardoned in August 2006. The death penalty for such 'crimes' was banned by parliament in 1930. In his fictional story (based on fact) of just such a soldier, entitled *The Secret Battle*, the author A.P. Herbert provides a poignant epitaph in the very last lines:

This is the gist of it, that my friend Harry was shot for cowardice – and he was one of the bravest men I ever knew.

Although there were sixteen thousand individuals who, commendably, took a stand against WW1, it was the Socialist Party of Great Britain alone who did so as a matter of political party policy. Our clear-sighted and principled position is reflected by the articles from the *Socialist Standard* reproduced in this pamphlet. This conflict was not caused by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, or by German military imperialism, or by an Arms Race. These happenings were offered as justification at the time, but were nothing more than the consequences of a deeper underlying and ongoing cause. Sadly, truth is not a requirement for A-Level history. The abiding reality is that this war, as others before it and since, was the result of the ever-present struggle by competing national powers and alliances for territorial supremacy and market dominance. Nothing has changed!

WW1 was not only the inevitable result of rampant class-riddled capitalism, but it provided graphic evidence of the obscene lengths to which those who support such a system are prepared to go to perpetuate it. This ridiculous war involved over thirty countries, resulting in over nine million soldiers being killed and twenty-one million injured. A mind boggling twenty-five thousand miles of trenches was dug by both sides on the Western front, creating a rat-infested, disease-

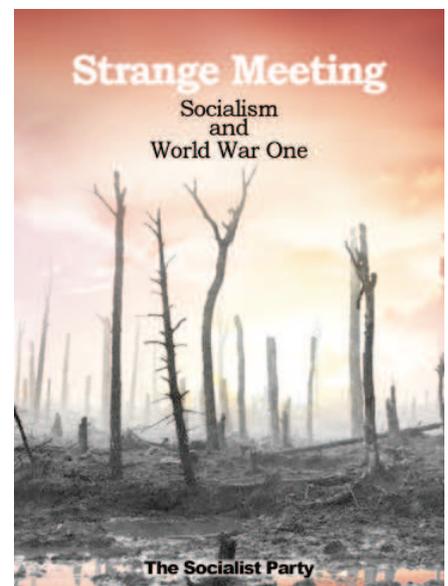
ridden environment. For this purpose the British and French between them used no less than one hundred and forty thousand Chinese labourers (Chinese Labour Corps). Coal miners were recruited to dig tunnels and place explosive devices beneath enemy lines – tunnels in which some remained entombed. On the Eastern Front, conditions were little better. Before the fated Christmas truce in the west, Austria-Hungary had lost four-hundred thousand soldiers – almost half its army – whilst Russian losses amounted to over a quarter of a million.

Poison gas was employed as a weapon of war (used first by the French) and an act of genocide by the Turks eliminated one and a half million Armenians, and the unrelenting savagery of battle brought untold grief to thousands of families. Nothing was resolved by the war; it ended in stalemate rather than checkmate. But further seeds had been sown that would yield an even more destructive conflict.

Few, if any, lessons have been learned about the fundamental flaws of a society which continues to be run by a few to the detriment of the many. For as long as the abundant resources of our planet are exploited for profit rather than produced for need, wars will continue, as the Socialist Party has been pointing out for over a hundred years and will keep on doing until common sense prevails.

#### **RICHARD HEADICAR**

Copies of the pamphlet are available from the Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 for £4.50 including postage and packaging. Cheques to be made out to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.



# The Economic Causes of the First World War



Capitalism with its minority ownership of the means of production and distribution, and the resulting economic struggle for profit means the capitalist class has a motive for using armed forces in wars to protect its vested interests. All members of the capitalist class do not have identical interests in foreign trade and investment; there are divisions over free trade and tariffs. The policy of a government is dictated by which capitalist group is predominant at the time but the capitalist class as a whole has the same interest in defending itself and their privileged position based on their private ownership of the means of production and distribution against the working-class. They are all prepared to use armed force to maintain that position against the working-class.

Capitalism is the cause of the international rivalries that lead to war. When socialists say that capitalism is

contest going on at all times.

Governments in trying to handle the problems and antagonisms created by capitalism turn to war when other means fail. As Clausewitz wrote 'War is merely the continuation of policy by other means.'

In 1914 an explanation for the First World War was the defence of neutral Belgium but no mention was made on the Allied side of the atrocities in the Congo Free State which had been privately controlled by the King of Belgium. Here defenceless natives were maimed and slaughtered for profit, up to 8 million of the estimated 16 million native inhabitants died between 1885 and 1908. Native Congo labourers who failed to meet rubber collection quotas were often punished by having their hands cut off. The First World War was also blamed on the personality of the Kaiser or the acts of individuals such as the Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip at Sarajevo. Professor Pigou in *Political Economy of War*,

hampered by an increasing competition. And then? Why! New areas for trade are cleared by cannon shot. Even the Stock Exchange, for reasons of interest, can cause armies to enter into campaign' (*United Service Magazine*, December 1918). Even Keynes in 1936 identified that 'competitive struggle for markets' is the predominant factor in 'the economic causes of war' (*The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, 1936). Capitalists who have money invested in some foreign territory will do their utmost to secure protection for their property through the activities – including in the last resort war – of their government. So it is capitalism itself which produces these conflicts over markets, trade routes, raw material which cause war. As we wrote in 1914, 'the capitalists of Europe have quarrelled over the question of the control of trade routes and the world's markets.'

**“What do we all seek? New outlets for an ever-increasing commerce. Why! New areas for trade are cleared by cannon shot.”**

the source of wars we do not mean that wars are deliberately plotted by individual capitalists or groups for the purpose of making money. The capitalist system of society is rooted in conflict, and war is one of the products of that conflict. War is not an accidental interruption of the peaceful operation of capitalism but is inherent in the structure of the system itself, it is not the outcome of diplomatic stupidity or miscalculation, or of the arrogance and mistakes of statesmen. War is an extension of an underlying

dismissed the Sarajevo incident as being the occasion not the cause of war. It was 'the match to the powder magazine. The real fundamental causes are those that lie behind the assembling of the powder.'

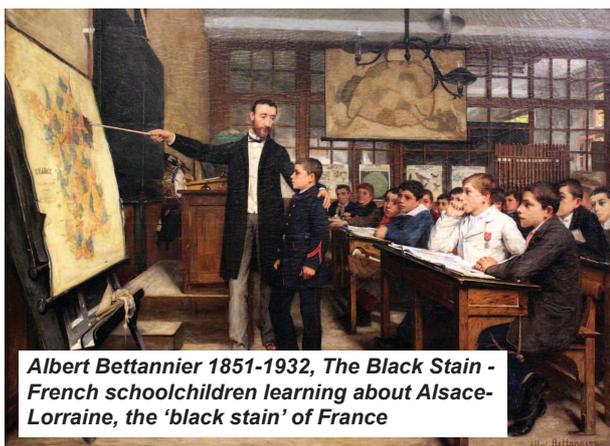
Economic competition between capitalist groups leads to the encroaching on the markets and resources of foreign rivals, and governments retaliate with tariffs, quotas, subsidies and other methods of excluding goods from the market. In the last resort the struggle leads to wars of conquest, the object of

which is to acquire control over markets, or over territories rich in mineral and other resources and in an exploitable working-class. Marshal Foch, French military leader in the First World War wrote in 1918 of the commercial nature of the forces leading to war: 'What do we all seek? New outlets for an ever-increasing commerce and for industries which, producing far more than they can consume or sell, are constantly

## German competition

The origins of the First World War lay in the fact that the nineteenth century industrial, military and naval predominance of British and French capitalism was being challenged by the rapid expansion of Germany. As German industry grew, German production and exports were catching up with the British and the French. Germany was only unified in 1871 and its economic development had been rapid: in 1870 coal production was 40 million tons, in 1913 280 million tons (60 percent from the Ruhr but also from Lorraine, Silesia, and the Saar. Germany was developing modern industries such as the chemical and electrical industries, and in textiles by 1914 they exported more and imported less than Britain. The German annexation of the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871 linked Lorraine ore with Westphalian coal, and Germany's pig-iron production jumped ahead of Britain's.

In Britain a Commission on the Depression of Trade Report of 1886 regarding German competition in world markets stated 'A reference to the reports



Albert Bettannier 1851-1932, *The Black Stain - French schoolchildren learning about Alsace-Lorraine, the 'black stain' of France*

from abroad will show that in every quarter of the world the perseverance and enterprise of the Germans are making themselves felt. In actual production of commodities we have now few, if any, advantages over them, and in a knowledge of the markets of the world, a desire to accommodate themselves to local tastes or idiosyncrasies, a determination to obtain a footing wherever they can and a tenacity in maintaining it, they appear to be gaining ground upon us.'

France had experienced a loss of prestige after defeat in 1870 by Germany, its pride was hurt by the loss of Alsace and Lorraine with its iron ore and coal mines. Thus France had an outstanding interest in reclaiming Alsace and Lorraine. Also the Saar with its wealth of



Franz Ferdinand, Sarajevo, 1914

coal deposits coupled with its location on the border between France and Germany meant the Saar was important. Historically, the Saar was a Prussian/German territory but in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War the French attempted to seize it but failed.

### Places in the sun

A major factor in capitalist rivalries was imperialism, particularly the 'scramble for Africa' and Germany's search for a 'place in the sun.' Germany had entered into the colonial scramble but they developed late and found all the best territories and strategic ocean highways already dominated by Britain, France and others. Britain had acquired most of its empire before 1870; Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the globe were acquired to protect trade routes. The prime motivator for empire was trade, the East Company drove the expansion of the British Empire in Asia. First came the missionary and the trader then the soldier and Governor with the flag.

Germany annexed Namibia, Togoland, Cameroon, and Tanganyika and made efforts to connect the south

west colonies with the eastern colonies which threatened British expansion north from the Cape. German support for the Boers against Britain in mineral-rich South Africa antagonised the British. Dr Heinrich Schnee, formerly Governor of German East Africa wrote in 1936: 'The colonies offer an assured market for our own industrial produce; they afford a field of investment for the savings and capital of the Mother country.'

Colonies were necessary for investment, resources, raw materials, markets for manufacturers and raw materials not available or in short supply in metropolitan countries e.g. rubber in the Congo. The colonial markets became more important after Free Trade was abandoned in Europe in the 1870s.

Joseph Chamberlain, British Secretary of State for the Colonies said in a speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in 1890, said that 'All the great Offices of State are occupied with commercial affairs. The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office are chiefly engaged in finding new markets and in defending old ones. The War Office and the Admiralty are mostly occupied in preparations for the defence of these markets and for the protection of our commerce' (Leonard Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism*, 1920).

Prior to 1914 German capitalism was rapidly encroaching on British and French markets, the international situation was intensely difficult with two basic problems: Alsace and Lorraine in the west and in the east the Balkans. The Serbian Pork War inflamed Serbian nationalism in Serbia and amongst Bosnian Serbs, and a Bosnian Serb would assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. The Berlin-Baghdad Railway, which would link Germany to the oilfields in the Persian Gulf, putting it in striking distance of British oilfields in Persia, Russian oilfields in the Caucasus, and British, was deemed a serious threat.

The German invasion of Belgium meant British capitalist interests were endangered directly by Germany becoming master of ports on the English Channel. Prime Minister, Asquith wrote on 2 August, 1914: 'It is against British interests that France should be wiped out as a Great Power. We cannot allow Germany to use the Channel as a hostile base. We have

to prevent Belgium being utilised and absorbed by Germany.'

### British War Aims Achieved

The British war aim in the First World War was to restrict German access to the Persian Gulf and the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty accomplished everything that Britain and France wanted; Germany lost its colonies in Africa which became mandates of the British Empire, the Ottoman Empire was broken up and Britain received as mandates Mesopotamia and Palestine, and the French got back Alsace and Lorraine, and received the mandates of the Levant (Lebanon and Syria). The Saar Land became a mandate of Britain and France from 1920 to 1935, and after the Second World War the French got their hands on it again but only until 1956. Germany achieved one of its war aims albeit briefly: the March 1918 Brest Litovsk Treaty forced on the new Bolshevik government in Russia meant that Ukraine, 'the bread basket of Europe' with its fertile steppes of rich black soil and vast fields of wheat, gained 'independence' from Russia but was essentially an economic satellite of Germany.

The First World War did not start overnight through an assassin's bullets at Sarajevo, it was the outcome of years of conflicting capitalist interests. After the war we wrote 'While competition between capitalist groups for routes, markets, and control of raw material exists, the cause of war remains.' We had even written as early as November, 1914: 'the facts point irresistibly to further great wars. They indicate that no sooner will the present struggle have ceased than diplomats will be at work forming new alliances.' And it was these alliances and the rivalries that were engendered by them that eventually led to the next world war in 1939.

STEVE CLAYTON



Gavrilo Princip



# Winners And Losers - Haig and the Soldiers

A few years after the Armistice some comfortably charitable ladies in Scotland had the idea of setting up a factory to provide paid employment suitable for disabled ex-soldiers – to make imitation poppies. One of them was Dorothy Maude Vivian, second daughter of the third Lord Vivian and maid of honour to Queen Alexandria, recently ennobled into the Countess Haig, wife of Field Marshall Douglas Haig who, as commander of the British Army in France, had planned so many of the disastrous battlefield episodes which had left so many dead or needing charity through being physically wrecked. Throughout the year the poppies flowed out, each bearing in its black centre spot the initials HF standing for the charity's name of the Haig Fund. Which may have done something to persuade the commander that, as far as his reputation went, it had all been worthwhile.

## Somme

Haig achieved his ambition to replace Sir John French as commander of the BEF in France in 1916, after a long campaign of intrigue and character denigration. He installed himself in a château near Montreuil – a small, agreeable town where his officers could ease the stress of commanding the thousands of British soldiers in the trenches by visiting their club where a subscription of five francs ensured them three good meals and afternoon tea each day and access to vintage claret and burgundy at prices far lower than those in Paris or London. Haig's immediate concern was to implement the decisions of the joint conference at Chantilly, to launch a series of devastating Allied attacks across the trench line to drive the German army into subjection.



This was to be tested in the Battle of the Somme, lasting from 1 July 1916 until November. Before the reality of the casualties emerged that battle was represented as a proud example of British valour and fortitude which would crucially re-arrange the shape of the Western Front and so the future of the war. It turned out to be a gruesome failure costing thousands of lives but bringing little significant change.

## Enthusiasm

The conferring overlords at Chantilly were not, of course, distracted by any contributions from the people whose lives were for disposal – the Allied soldiers who would be ordered out of their trenches to face the storm of bullets and shells in order to kill as many of the enemy as possible before putting the rest to flight. All over Britain – as in Germany, France and the rest – there was a powerful surge in enthusiasm for the war and a restless ambition to get into military uniform and into the front line as soon as possible. An example of the war, and of Haig's reaction to the fate of the soldiers, was the 49th. Division of the West Yorkshire Regiment who on 3 September 1916 were ordered to attack a heavily fortified area which included the infamous Triangle and the Pope's Nose. Those troops were supposed to be resting before going over the top but in the event they had to spend their waking time dragging ammunition and reserve rations for miles up to the dumps near the front. Their condition was such that one of their sergeants said his platoon's normal strength of 33 was reduced to 'eighteen decrepit old men'. The result was, then, predictable. Of the 350 men who attacked in the first wave on that day 244 were killed or wounded. Haig's view of the incident

was that those men '...did not really attack and some men did not follow their officers ... I had occasion a fortnight ago to call the attention of the Army and Corps Commanders ...to the lack of smartness, and slackness of one of its Battalions in the matter of saluting

when I was motoring through the village where it was billeted. I expressed my opinion that such men were too sleepy to fight well, etc.'

## Three Brothers

Deep within that murderous confusion were the Bright brothers, three proud Cockneys who had become hardened soldiers during the Boer War; this account of them is compiled from their own memories and that of their sister Maud, who was both proud and fearful of them. The eldest was Bill, a sergeant; there is a photograph of him in the splendour of his uniform with riding breeches, spurs and peaked cap with its regimental badge. He stands erect before the studio forest, wide-eyed at the camera. What they would have called A Fine Figure Of A Man. There are no known photographs of the other two, Jim and Fred, but they were also out there. On 16 September 1916 Bill was blown to bits, probably in a trench. His men said they knew it was him because among the other remains they found his identity tag. His name is on the Memorial at Thiepval – one of those 'Who Have No Known Grave'.

## Trench Raid

When Jim was told about his brother's death his immediate, insistent reaction was that he had to take part in that night's trench raid which was planned to slip across No Mans' Land and bring back a couple of Germans for interrogation about the enemy's strength, origins, plans. With the rest of the men Jim went silently across and as he dropped into the opposite trench a young German soldier appeared – 'not much more than a kid' was how he described him – holding trembling hands aloft and whispering 'Kamerad'. It must have been obvious that this 'kid' would have been only too ready to answer any questions put to him later by a British officer but Jim did not let that divert him. 'I'll give you Kamerad you bastard' he snarled as he sank his knife into the young body again and again. It is not known whether Jim stayed in that enemy trench long enough





to appreciate that conditions there were much better than those he had to endure.

What is known is that he wrote to Maud 'I am up to my knees in mud and I am lousy. Please send me some clean socks and underwear'. During the later Battle of Paschendaele he was himself taken prisoner (but not knifed). He then spent the rest of the war being cruelly worked in a salt mine in Germany, which left him with permanent damage to his lungs so that in the next war he could only wheeze his life out in a small, dingy room in the East End while the Luftwaffe bombed as he lay dying.

Fred's story was different. A previous record of insubordination to an officer had led to him being thrown out of the Army – 'dishonourable discharge' he pointedly labelled it – which caused his application to join up again in 1914 to be rejected until the British Army's losses were such as to cause a lowering of standards. So he joined the other two in the trenches, until an exploding shell or a burst from a machine gun tore out the muscle in his left arm and sent him back to civilian life. However serious, the wound did not stop him starting a boxing club where the local lads could be taught by him in what he primly called 'the noble art'. It also did not stop him getting into a fight in the docks in which he lost the sight of an eye.

### Chaotic

It was rather different in the higher levels. Late in August 1914, during the chaotic retreat from Mons, Chief of Staff General Sir Archibald Murray responded to the news that the BEF was in imminent danger of being overwhelmed by the advancing Germans by passing into a faint.

Any private soldier who behaved in that way might well have been dragged before a Court Martial and perhaps executed for cowardice. However Murray, as a high ranking officer, had to be treated differently. His indisposition was remedied by feeding him a pint of champagne. Years after the war, one of Haig's generals remembered Major General Sir Henry Wilson as an 'Out-and-out crook. Never did a stroke of work. Sat in his office writing to his lady friends in high places'. In the same style, Haig himself was ready to contemptuously sneer at those who were supposed to be his staunch allies, writing to Dorothy Vivian as early as September 1914 that: 'The French are most unreliable. One cannot believe a word they say as a rule'. And later, on the same theme, 'They are truly a race of usurers!'

### Viscounty

After the Armistice an immediate question for the British government was how Haig should be rewarded for his time in charge of the British forces on the Western Front. The first attempt at this was to arrange a great victory parade in London and to suggest that he shared the fifth carriage with Foch, Clemenceau and Orlando. Haig did not think much of this: 'I have no intention of taking part in any triumphal ride with Foch and a pack of foreigners, merely to add to L G's importance and help him in his election campaign'. He also rejected an offer of a viscounty, on the grounds that the same title had previously been offered to Field Marshal Sir John French, the officer he had deposed and who had been sacked – to Haig's satisfaction – for being incompetent. Eventually, more to his taste, he was made Earl Haig of Bemersyde with a subsidiary viscounty and barony, an estate in Scotland and a grant to allow

him to live in the style these titles demanded. There was however another problem; Haig asked for £250,000 as appropriate to his achievements in arranging all that slaughter but Parliament disagreed and limited his reward to £100,000.

A different type of heroism, of endurance in the face of exposure and deprivation, was demanded of the men returning from Flanders. One of these was Wally Crosby, the boyfriend of Maud the long-suffering sister of the three Bright brothers. When the war began Walter, who had a well-paid, secure job in a sawmill tried to join up – how else would he have faced the Bright family? But he was rejected until 1917 when he was ordered to report to a boat train at Victoria Station which would take him to France. Before he went he and Maud married in a local Registry Office. This was not due to the anxious couple being bound by any deep affection but because they hoped that if Wally was Killed On Active Service Maud would qualify for a war widow's pension which would be significantly more than the sweatshop wage she was getting from her job in a Shoreditch dress factory.

### Survival

But Wally survived; and when he was demobilised and went to the saw mill to ask for his old job back he was told that it had been taken by an eager young civilian soon after he had left for the boat train. Thus it was that Wally and Maud resigned themselves to a 'peacetime' life of relentless poverty, made sharper and deeper as they produced a batch of children. Wally, one of the survivors of that dread turmoil which is now being glorified by the ruling class, descended into an underpaid road-digging labourer; between the two World Wars he was unable to find a job lasting him more than a week or two. For him and his family there was no triumph but only bitter frustration and despair. Meanwhile their leaders gathered at Versailles in what was called a Peace Conference except that its primary task was to re-arrange the national borders to prepare for the next conflagration. In that process the people of Germany were subjected to such privation as to persuade them that their best hope was in a cruelly repressive state. And as the poppies, with their reminders of Haig and his works, flowed from the factories the children were being born who would grow into the warriors – the trained killers – of the next war.

### IVAN



Vickers gun crew, Somme, 1916

# The Covenanters – the Scottish Taliban?

*In the run-up to the Scottish referendum we conclude our three-part series exposing the myths of Scottish nationalism.*

Over 18,000 and possibly as many as 30,000 Scottish Presbyterian Covenanters gave their lives for their beliefs during the seventeenth century. To understand the background to this, we have to remember that religion and politics have been interwoven throughout Scottish history. For instance, there was the Calvinist Reformation where John Knox was able to bend much of Scotland to his will and control Parliament. From the signing of the Scottish National Covenant of 1638 to the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 there was a movement to make Scotland a theocratic state. These dissenters were the staunch supporters of Presbyterianism, the radicals of their day, who strictly followed the rules of John Calvin, John Knox and latterly Andrew Melville. It was their desire for a theocratic government and rejection of the king's claimed supremacy of the church that branded them as zealots and a threat.

The Kirk was the focus for the Presbyterians in which the senior members of a congregation were elected as the Elders. They and the minister held great sway through the 'Kirk Session' – the local church court. It was through the workings and authority of this court that the day-to-day life of the congregation was overseen. The Kirk Session was responsible at local level for matters of conscience and religion which in practice ranged across practically everything. Their role extended to dealing with excesses and behaviour of all kinds, whether drink or style of dress, fornication or lewdness, oppression of the poor by over-taxation or deception in buying and selling. The local nature of a punishment, both the publicity and enforcement locally, meant that action was swift. The most common civil penalty imposed by the Kirk Sessions was the fine. In some places this was according to a set table, in others there was a quite enlightened approach to fines according to the estate of the offender (proportionality as we call it today). Non-payment of fines could result in imprisonment or being locked in the 'jugs' – a lockable metal collar attached to a wall by a length of chain, for the duration of the sermon. The penalty for adultery was to stand dressed

in sackcloth, bare headed and bare feet at the kirk door; then sit on the stool of repentance in front of the congregation for perhaps six months or longer.

Sometimes the punishment included fines and whipping too. Few resisted as under a law of 1581 the adulterer who refused the kirk's punishment could be put to death. In the period 1574 to 1612 Puritanism and the zealous Presbyterianism of Andrew Melville gained a foothold that punished a wide range of alleged excesses. This Puritan zeal included attacks on Christmas and traditional holidays such as Midsummer Eve. Pilgrimages, dancing, carol singing, merrymaking at weddings, and wakes; and failing to work on Christmas Day, were all subjects of condemnation. In 1579 a law was



**Covenanter James Renwick taken to execution in 1688**

passed banning Sunday travel, recreation and drinking. A second and more intense phase of Puritanism appeared after 1638 when much of the country was imbued with fervour following the National Covenant. The Puritan vigour was subsequently endorsed by Oliver Cromwell when he subjugated Scotland during his republican rule. In 1656 the ultimate law was passed that forbade frequenting taverns, dance, listening to profane music, washing, brewing ale or baking bread, travelling or conducting any business on a Sunday. This, for example, led to the punishment of children for playing on a Sunday, and a public warning about carrying water, sweeping the house or clearing ashes from the fire place.

The National Covenant was drafted by Sir Archibald Johnstone, and Archibald Henderson. It was in three parts – a reproduction of the Confession of King James VI (later

James I of England) in 1580; a detailed list of the Acts of Parliament which confirmed Presbyterianism and condemned Popery; and, thirdly, a protest about the changes in worship which was an attempt to force episcopal reforms on the nation. King Charles over-reacted and regarded the Covenanters as rebels. In June 1640, during an uneasy truce, the Scottish Parliament assembled in defiance of the King's attempts to postpone its sitting. A number of acts were passed that radically altered the constitution of Scotland. A new Committee of Estates was appointed to govern Scotland when Parliament was not in session. The Committee's primary responsibility was the defence of Scotland, for which it was granted powers to borrow money and to raise taxes. The Committee was dominated by Covenanters. The Committee remained in power whenever Parliament was not sitting throughout the turbulent 1640s. The fundamentalist Kirk Party became the dominant political force and governed Scotland as a theocracy from 1648-50, characterised by regular purges of officials and soldiers regarded as ungodly or 'malignant'. The Kirk's desire to stamp out sin and to enforce moral reform, in accordance with the principles of the Covenant, resulted in one of Scotland's periodic 'witch-crazes' during 1649-50, in which hundreds of alleged witches were persecuted, with many burned at the stake.

Charles II was proclaimed King of Scots in February 1649, but the Kirk Party insisted that he should first accept the Covenant and promise to establish Presbyterian church government throughout the Three Kingdoms. Realising that he needed a Scottish army to help him regain the thrones of England and Ireland, Charles was obliged to sign the Treaty of Breda in May 1650 and reluctantly took the Covenant upon his arrival in Scotland the following month. The Kirk Party struggled to keep Charles under its control by banishing most of his closest advisers and by insisting upon purging the Scottish army of all but strict Covenanters in the weeks before the Battle of Dunbar against Cromwell. Up to 80 veteran officers and 3,000 experienced soldiers were

judged unfit to serve and were replaced by inexperienced recruits, which contributed to the Scottish defeat at Dunbar and discredited the Kirk Party. The Kirk Party was further weakened when hard-line Covenanters broke away to form the Remonstrant movement.

On 14 December 1650, the Commission of the Kirk decreed that it was Parliament's duty to employ all lawful means to defend Scotland against the English invaders, which opened the way for the re-admission of Royalists and Engagers into the army once they had undergone suitable penance. Pro-Royalists were known as 'Resolutioners' because they supported the resolutions of 14 December. They were opposed by 'Protesters', a group which was led by Remonstrants but included many who had not supported the original Remonstrance. The Protesters continued to object to the relaxation of the strictures against 'malignants' but the Royalists rapidly gained influence in the military and civil administration of Scotland after the coronation of Charles II culminating in the fall of the Kirk Party.

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 was greeted with some euphoria among the general populace who had endured over twenty years of almost constant war. But it was short lived. Charles turned upon the Kirk and its leaders who had given him such a tough time in 1650 - 1651 when he had tried to take up his throne following the execution of his father (Charles I). At his Restoration he took his revenge, executing the Marquis of Argyll, James Guthrie and Archibald Johnstone. He next caused legislation to abolish all that Presbytery had achieved and restored episcopacy along with compulsory attendance at the approved church on pain of heavy fines for non-attendance.

From about 1670 the country was under military rule as Charles intensified the persecution of the people and prompted the 'Killing Time' of 1684-5. To quell unrest in south-west Scotland some 3,000 Lowland militia and 6,000 Highlanders (the 'Highland Host') were billeted in the Covenanting shires. The Highlanders were responsible for many atrocities, robbery and rape, pillage and plunder. Covenanters were flushed out and hunted down as never before and the common soldier was empowered to carry out summary executions of any suspect without the requirement of a trial. A Covenanter once caught by the King's troops was shot on the spot. Usually it was done without any evidence. Brutality in these days defied the imagination and the persecution had no mercy on man, woman or child, irrespective of circumstances. These policies provoked armed rebellions in 1666 and 1679, which were quickly suppressed. Following the Battle of Bothwell Brig some 1200 prisoners were taken and incarcerated in a make-shift prison at the Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh, where many died of suffocation. Of these prisoners, 257 ringleaders and ministers were sentenced to be transported as slaves. The vessel set sail but struck rocks off Orkney. It is said that the captain despite the pleas of the prisoners ordered the hatches to be chained. Thus it was on December 10, 1679, that 211 Covenanters went to a watery grave.

Cameronian was a name given to a section of the Scottish Covenanters who followed the teachings of Richard Cameron, and who were composed principally of those disavowing allegiance to Charles II and the government of Scotland, in the name of 'true Protestant and Presbyterian interest'. They opposed government interference in religious affairs, and were anti-Catholic, refusing to take the oaths of allegiance to an uncovenanted ruler. They wished to restore the ecclesiastical order which had existed between 1638 and 1649. The Cameronians saw themselves as early Christian martyrs by holding steadfastly to their beliefs in the face of torture and death. It was from these rebellious religious militants that the famous Cameronian Rifles regiment was formed, not as some suppose, from the family clan Cameron, and it was why each new recruit to

**continued page 22**



## The falling rate of profit (2)

THE MAY/June issue of *Philosophy Today* also mentions the 'law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall' (as it's called in the first English translation of Part Three of Volume 3 of *Capital*). In a generally fair article on Marx in their *Brief Lives* series, poet Roger Caldwell ventures into the field of economics:

'Marx takes over from economist predecessors such as Adam Smith the notion of the falling rate of profit, although he is nowhere able to show that such a tendency exists, not least because, in the buoyant economy of the middle to late Victorian period, rates of profit were manifestly rising.'

It was indeed the opinion of Classical Political Economy that in the long run capital accumulation would theoretically eventually come to a halt because the rate of profit would have fallen to nearly zero. Adam Smith thought this would happen because capital would become too abundant (a view shared by some moderns, Keynes for example). Marx regarded this as merely a passing phase of the business cycle which would not be permanent.

David Ricardo thought that it would happen because of diminishing returns from agriculture which would eventually lead to all surplus value (to use Marx's term) being absorbed by ground-rent at the expense of profits. Marx wanted to explain the phenomenon from the internal working of the capitalist economy, not from some external 'natural' phenomenon such as Ricardo was suggesting.

Starting from the basis that surplus value arose only from that part of capital invested in the purchase of labour-power, and noting that as capital accumulation proceeded the proportion of capital invested in this would fall as more was invested in plant and machinery, Marx deduced a theoretical tendency for the rate of profit, as newly created surplus value as a percentage of total capital invested, to fall because total capital would increase at a faster rate than total surplus value.

This was Marx's contribution to the debate amongst the Classical Political Economists. But no more than Smith or Ricardo would he have thought that the rate of profit would actually fall to zero, simply that there would be a 'tendency' for it to move in this direction. The very fact that he chose the word 'tendency' shows that he did not think that there would be a steady downward movement. This is confirmed by his listing of a number of 'counteracting' tendencies that would work to increase the rate of profit, the implication being that at one time the tendency might win out and that at another the counter-tendencies might.

Any such fall for the reason Marx gave would be a long-run tendency, discernible only in generations rather than decades (not that Marx expected that the workers would wait generations to overthrow capitalism) and is to be distinguished from the short-term falls that occur for different reasons just before and during the economic downturns that capitalism regularly goes through from time to time.

Marx was well aware that profits were rising in 'the middle to late Victorian period' and notes this not only in Volume I of *Capital* but also earlier, in 1864 in his Inaugural Address of the IWMA. But an increase in the amount of profit is not the same as an increase in the rate of profit. Not that Marx was particularly concerned to show that the rate of profit had been falling during this period, nor did he need to be. A 'tendency' is only ever a tendency and does not have to manifest itself all the time. That's why it's called a tendency and not an iron law.

## **OBITUARIES**

### **Richard Montague**

IT IS with great sadness that we have to announce the recent death of our comrade Richard Montague in Belfast only a few days before his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Richard was political from a very young age. As a boy he found himself in the Republican Movement, and, at the age of 16, he also found himself in jail – or as he always referred to it, ‘Chokey’ – for a short spell. He soon became disillusioned with nationalism. When he looked at the problems that affected the vast majority of the working class in every country, he realised that nationalism, and concern for artificial borders between people, held no solutions and he quickly turned against it. One of his favourite stories was how, when he left the Republican Movement, he was proud that he’d taken 4 or 5 people out of the IRA with him.

Richard came across the SPGB when he was working in London. He vividly recalled sometime later how, after reading some of the Party’s literature on the big questions of the day, his first thought was ‘where have these people been hiding?’

In finding the Socialist Party, Richard had found his political home for the rest of his life, and the Socialist Party had found one of its most stalwart, most articulate, most enthusiastic, most liked, most respected and most admired members. During the coming decades the sheer ability of the man was revealed: writing, speaking, debating, organising, letters to newspapers, electioneering, answering correspondence – even printing Party literature! Richard bought and trained himself to run an old duplicator, turning out leaflets and makeshift pamphlets in the days when that was no small feat. When he wasn’t physically active, he was talking socialism. With him, the personal was indeed always the political and vice versa.

When he was a young man, Richard kept company with some local Trotskyists – though he was never a member of any of their groups. The question of socialism was bound up at the time with the question of what existed in Russia. Richard knew instinctively that he was opposed to what existed in Russia, for he naturally detested anything based on coercion, or

leadership or hero worship. And besides, he knew his Marx well enough not to be taken in by bogus Leninist claims.

Richard didn’t hide his views on religion. At the age of 13 he was able to embarrass his would-be teachers, the Christian Brothers, by explaining back to them the absurdity of their own nonsense. .

Richard soon became a contributor to the *Socialist Standard*. Writing was in his blood, he loved to write and he was certainly one of the best writers the *Socialist Standard* ever had in my opinion – and we have had some great writers over the years. His articles on Irish history have been praised by many. A history of the Party published in 1975 by a non-member rightly states that anyone wanting to get an understanding of what was called ‘The Irish Question’ would do well to read Richard’s articles. The Party’s stock pamphlet on Ireland entitled *Ireland, Past, Present and Future* was written by Richard and his novel, *Frank Faces of the Dead*, was a story about the troubles. Published at the height of the conflict, nothing sums up Richard’s hatred for violence and division within the working class better than the dedication he wrote for his book. It was dedicated to all the victims of the troubles – including the British soldier, IRA member, protestant paramilitary, RUC member and UDR member.

Not only was Richard a fantastic writer – and he wrote great poetry and short stories just as he wrote articles and pamphlets and books – but he was an avid reader too. His knowledge of literature was extensive and would easily put any professor of the subject to shame. He effortlessly connected numerous writers to politics and his own socialist views. Joyce, Wilde, Shaw, Marx, Shelley, Keats, Fitzgerald’s translation of Omar Khayyam, to name but a few – Richard had them all at hand and could quote them all.

His knowledge of Shelley’s poetry in particular was second to none and he could quote huge swathes of it, for he loved Shelley. *The Mask of Anarchy*, a poem Shelley wrote in protest against state violence, was a particular favourite and Richard knew it by heart. And he didn’t just recite it. Indeed, he sometimes claimed that Shelley was the true originator of many ideas accredited to Karl Marx.

Socialists don’t follow leaders,

and we don’t give much credence to what’s called the great man theory of history. But we do recognise the worth of a person as an individual. Richard was one of the worthiest of individuals.

**NIGEL McCULLOUGH**

### **Sandy Easton**

We are sorry to have to report the death (aged 60) of our comrade Sandy Easton, for many years a member of the old Islington Branch and before that of the old Croydon branch, then latterly of North London Branch. Raised in Edinburgh where he also attended university, Sandy joined the Party there in 1974 after hearing Socialist Party orators at the Mound. He and was very active throughout most of his membership, serving many times on the Party’s Executive Committee and being a former long-standing member of the Media Committee and its predecessors.

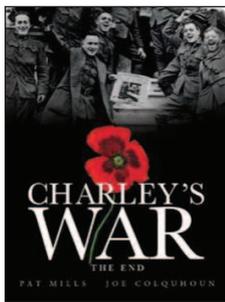
Sandy was a dedicated socialist, always interested in the historical detail of theory and diligently committed to the principles of fair process. He was open-minded, much influenced by his huge interests in folk-music (and its meanings) and in radio drama. He was a fine actor in his own right; some members once saw him in a superb performance of Wesker’s ‘Roots’ in which all the parts were played by blind actors. He was also a very accomplished keyboard player and singer too – indeed many attendees at Conference socials over the years will remember his particular penchant for mining disaster songs! We will also remember his incredible ability, as someone who was blind, to navigate his way around London streets and the underground system with minimal help or assistance from others. And there are many who will swear even now that Sandy could tell who’d entered the room by the distinctive sound of their footsteps or other, barely detectable means that indicated their presence.

In a great many ways he embodied the principles for which he stood. It is impossible to think of Sandy without hearing a calm, reflective, knowledgeable socialist voice. For many years he was a telephonist for a bank though in the Party his vocal abilities were often put to even better use as a Party speaker and debater. He was a lovely, gentle and incredibly insightful human being who will be greatly missed.

**SC/DAP**

## Realistic portrayal

Pat Mills and Joe Colquhoun,  
*Charley's War. Volumes 1 to 10.*  
Titan Books



*Charley's War* has been described as the best British comic strip ever produced and it is difficult to disagree. It can be heartily recommended for younger

people as an easy introduction to the First World War and for adults as a gripping read in itself.

The strip originally ran in *Battle* from 6 January 1979 to 26 January 1985 and follows the teenage Charley Bourne from his enlistment in early 1916, through the bloody battles at Somme and Passchendaele to the end of the war and beyond. It is a dramatic but realistic portrayal of life in the trenches, and through flashbacks and other devices deals with other less well known aspects of the war – the war in the air, at sea and on the home front, the experience of the French at Verdun, the Etaples Mutiny, and the intervention in Russia. It even features a conchy, though not a socialist – they were, alas, rare birds indeed.

Naturally various narrative devices of the genre are used in order to maintain attention and pace but the strip is never a standard boy's own tale of daring do. Charley is treated as a real person, with a past, as a worker on the buses in London, a future on the dole in the '30s, and a family life, father, mother and sister, and later a wife and children. It is easy to pick holes, e.g. its all too free adoption of the 'Lions led by Donkeys' approach, which neglects the physical constraints of the fighting environment (could all the Generals on all the sides really have been such idiots?), and the occasional dubious historical details (although there were some horrific evil weapons in use, the acid sprayer used to melt soldiers depicted in the final book almost certainly never existed). However, the shock and power of the story lines overcome all niggling objections.

*Charley's War* has been reproduced over a period of years by Titan in high quality hardback editions, which doers the highly detailed art of Joe Colquhoun ("Co-hoon" for non-Jocks) proud. The books have restrained but stylish black covers, which will not embarrass the non-

genre purchaser. The reprints come complete with lots of finely crafted background information and excellent introductions. The full set is now available and is heartily recommended.

**KAZ**

## Against the State (But Not Quite Yet)

Noam Chomsky: *On Anarchism.*  
Penguin. £6.00.

This is not a book with new material but a collection of articles and interviews published originally between 1969 and 2010. It is therefore not a place to look for an overview or consistent statement of Chomsky's approach to anarchism. It is, however, interesting to see how close some of his political positions are to those of socialists.

For one thing, he rejects any idea that Bolshevism is 'Marxism in practice' and quotes approvingly Paul Mattick's critical remarks on Leninism. Moreover, he says, a consistent anarchist must oppose private ownership of the means of production and the concomitant wage slavery, which he describes as 'intolerable'. Capitalism is anti-human, and its unbridled version (one subject to less state regulation) would lead to extreme authoritarianism.

On the other hand, it is not clear if Chomsky's conception of socialism is quite the same as ours. He is against the idea of providing a detailed plan of a future society, preferring to rely on general principles. He favours making changes piecemeal, since we cannot know the effects of large social changes; and if one change works out well, make further changes. But he does not explain how a major change to abolish the wages system could be carried out piecemeal.

And many anarchists will disagree with him when he advocates defending and strengthening some aspects of state authority. His stance is that only the (US) federal government can protect people from the tyranny of corporations. He gives the example of environmental regulations, but admits that these have only a limited effect.

The longest chapter here criticises the way the Spanish 'Communist' Party undermined anarchist-run areas in the Civil War. The volume as a whole has much worthwhile content, as long as you do not expect a fully-developed argument.

**PB**

## War Requiem (Britain 1988)

Derek Jarman's *War Requiem* is a cinematic representation of Benjamin Britten's oratorio *War Requiem*, op 66, a non-liturgical setting of the Requiem Mass which had been written for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962. The war poetry of Wilfred Owen inspired Britten's music, and Britten included nine of Owen's poems in the oratorio. Jarman had read the 1988 John Stallworthy biography of Wilfred Owen, and referred to his film as 'the three queers *War Requiem*' (Jarman, Britten, Owen). The film includes a video montage by John Maybury of newsreel of the horrors of twentieth century capitalist wars culminating in the mushroom cloud of the Atomic bomb explosion.

The film is structured as the memories of Olivier's character, the Old Soldier in a wheelchair, attended by his nurse, Tilda Swinton. Olivier recites Owen's *Strange Meeting* in the film's prologue: 'It seemed that out of battle I escaped, Down some profound dull tunnel.' Immediately the emotion of Britten's music, Owen's words and Olivier looking straight into the camera in close-up, all anguish and aged memories of the horror of the First World War and the prospect of death are overpowering. This would be Olivier's last film, he died in July 1989.

Owen was killed in the last week of the First World War aged 25. He wrote 'My subject is the war and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity.' Jarman portrays Owen and soldiers' lives sacrificed for wealthy bankers, the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and this is compared to the Abraham and Isaac biblical story, a ram caught in barb wire, Abraham slits Owen's throat. Owen's poem *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*: 'Caught in a thicket by its horns, A Ram. Offer the Ram of Pride instead But the old man would not so, but slew his son, And half the seed of Europe, one by one' follows the wording of Genesis 22:1-19 very closely.

Owen believed in an Anglican Evangelical Christianity, and from 1911-13 had an unpaid post as lay assistant and pupil in Dunsden near Reading. During this period his sympathies for 'the underdog' became apparent; he helped the old and the sick, the illiterate, and the poor rural workers enduring an agricultural depression. But his dislike of the narrow evangelicalism practised at Dunsden would prepare Owen for his later indignation at the support which the Churches gave to the First

World War.

Jarman employs Christian iconography; the Unknown Soldier with a barb wire crown akin to Christ's crown of thorns at the crucifixion. Jarman wrote 'the immaculate side of Christ's life, nothing to do with the Church, the person who actually went out and brought in all those who were considered unclean in Jewish society, a very fantastic story and a very fantastic achievement, whether or not he is the Son of God.' In the Owen biography, Stallworthy had written 'Christ said 'Love one another' and 'Love your enemies' despite the exhortations of Church and State. Owen perceives that 'Pure Christianity will not fit in with pure patriotism.' Owen wrote in *At a Calvary near the Ancre*: 'bawl allegiance to the state, But they who love the greater love lay down their life: they do not hate' which echoes John 15:13: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

A five minutes scene of interpretative acting to Britten's music by Tilda Swinton dressed in a Neo-Classical look à la Canova, plaiting her hair by the mausoleum of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier runs the gamut of emotions from laughter to anger, anguish, despair, and reflection. Swinton was Jarman's muse: 'Woman as sister, nurse, and grieving', making eight films with Jarman.

The final scene of Jarman's film and the climax of Britten's oratorio sees the German Soldier with a wreath of red poppies coming to the

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier which is now a tableau after Pierro della Francesca 15<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance painting *The Resurrection* with Owen Teale in the central position of the tableau. Aldous Huxley called it 'the greatest painting in the world.' The Mother (Hayes) and Sister (Swinton) arrive with a basket of white poppies in a very moving and heart-bursting scene. The use of white poppies was deliberate; Swinton said 'white poppies, a living white flower', and on the AIDS crisis of the time; 'We had many friends being diagnosed, becoming ill and dying. We felt like we were in a war of our own.' The white poppy established by the Peace Pledge Union in 1934 disassociates the memory of war from the militaristic aspects of Remembrance Day. In 1986 there was controversy over the white poppy when it was given approval by the Bishop of Salisbury which caused Thatcher to express her 'deep distaste' for the white poppy in the House of Commons.

Jarman was the son of a RAF Lancaster bomber pilot in the Second World War, and his father's despair and depression is attributed to the high number of fatalities that bomber crews experienced and the killing of civilians in German cities. Swinton herself is from a military family; daughter of a Major-General, and sister to a Lieutenant-Colonel. Tilda joined the Communist Party of Great Britain while at Cambridge in the 1980s but is now a member of the Trotskyist Scottish Socialist Party.

Jarman's *War Requiem* followed his politically angry *The Last of*

*England* which re-interprets Ford Madox Brown's pre-Raphaelite painting, and tells of the death of England ravaged by internal decay, capitalist restructuring, greed, AIDS, homophobia and repressive morality. *Village Voice* described it as 'wrenchingly beautiful, the film is one of the few commanding works of personal cinema in the late 80's, a call to open our eyes to a world violated by greed and repression, to see what irrevocable damage has been wrought on city, countryside and soul, how our skies, our bodies, have turned poisonous.' Jarman himself said 'I was brought up by a generation who fought the war and established the welfare state, and I perceived that everything my parents had fought for was being taken away.' Following *War Requiem* Jarman would make the political *Edward II*, seen as a landmark film in the New Queer Cinema.

**SPC**

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## The Downside Of Upgrading

WHEN WE splash out on something like the newest phone upgrade, we like to think that we're making our own decision. But how free is our choice? Jacques Peretti,

in his documentary series *The Men Who Made Us Spend* (BBC2), looks for answers in the wily world of marketing and product development.

The first episode focuses on an 'open secret' of the capitalist marketplace – planned obsolescence. This is how the lifespan of a commodity is deliberately reduced by the way it's designed. Doing this means that manufacturers can manipulate us into buying a replacement and therefore increasing their profits. This approach has been applied to many products since a cartel of lighting luminaries agreed to limit the lifespan of lightbulbs in the 1920s. More recently, ink cartridges have been fitted with counters which click down when each page is printed. Our printers tell us that the cartridge needs replacing when the counter reaches zero, not when it actually runs out of ink.

Planned obsolescence not only relates to how a commod-

ity is made, but also how it is perceived. Often, a product only lasts as long as we're told it's fashionable. If a new smartphone, car or games console is announced, we're more likely to fork out for it if we're made to think our old one has just become as outdated as a mullet. And if the advertisers have done their job well, we'll be eager enough to queue outside a shop for weeks to be among the first to buy the latest iPhone.

There's nothing inherently wrong with replacing gadgets for different or better versions, of course. As Peretti's polemic explains, it's only capitalism which corrupts this by manipulating our desire for the new. He argues that planned obsolescence has been used to help boost consumer spending during its various dips, and has led to today's 'limitless consumption', with shopping seen as a duty. He takes the stance that our spending habits are driven by innovations in marketing strategies. The relationship is more reciprocal than that, as new approaches to selling build on previous spending patterns. And on a wider scale, consumer spending is influenced more by economic forces than small-scale changes in ideology. Despite overstating marketing's role in the economy as a whole, Peretti's perceptive arguments will remain relevant until we plan to make capitalism itself obsolete.

**MIKE FOSTER**

## From 18

the regiment was issued a bible.

Were the Covenanters essentially Protestant theocrats? Or were they really democrats challenging an absolutist regime? Presbyterian beliefs meant an opposition to the King's claim of supremacy in church matters, although they acknowledged his supremacy in civil matters. Yet to safeguard their religious rights required a clerical influence on the civil government. Covenanters stood up to the powers of the Crown but never, at any point in time, challenged the Crown's right to rule.

Some historians have tried to portray the Covenanters as an early revolutionary movement. The Covenanters are regarded by some as freedom fighters who bravely opposed attempts by the English crown to destroy the Scottish religion, culture and identity and it is also claimed that those Protestant rebels were sidelined in Scots' history. The King had indeed been defeated in his attempt to dictate the religion of his subjects, but it was, nevertheless, the Covenanters' intention to deny the religious freedom they sought for themselves to all others. Being Episcopalian wasn't good enough; to be Catholic was unforgivable. Inspired by the theocratic spirit, the bigoted creed of the Covenanters sought to create a fundamentalist Scotland. In many ways, they can be seen as a sort of tartan Taliban, our very own Scottish ayatollahs, who tried to turn Scotland into a theocratic state, with its communities controlled by the church. In that respect, they do not deserve too much of our sympathy.

**ALJO**

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our [Meetup](http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/) site:  
<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

**West London Branch.** Tuesday 5 August 8.00pm. 'The Working Class Lost the First World War'. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN. A discussion opened by Steve Clayton.

**Kent & Sussex Regional Branch** from 12 Noon Saturday 16 August. Literature Stall - Tunbridge Wells, Kent at Five Ways in the Calverley Road pedestrian precinct, opposite the millennium clock.

**Socialist Party Head Office,** Sunday 17 August 3.00pm. 'The Left and the First World War' 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN Speaker: Keith Scholey.

**Glasgow Branch.** Wednesday 20 August 8.30pm. 'The Not So Great (1914-18) War'. Community Central Halls 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 6HT. Speaker: John Cumming.

**Kent & Sussex Regional Branch.** Monday 25 August from 10.00am. Literature Stall Kent Miners' Festival. Sunnysbank, Adelaide Road, Eythorne, Dover CT15 4AN.

Party Literature Stall at the **Carshalton Environmental Fair**, from 10.30 to 17.00 Monday 25 August. Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3DD.

**Socialist Party Head Office** 3.00pm, Sunday 14 September 'The Strange Death of Labour Ireland 1912-22' Guest Speaker: Dr Ivan Gibbons. 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

**Glasgow Branch.** Maryhill Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 7YE Wednesday 17 September 8.30pm 'Hollywood: Behind the Dream Factory' Speaker: Vic Vanni.

**East Anglia Regional Branch,** Saturday 20 September 2.00pm. 'Highland Clearances' Speaker: Alwyn Edgar. The Nelson Hotel, 120 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich NR1 1DX (The meeting room can be accessed by going through the Costa Coffee Café and down the stairs. Left hand side of the bar as you face it).

**Socialist Party Head Office.** 11.00am to 5.00pm, Saturday 27 September 2014 Socialist Party Day School - The Party Case on capitalism, war and religion. Speakers: Pat Deutz, Howard Moss, Steve Clayton. 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

## 'The Socialist Party and the First World War'

This exhibition at Socialist Party Head Office will open 11am to 5pm Monday 4 August to Sunday 10 August 2014 and weekends for the rest of August.

The exhibition will feature the September 1914 *Socialist Standard* front page statement 'The War and the Socialist Position', the Defence of the Realm Act & Regulation No.27 (November 1914) and the SPGB/*Socialist Standard*, SPGB propaganda in WW1, Conscientious Objection and the tribunals eg *Socialist Standard* May 1916 - Watford Branch and Conscientious Objection tribunal 'Crabbed Age and Youth' article, the SPGB and the Bolsheviks in London 'Maximovich' (Lenin and Litvinov) - *Socialist Standard* March 1915, fleeing the country (Adolph Kohn & Moses Baritz - the foundation of the companion parties), and the prisoners of conscience: The case of imprisoned Party members at Dartmoor Prison.

Socialist Party Head Office,  
52 Clapham High Street,  
London SW4 7UN.

## 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.

# 50 Years Ago

## The verdict of history

MILLIONS OF words will be published this month about the world's first Great War. Few of them will be complimentary.

Over the last fifty years the war has come under a detailed scrutiny. The official propaganda has been exposed as a mass of blatant lies. The leaders, worshipped at the time, have been shown up as incompetents. The motive behind the war has been pronounced as a naked economic struggle. The popular verdict seems to be that the war was a ghastly mistake, which would never have come about if the world had been run by cleverer, more humane leaders.

In the manner of historical fashion, this verdict may one day be modified, and men like the late Earl Haig become restored to favour. The millions of killed and wounded may be ennobled into heroes whose lives were not wasted, but who suffered for a worthy cause. Historians may decide for us that we should be grateful the war was fought.

But whatever historians may decide, whatever historical fashion may decree, facts are facts. And the facts of the First World War have not changed.

In the first place, it is true that the war was a stupid and futile business. War always is. But it was not a mistake.

Whatever incidental errors may contribute to its horror, war in the modern world does not happen by accident. If it did, then the massive armed forces which all countries always maintain are mistakes. Weapons—nuclear and otherwise—are mistakes.

In fact, all these things are quite logical, once we have accepted the basic condition of the existence of the capitalist social system. We live today in a world in which a minority own the means of producing and distributing wealth. This minority—the capitalist class—are always in competition among themselves for economic advantage.

They compete for markets and for fields of important raw materials and minerals. They anxiously guard the trade routes which connect them with their markets and material resources abroad.. They are always trying, with their economic conferences, their tariff walls, their international trading clubs, to protect what spheres of influence they have and to expand into others.

Here is the root of war.

(from editorial, *Socialist Standard*, August 1964)

# ACTION REPLAY

## Team Spirit

GERMANY VS Ghana at the football World Cup in Brazil. Jérôme Boateng and his half-brother Kevin-Prince Boateng are playing, but on opposite sides (as they did four years earlier in South Africa). Jérôme plays for Germany: his mother is German, his father a Ghanaian immigrant to Germany. Kevin-Prince has the same father but a different mother (also German); he plays for Ghana. Both were born in Berlin. Kevin-Prince played for the German Football Association's junior teams but a few years ago decided to play for Ghana. Jérôme says he never thought of playing for Ghana, where he's never been.



Kevin-Prince Boateng

The US team in Brazil also has a sizeable German influence, and not just because their coach is Jürgen Klinsmann. Four of the squad have German mothers, with their fathers being American servicemen who lived in Germany. Some have never lived in the US, but chose to play for them since they had little chance of playing at international level for Germany. One thing all this shows is how relative-

ly open the world is these days, with plenty of people migrating for work and other reasons (including military ones, sadly). Other World Cup squads were also a mix of players of various backgrounds. Thus, Josip Drmić played for Switzerland, where he was born, though his parents are Croatian.

It also raises questions about eligibility for a particular national side which varies between different sports. For football it is a matter of birthplace of the player or their parents or grandparents, having a passport for the country in question, or living there for five years after the age of eighteen. In rugby union, birthplaces matter but passports don't, and the period of residence must be three years preceding a specific match. Back in 2000, rugby saw a controversy about players who played for Wales, despite being qualified instead for New Zealand: it was dubbed Grannygate.

So nationality is a pretty fluid concept as far as sport is concerned. However, this seems to be ignored by supporters who cheer on 'their' teams, irrespective of the actual backgrounds of the players. Capitalism really does undermine the importance of countries and borders, in sport as in so many other areas.

PB

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