

socialist standard



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



**“And I can’t help but wonder now, Willie McBride,
Do all those who lie here know why they died?”**
No Man’s Land, Eric Bogle



Marine Le Pen
page 6



Harry Patch
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Alan Milburn
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 5 September** at the address below. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
 tel: 020 7622 3811
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Introducing The Socialist Party

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

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

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

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

Editorial

Capitalism and the two world wars

The two world wars that disgraced human history in the 20th century were essentially wars to change or preserve an existing carve-up of the world between the leading capitalist states.

In the first world war Imperial Germany attempted to upset, by force of arms, the then existing imperialist division of the world which benefited in particular Britain and France. The second world war too – which broke out seventy years ago this month – was the result of Germany and Japan throwing off unfavourable treaties, territorial divisions and trading arrangements imposed by Britain, France and the United States. From this, historical perspective, it was a continuation of the first world war

In such wars it is the challenging powers that have to take the initiative and so appear as the “aggressors”, but only those completely taken in by the propaganda of the victorious powers (and of course the winners also win the right to impose their version of history) will believe that it was just Germany that was responsible for the first and second world wars. An objective examination of the situation shows that, apart from their “business war” aspects (over markets, raw materials and investment outlets), the two world wars were wars (on the one side) to try to change the existing imperialist carve-up of the world and (on the other side) to preserve it. What was responsible for these wars was the whole world system of capitalism with its competitive struggle for profits and its collection of competing armed states. No one state, or politician, or people can be blamed for them; they were the result of the

“normal” functioning of the capitalist world system.


As socialism had been historically possible since the end of the 19th century humanity could have avoided them. Neither of them justified “the shedding of a single drop of working class blood”, as we declared in our anti-war manifesto in 1914, or as Harry Patch, one of the last survivors to have fought in that war, who died in July, put it, it was “not worth one death let alone all the millions”.

The “War to end all wars” did no such thing. Nor did its even bloodier sequel, World War N° 2, which resulted in the division of the world into two imperialist spheres of influence, the US sphere and the Russian sphere, with a continuous series of local wars at the boundaries between the two, which lasted until the collapse of the Russian Empire twenty years ago this autumn. This collapse was hailed “the end of history” and there was talk of a “peace dividend”. Tony Blair of all people even declared shortly after becoming Prime Minister in May 1997: “Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war”. Empty rhetoric from a capitalist politician who was later to send British troops to kill and be killed in Iraq and Afghanistan to protect oil supplies and prevent another challenge to the powers currently dominating the world.

There will be wars, the threat of wars and the waste of preparing for wars as long as capitalism lasts. The only end to war is the end of capitalism – the socialist revolution.

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Euthanasia? Line on the left, one needle each...

It's not often that nature obligingly weighs right into a political row to decide the matter within a month or so, but in the wake of the recent anti-NHS row across the Pond it might do just that. As you will recall, the usual internecine sniping between workers, managers and policy-makers within the British NHS was suspended as the country went into a collective fit of the conniptions over the defamation being perpetrated in the American press.

According to the rabid opponents of Obama's modest health-care reform bill, we in Britain have enforced euthanasia and face 'death panels' of officials who decide which of us get to live. You wouldn't think even

redneck republicans would buy this, but their own political bosses obviously think otherwise, and they're the ones with their fingers on the arrested pulse of American political consciousness.

It's not cricket, is it? We can slag off the Health Service all we like, after all it's the national sport. But do it on American TV, as self-promoting neocon-licking uberturd Daniel Hannan MEP did, and out comes the Dunkirk spirit and a flurry of statistics to show why a), the NHS kicks America's butt over every Key Performance Indicator, b), 47 million Americans with no health insurance would rather live over here and c), Daniel Hannan should present himself before the next available death panel.

Everybody, calm down. Just wait and see. Swine flu is back this month, so it won't be long before we'll have hard evidence about which health system copes best, or least worst. The word on the wards is not optimistic, though, judging from a recent poll of health experts of whom over half 'seriously doubted that their health authorities would be able to cope' if the virus became more virulent, as is widely expected (*New Scientist* editorial, 15 August). Half, too, had 'stashed away their own antivirals', even though Tamiflu and Relenza are not likely to do much good for adults and none at all in children under the age of twelve (*New Scientist*, p 4).

Not to be accused of pessimism, Pathfinders would like to offer its own handy list of flu-busting tips for worried readers everywhere. First, lay in a stock of food and don't go out for five months. Alternatively, remove yourself to the Seychelles for the winter. Keep large reserves of water, wood, coal and gold for barter in case society breaks down altogether. Always have a large well-armed staff at your disposal to run errands and catch diseases on your behalf. And of course, have your own doctor, preferably married into the family, with access to the best private hospital your banker's bonuses can buy.

Well, that's the owning class taken care of, which is the main thing. For the rest of us, well, let's keep things in perspective. A big die-off will create a labour shortage and that will raise wages and foster strength and unity among what's left of the unions.

No more worries about unemployment and recession – or euthanasia.

Meanwhile Daniel Hannan has been 'rebuked' by David Cameron, and many are expecting the disloyal swine to be flushed down the Tory Party's private Swine Flue for being so off-message. Of course, Hannan was only saying what many in the Gentlemen's Gestapo privately believe, which is that the Health Service is a giant drain on corporate profits at a time when workers are ten a penny. The American ruling class also know this, which is why they're keen to tell the American proles that the British euthanise all their old people by leaving them out for the vultures, and pack their sick babies into Soylent Green factories.

Bang goes the science media

Ben Goldacre at the *Guardian* must be wondering if his *Bad Science* column is turning into Bad Business, when science journos are being laid off from papers all round the globe as part of a 'dumb down and ditch it' campaign to cut staff costs and gloss up the lowest common denominator sections that require the least thinking. Newspapers are in terminal decline due to the internet, and in the Balloon game that editors are playing, the boffin-hacks are getting tipped over the side first. Of course, they all go online and start blogs, but then they're in competition with a million other blogs touting all brands of 'science' from creationism to alien telepathy – and losing. In the 'Best Science Blog' section of the 2008 Weblog Awards, Pharyngula, an anti-religion sceptic's site, lost first place to a climate-change denial blog ('Unpopular science', *The Nation*, 29 July).

Is science really so unpopular? The BBC seems to think so. Its new science programme, *Bang Goes the Theory*, tries ever-so-hard to be cool, with three young presenters prowling a loud CBeebies-like studio set and conducting experiments carefully selected for their 'wow' factor. The breathless pace effectively rules out any real depth, and the hook appears to be not the science itself, as in *Horizon* or dear old long-lamented *Tomorrow's World*, but whether the presenter is going to get seriously injured. If you're in your teens you'll feel too old for this show.

Meanwhile in recognition of the fact that many scientific breakthroughs have initially been knocked back, a new open-source academic journal called *Rejecta Mathematica* has gone online, consisting of papers rejected by peer-review ('Huddled Maths', *Economist*, 29 July). Let us be the first to recommend to the BBC their next piece of prime-time fluff: *Science – The Out-Takes*.

Competition for the Twittering Classes

The latest fad for micro-blogging is coming under fire, with a study showing that 40 percent of 'tweets' are 'pointless babble' and only 8.7 percent pass along 'news of interest' (*BBC Online*, 17 August). Considering the gargantua of garbage which is the printed book output, this is not a bad batting average. However, keen as ever to raise the bar of public discourse, Pathfinders proposes a competition for the best expression of the Party Case in 140 characters or less. Brief reflection offers: 'World for the Workers, not the Rich W**kers' however you are sure to do better than that. Emails or letters to our Clapham office. Closing date 10 November, for our December issue, and best ideas will be printed. First Prize will be, of course, comradely adulation, as we socialists are trying to move away from material remuneration systems.

twitless?

Stalinist?

Dear Editors

Truth is (August *Socialist Standard*) that we paid our staff more than our competitors in the newspapers and even included BUPA. The unions, when we were negotiating, said we could go on with the BUPA, but mustn't mention it. Never quite understood what they stood for when their officials drove off in Jaguar XJS', etc.

As far as the 'sharecropping' goes, there is a shortage of allotments in the area and we were trying to free up some of our land near the hotel to fill that local gap. It was a win-win situation.

Nothing more - but if it's a move against the workers of the world...then fine. I think the reason socialism continually fails is because the greed of the political and bureaucratic classes and their lack of efficiency and vision is a stronger deterrent to the common man than the greed of bankers, lawyers and the rest of those who dip their snouts in the working man's taxpayer trough. We can at least get rid of these guys eventually, because that's how capitalism works. And working man is mostly middle-class now, anyway.

For socialism read Stalinism. Read subjugation. Read gulags and firing squads and torture of your own people. Oh happy days.

Eddy Shah (by email)

Reply: Just because we use the words "capitalism", "socialism", and "exploitation" doesn't mean that we therefore supported Stalin's Russia. We didn't (and we didn't support Lenin's Russia either). There was exploitation there too under a system of state capitalism. It was never socialist. We'd have thought that an employer who wanted to run his business without trade union interference could more justly be likened to Stalinism. After all, there were no trade unions in the USSR either - **Editors**.

Corruption

Dear Editors

It's hardly "political rocket science" to understand the decay and corruption that lies at the heart of New Labour as affirmed by yet another dismal by-election defeat for Labour in Norwich North.

Throughout the coverage of this by-election some mainstream political commentators lampooned former

Labour MP Dr Ian Gibson (whose resignation sparked this contest) as a maverick left wing politician, thus implying there was some justification for the New Labour "star chamber" to deselect him over the second home allowance scandal.

Maybe if there actually were more left-wing MP's or prospective parliamentary candidates selected democratically by their local parties and who are periodically adjudged by their local party members on how they stand up for the basic principles their party stands for, then not only would these commentators have had something politically tangible to commentate about but more essentially the new Tory MP Chloe Smith might have had to face a genuine political contest based on policies and ideology rather than personalities and scandals.

Whilst this by-election campaign enticed Tory leader David Cameron to visit Norwich North on six occasions and to predictably hail his victor as a "rising star", her victory was in fact, as indeed all Tory poll successes are, wholly attributable to the failed free market economic policies of New Labour which are the normal mainstay of the Tory Party itself. Apart from Tory core voters who'd vote Tory under any circumstance, the fact that many floating voters in Norwich North voted Tory during a recession underlines how utterly skewed British political attitudes and opinions have become due to this bipartisan political climate that deludes millions of apathetic voters into thinking that they have a legitimate choice.

Yet in essence Dr Gibson is no maverick and he certainly wasn't a radical left wing MP. What

proved too much for New Labour's "star chamber" is that he, along with a handful of other Labour backbenchers on occasions, was mildly critical of New Labour's right-wing free market agenda. Because the majority of Labour MP's today just poodle along passively from day to day far more concerned about their careers and expenses rather than the wellbeing of society in general, then the likes of Dr Gibson are labelled mavericks, hence easily held up as scapegoats for the MP expense scandal.

At least Dr Gibson was right to resign immediately if only to expose how the treatment meted out to him exposes how the New Labour leadership has undermined internal Labour Party democracy all along and how, barring a miracle it's going to result in a future Tory government. The real question however is why these very same commentators within the alleged free press and media totally ignored the fact that the behaviour of Dr Gibson, albeit an alleged 'lefty' who should have never have accepted the second home allowance in the first place, was relatively quite trivial in comparison with the behaviour of Chancellor Alistair Darling or employment minister Tony McNulty. A greasy pole indeed!

NICK VINEHILL, Snettisham, Norfolk

Reply: Of course it wouldn't make any difference if all Labour and Tory MPs were honest and democratically selected. They still wouldn't be able to make the capitalist system work in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary workers - **Editors**.

Party News

Tolpuddle 2009

In July we had the Tolpuddle Rally in sunny Dorset. Tolpuddle is little village near Dorchester, where, in days gone by, six agricultural labourers were transported to Australia for having the temerity to organise a union to protect their wages. Different unions still turn out today to commemorate the beginning of the trade union movement, under the auspices of the TUC. The Socialist Party has been attending for a good thirty years or more and this year's was great, as the weather was very kind to us, not raining, not too hot.

Various comrades and sympathisers turned out to ensure a successful weekend of selling, to the tune of £59 literature and £56 for promotional

goods. We gave away dozens of Socialist balloons to (usually) happy and grateful children - and dozens of leaflets to their parents! The parade was bigger than ever. Billy Bragg sang songs, there were stalls aplenty and thousands of people. One comrade suggested we should have a socialist camp next year with a banner.

Although there were some doubts that we would be able to manage two stalls as we put lots of free back issues of the Standard on one of the stalls and by the end of the weekend, most of them had gone, so this 'freebie' stall actually worked really well. All in all, a pleasant, good natured rally that everyone enjoyed and a valuable outlet for our ideas - we hope to see even more comrades and friends there next year. V.C.

March of the far right

In many parts of Europe far-right populist, as well as fascist and neo-Nazi political parties, have increased their support in local, national and European elections recently (though not everywhere, not in Poland for instance).

In many areas hundreds of thousands of workers have voted, not for socialism, as the economic crisis and downturn of international capitalism deepens, but for localism, nationalism and racist policies. What has happened in part of northern England, has likewise been mirrored in northeast France—the British National Party in England and the Front National in France. An extreme example of the trend was the municipal by-election in June and July in Hénin-Beaumont.

Poverty and Corruption

Hénin-Beaumont, just north of Arras and half-way between Lens and Douai in the Pas-de-Calais, is a former mining town with a population of 27,000; and in the words of Jason Burke, “one of the poorest parts of France, a wasteland of red-brick terrace homes, crumbling blocks of public housing, half-deserted industrial estates and vast fields of wheat bisected by six-lane motorways taking holiday-makers elsewhere” (*Observer*, 5 July).

Although a recent film, “Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis” (“Welcome amongst the Ch’tis”, the popular name for people from this part of France), about a postal worker sent there from the south of the country, which I saw (in western France), popularised the locals, it made no difference to the unemployment, now officially 20 percent, alcoholism (mostly cheap beer), drug abuse and domestic violence; and with the lowest levels of education in the country.

As in many areas of Britain, with the Labour Party, this part of France, including Hénin-Beaumont, was a long-time fiefdom of the reformist Parti Socialiste, which has become thoroughly corrupt, subject to cronyism and patronage. The PS, running the municipal council for almost 60 years, is split into a number of allegedly left and right factions; and the mayor is in jail, charged with corruption, fiddling expenses and local taxes, resulting in cuts in the municipal budget. It can’t get much worse.

Enter the Front National

For the first time in recent years the FN decided to field a candidate, for the municipal authority. The party’s local candidate Steeve Briois hoped—probably expected—to become mayor, reversing a general decline since 2002. Marine Le Pen, the 40-year-old daughter of the FN leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, canvassed the area, popularising the slogan “France for the French” (shades of Gordon Brown’s “British jobs for British

workers,” supported by the BNP), and claiming to be the natural inheritors of working-class politics in France. Since 1990 the FN has in fact increased its influence and support within the working class by beating the nationalist drum and playing the anti-Islam card.

Like the BNP, Marine Le Pen and her supporters, have tended to soften (but not abandon) the FN’s anti-immigration language, and tone down its racism and anti-semitism. She promotes a populist, “Strasserite”, image rather than her father’s former neo-Nazi views (see the *Socialist Standard*, February and March, 1993).

In the first round of the Hénin-Beaumont election the Front National polled just under 40 percent, more than double that of any other candidate. Briois assumed his mayoralty was “in the bag”. Unfortunately for him, however, the left and right formed an alliance, and collectively polled 52 percent in a 62 percent turnout, thus squeezing the FN out.

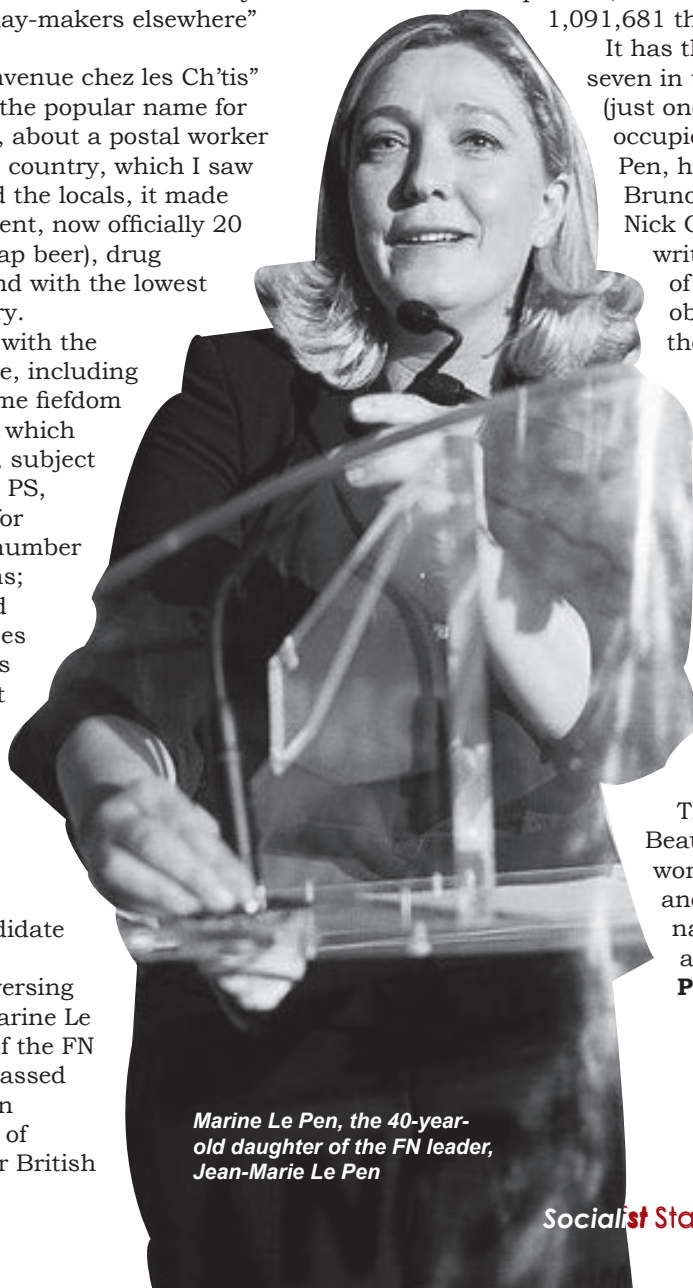
Europe

The Front National did not fare particularly well in this year’s European elections either. It won just 6.3 percent, down from 1,684,792 in 2004 to 1,091,681 this year in a low poll.

It has three seats, down from seven in the last Parliament (just one more than the BNP), occupied by Jean-Marie Le Pen, his daughter, Marine, and Bruno Gollnisch, a friend of Nick Griffin. Jean-Yves Camus, writing in the July number of *International Searchlight*, observes: “The result leaves the FN weaker than before, but not yet dead. It was notably ahead of the two parties of the alternative left, the New Anti-Capitalist Party and the Left Front”.

The Front National in France, like the British National Party, has nothing to offer the working class, but the same old worn-out reformist policies and slogans that have failed, time and time again. The workers of Hénin-Beaumont, France, Britain and worldwide, will have to look, and act, beyond the petty nationalisms of such parties and politicians.

PETER E. NEWELL



Marine Le Pen, the 40-year-old daughter of the FN leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen

IRE OF THE IRATE ITINERANT



IN THIS STRIP, WE'LL BE TACKLING THE THORNY ISSUE OF POST MODERN CULTURAL RELATIVISM.

DO WE HAVE TO?



WELL, YEP... WE HAVE TO ASK, WAS THAT WHOLE POST ENLIGHTENMENT SECULAR SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW PURELY A WESTERN CONSTRUCT? MAYBE IT MEANS LITTLE TO OTHER CULTURES.



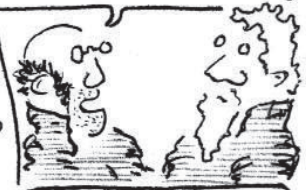
AND WE'RE ON DANGEROUS GROUND HERE. IS EXPORTING, INDEED IMPOSING WESTERN IDEALS LIKE DEMOCRACY, FREE SPEECH, TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD A FORM OF IMPERIALISM? 'MUSCULAR LIBERALISM' AS THEY CALL IT, SURELY A BIT OF A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS..



THINK OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION IN 1979... A REACTION AGAINST WESTERN SECULAR MODERNITY. IN A COLD WAR WORLD, EVERYTHING WAS RATHER SIMPLISTICALLY JUDGED IN LEFT/RIGHT TERMS. IRAN CONFUSED PEOPLE.



WE HERE IN EUROPE ARE VERY PROUD OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT, BUT WHAT ABOUT ELSEWHERE? OH, THE REST OF THE WORLD MODERNIZED, INDUSTRIALIZED, JAPAN BEING THE PRIME EXAMPLE, BUT, THINK OF TWO YOUNG MEN... GANDHI AND BIN LADEN... BOTH WESTERN ATTIRED YOUTHS, WHO DECISIVELY REJECTED THE WEST, DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY THROUGH ANCIENT RELIGION AND CULTURE.



AND REMEMBER THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR? PEOPLE BURNING BOOKS THEY'D NEVER READ IN THE STREET, AND LIBERALS CRINGING... NOT SO MUCH SITTING ON THE FENCE AS STICKING HEADS IN THE SAND.



I SUPPOSE THE IDEA NOW IS THAT ALL CULTURES ARE EQUALLY DESERVING OF RESPECT, - A NOBLE ENOUGH AIM, CERTAINLY. BIT GALLING TO HAVE TO TAKE SERIOUSLY WHAT IS BASICALLY MEDIEVAL SUPERSTITION, THOUGH.



SO WHAT ABOUT THE LEFT? MARX'S WORLDVIEW WAS TOTALLY EUROCENTRIC, A PRODUCT OF THE AGE HE LIVED IN. WHAT ABOUT A PRE-ENLIGHTENMENT LEFT? WELL, WE HAVE THE LEVELLERS, THE DIKKERS, BACK IN THE 1640'S... BUT RELIGION WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO THEM. IT'S DIFFICULT FOR US TO GET BACK INTO THEIR MINDSET. EVEN HARDER TO GET BACK INTO THE MINDSET OF SPARTACUS, - PRAISED BY MARX!



BUT IT MUST BE SAID, THE DISPOSSESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD HAVE LITTLE ENOUGH - JUST THEIR CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS IDENTITY, A DEFENCE AGAINST THE ALIENATION THAT CAPITALISM BRINGS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES. WE ARN'T JUST YOUR PLIABLE CONSUMERS!



HEY, YOUSE! AH DEMAND YE RESPECT MA CULTURE... OF MOROSE ALCOHOLISM!

YEAH! WE CAN GO WITH THAT!



AND MAYBE IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT MAYBE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF REALITY ARE EQUALLY VALID. TO A POINT. I STILL FEEL THE WESTERN SCIENTIFIC POST ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT DID REVEAL SOME REAL, ABSOLUTE TRUTHS ABOUT THE UNIVERSE, THE HUMAN CONDITION. AND SOCIALISM IS, ULTIMATELY, A SECULAR, RATIONAL, PRODUCT OF THAT. WITH A TRULY UNIVERSAL MESSAGE.





ONE TO MISS

"His birth was marked by a double rainbow and a new star, he hit 11 holes-in-one in his first game of golf, finishing 38 under par, and throughout his life he has performed heroic feats impossible for mere mortals. When he shouts, 'huge storms happen'." The life of North Korea's ailing leader, Kim Jong-il, has long been extravagantly window-dressed by the state's diligent chroniclers, but now it is about to get the full regal treatment with a new movie chronicling his exploits from childhood to living legend. North Korea's state media said this week that the first part of a multi-series documentary about Mr Kim's birth, childhood and early achievements, when he developed 'military ideas and theories and tactics of [his father] President Kim Il-sung', has already been produced. Although other propaganda movies extol Mr Kim's boundless virtues – one records that he came down from the heavens accompanied by a huge snowstorm – this will be the first to "comprehensively deal ... with his revolutionary exploits", said the Korean Central News Agency." (*Independent*, 17 July)

GOD AS A HISTORY MAKER

"The Christian right is making a fresh push to force religion onto the school curriculum in Texas with the state's education board about to consider recommendations that children be taught that there would be no United States if it had not been for God. Members of a panel of experts appointed by the board to revise the state's history curriculum, who include a Christian fundamentalist preacher who says he is fighting a war for America's moral soul, want lessons to emphasise the part played by Christianity in the founding of the US and that religion is a civic virtue. ... One of the panel, David Barton, founder of a Christian heritage group called WallBuilders, argues that the curriculum should reflect the fact that the US Constitution was written with God in mind including that 'there is a fixed moral law derived from God and nature', that 'there is a creator' and 'government exists primarily to protect God-given rights to every individual'....Another of the experts is Reverend Peter Marshall, who heads his own Christian ministry and preaches that Hurricane Katrina and defeat in the Vietnam war were God's punishment for sexual promiscuity and tolerance of homosexuals." (*Guardian*, 22 July)

MORE RELIGIOUS NONSENSE

"The Dalai Lama may not be the first person who comes to mind for business advice but, as the Buddhist monk wrote in his new book, capitalism can profit from Buddhism's principles and values. In *The Leader's Way*, published this month by Broadway Books, the spiritual leader of Tibet wrote that both business and Buddhism attach importance to happiness and making the right decisions, and a company without 'happy employees, customers and shareholders will ultimately fail.' Citing Buddhist basics such as good intentions, a calm mind free of negative thoughts and a realization that nothing is permanent, the Dalai Lama and co-author Laurens van den Muyzenberg tackle timely issues such as corporate compensation, malfeasance and the collapse of the subprime mortgage market. 'When I started this project, I was not sure that companies could act in such a way that they could deserve a thoroughly good reputation. Now I am convinced that they can,' the Dalai Lama wrote. Profit, for example, is 'a fine aim,' but not the main role of business, which is 'to make a contribution to the well-being of society at large,' he wrote." (*Yahoo News*, 28 July)

Contact Details

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Central London branch. 2nd Weds. 6.30pm. 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Coffee Republic, 7-12 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

Enfield and Haringey branch.

Thurs 10th and 24th Sept. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, NI8. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch.

1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

West London branch.

1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

Pimlico. C. Trinder, 24 Greenwood Ct, 155 Cambridge Street, SW1 4VQ. Tel: 020 7834 8186

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Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglia branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details). David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. Tel: 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

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SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. 1st Thur. 8-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995 JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Richard Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel: 0141 5794109. E-mail: richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Ayrshire. D. Trainer, 21 Manse Street, Salcoats, KA21 5AA. Tel: 01294 469994. E-mail: derricktrainer@freeuk.com

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: 01328 541643

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: 01506 462359 E-mail: matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

WALES

Swansea branch. 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: 01792 643624

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The crisis: an open letter to trade unionists

Fellow Workers

Capitalism is once again in the middle of one of its periodic economic crises, this time a bigger one than in the recent past. And, as usual, we are the victims. This crisis has been caused, as all capitalist crises are, by the uncontrollable pursuit of profits that drives the capitalist economy.

With all capitalist businesses chasing profits, one sector of the economy inevitably overexpands in relation to what it can sell. This time it was the US house-building sector. Its overexpansion had an immediate effect on the banking sector which, in its chase after profits, had been engaging in dubious practices. This in turn had a knock-on effect on other sectors and is still working its way through the economy. Which is where we are today, with closed factories and rising unemployment alongside unmet needs.

Unemployment in Britain is expected to reach 3 million, maybe even before the end of the year. Faced with this economic tsunami, the government has been helpless. They have bailed-out the banks but, apart from that, all they have done is to print more money, but this won't get production going again. It will just stoke up inflation for later. It looks as if this Labour government will end like all previous Labour governments – leaving office with more unemployed than when they took over. So showing once again that governments can't control the way capitalism works.

The capitalist economy will eventually recover but of its own accord, not because of anything the government might do. And not without first putting the working class through many more months of additional misery.

Recovery will only come when the rate of profit is restored. Which employers are actively seeking to bring about by imposing wage freezes, even wage cuts, watering down pension schemes, and anything else they can think of to reduce their labour costs. Some have even had the cheek to ask their employees to work for nothing. Meanwhile both the Labour government and the Tory opposition are insisting that public sector workers will have to suffer too.

Workers should fight back. But the crisis has shifted the balance of forces even more in favour of employers. In the best of circumstances, when production is expanding and there is a labour shortage, unions have to work hard to get wages to go up a bit more than inflation. Now, with falling production and rising unemployment, unions can only try to put a brake on the downward slide, only try to stop things getting worse, .

Ask yourself this: Why should we have to fight the

same battles over and over again? Is this the only future? Yes, within the context of the capitalist system of production for profit, it is. But capitalism is not the only possible way of organising the production and distribution of the things we need. There is an alternative.

Workers can and should organise to end capitalism which forces them to work for wages to live. We should organise to replace it with a system based on producing the things we need simply because we need them and not to make a profit. Production for use, not production for profit. But we can't control what is produced unless we also own and control the means of production. In short, we need socialism, the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production.

To achieve this, workers need to take political action. We need to organise not just in trade unions but also as a political party with socialism as its aim and policy. This the Labour Party never was, even though it was originally set up and financed by the trade unions. Its policy was to work for reforms within capitalism. Labour governments did bring in some reforms, but they were never able to make capitalism work in the interests of workers. That's just not possible. All of them ended up merely managing capitalism and in the only way it can ever be – as a profit-making system in the interests of those who live off profits extracted from the unpaid labour of wage and salary workers. Instead of Labour changing capitalism, capitalism has changed Labour into the miserable band of self-seeking apologists for capitalism that everybody today can see they are. It's high time the unions stop financing this capitalist party, as some have already done.

Some are suggesting that, now that existing Labour Party has failed, the unions should set up a new Labour party. That would be a mistake. Labour reformism has failed once and it would fail again. So, let's not go down that road a second time. Let's learn the lesson of history that no government can manipulate capitalism to ensure permanent full employment and steadily rising wages, the TUC's illusion (and not only theirs) of a radiant future. Which, even if possible, would still leave the exploitation of wage-labour for profit on which capitalism is based.

No, what is needed is, as we said, a party with socialism as its aim and policy, an instrument workers can use to win control of political power with a view to ending capitalist ownership and the wages system and to bring in the common ownership of the means of production so that these can be used to meet people's needs in accordance with the principle "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs".

Socialism is still the hope of humanity. Let's work for it.

The Executive Committee, The Socialist Party of Great Britain. August 2009

Oil or democracy, what do you think?

Our rulers tell us they are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan for democracy. Not true.

In June 2009 in Afghanistan a group of heavily armed (with US weaponry) and masked Afghan thugs forced their way into the office of a Provincial Prosecutor and demanded that a detained prisoner be handed over to them. The Prosecutor refused and as the thugs became more threatening he called for the police. When the Provincial Police Chief along with the head of CID and other police arrived there was an escalation in the confrontation that culminated in the deaths of the chief of police, the head of CID and a number of others. The assailants fled the building and “vanished”.

Investigations led the police to a US Special Forces camp outside the town where US officers initially denied any knowledge of the incident or the perpetrators. Following several days of intense and very public pressure from the US installed puppet president, and former vice-president of Unocal (Union Oil Company), Hamid Kharzai, some 40 so-called “contractors” were eventually handed over to Afghani custody. (Kharzai, accused by the US of failing to run a tight enough ship, is not currently “flavour of the month”). The US Army and Special Forces washed their hands and denied any responsibility for these “civilians”.

Were these rogue elements outside of US control? History as well as current practice in Iraq make this unlikely. The US (and UK to a lesser extent) has a real penchant for creating, training and fully equipping foreign “special units”. From Nicaragua, where they called them “Contras”, to Colombia and most other Central and South American countries whose military officers were trained at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia and who then went on to direct regular or irregular units that waged war against the supposed enemies of freedom and democracy; in Iraq they are called the Iraqi Special Operations Forces. In every case local people call them Death Squads.

As the occupation of Afghanistan drags on and the body count climbs inexorably the pressure on President Obama to stick with his oft-stated plans of increased reliance on Special Forces, and to get results, will mount; the recent appointment of General Stanley McChrystal as commander in Afghanistan is a clear signpost in this

direction. McChrystal was head of Joint Special Operations Command 2003-2008, he was also commander of US Special Operations Forces in Iraq for 5 years.

So, with Obama offering “Change we can believe in”, how does the future bode for Afghans as the US and NATO bring peace, stability and good governance to their poor, benighted country? The occupation of Iraq offers a likely blueprint:

As Baghdad fell in early 2003 US Green Berets began a project at a facility in Jordan. There they trained young Iraqis with no prior military experience and moulded them into a Special Forces soldier’s wet dream; a covert, deadly, elite brigade, fully kitted out with state of the art equipment, a brigade that could operate indefinitely under US command and unaccountable to any Iraqi ministry.

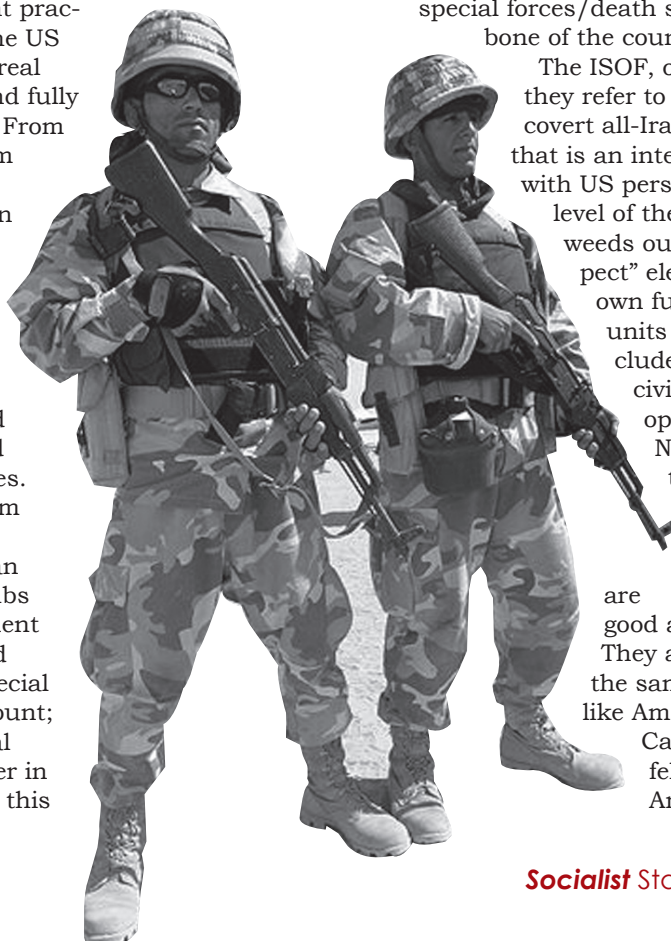
The head of the ISOF project is US General Trombitas, a 30-year veteran of Special Forces training teams in Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala. Trombitas claims to be “very proud of what was done in El Salvador” where special forces/death squads trained by him and others killed more than 50,000 civilians. In Guatemala some US trained special forces took part in the killing of around 140,000 people. In Colombia special forces/death squads now form the backbone of the country’s para-military police.

The ISOF, or the “Dirty Brigade” as they refer to themselves is, in reality, a covert all-Iraqi brigade of 9 battalions that is an integral part of the US military with US personnel embedded at every level of the command structure. It weeds out “unsympathetic” or “suspect” elements from wherever its own fully integrated intelligence units fingers them and that includes the Iraqi military, police, civil service and governing and opposition political parties.

No one in Iraq is off-limits to them:

“All these guys want to do is go out and kill bad guys all day. These guys are shit-hot. They are just as good as we are. We trained ‘em. They are just like us. They use the same weapons. They walk like Americans.” - Lt. Col. Roger Carstens, at the time a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, quoted by

Below: Death Squad? Members of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces



Shane Bauer, "Iraq's New Death Squad", *The Nation*, 3 June).

ISOF operations usually take place without *any* coordination with local security forces whose members are considered suspect. When police or army units show up in response to gunfire they are often targeted. Local commanders admit to turning away because if they intervene, report abuses or serious crimes by ISOF personnel they and their families are targeted. This US-created monster operates above and beyond any law. At present it answers to its master in the same way that the Taliban once answered to the ISS in Pakistan, Hamas was once supported by Israel and the Afghan war-lords once danced to the tune of the US dollar. How long beyond the supposed draw down of US forces will it be before the Iraqis at the head of this modern day SS assert their ruthless power and assassinate all in

their path to seizing total control?

Iraq has something the US wants – oil and long-term strategic bases; what about Afghanistan? A suppressed and cooperative Afghanistan is strategically vital to the US goal of bypassing Russia by piping gas and oil from the Caspian region through Pakistan to the sea. Originally they were very happy to do business with the Taliban government, it was

considered stable and pragmatic; then came 9-11 and even the grasping, venal oil barons balked at the probable public back-lash from doing business with those who were "with the terrorists".

So, today – Iraq; tomorrow – Afghanistan; and the day after tomorrow? If I were a Pakistani I'd be afraid, I'd be *very* afraid.

Policy has changed little, the means of achieving policy goals has changed little but it has become much more sophisticated.

Corporate state politician

Obama has delivered speeches around the world extolling the virtues of his new US policy of respect and tolerance for others – former enemies stand and cheer his every word. The contrast between words and deeds is plain to see for those who will take the trouble to look beyond the rhetoric. "Fine words butter no parsnips!" As the front-man of Corporate America, and in recognition of how thinly stretched its forces are, Obama is presently speaking of friendship, trust, respect, tolerance and cooperation whilst at the same time clearly wielding the big stick of consequences should *anyone* fail to recognise or respect the US's manifest Divine

Destiny. US foreign policy is not about furthering US interests to benefit its citizens it is about furthering US corporate interests to benefit its elite – very different from its publicly stated objective. To say that Obama came to "power" in the US is a misnomer, power is bedded within the "Corporate State" yet his electoral propaganda of "Change we can believe in", his apparent charm and chalk and cheese difference from Bush has millions around the world believing that the universe is a better place for his being elected – it is no different.

Despite the world economic crisis capitalism is not weakened, it can still fund its institutions and fulfil the fantasies of the elite, it can still fund its imperialist wars and it can still fund its formidable forces. We moan that we are not being paid enough to forge the chains and then cooperate in putting the shackles on our own ankles by voting for the myth that is the latest slick marketing ploy coming from the mouth of the newest political product of Corporate State Inc (or Plc). There has been no change!

Obama wrote a best-selling book called *Audacity of Hope*. I, for one, dare to hope but my hope lies not in some charismatic, middle-of-the-road corporate state politician. My hope lies in the set of principles that defines socialism and guides my vision of a future world. My hope lies in my belief in basic human decency and our shared humanity. We are the ancestors of those unborn – believing in false dreams will not bring about change for them. Shuffling paper or our feet will not further our objectives. Doing nothing or having a "they got us into this mess, they can get us out" attitude is, quite simply, not an option. Change will come when enough people decide that enough is enough. When enough people have done enough of the right things.

We need the world to be free of hunger, discrimination and fear. We need it to be free of thugs and mercenaries acting in the name of unrepresentative regimes. Should we wait for socialism or should we each do what we can as individuals? I know what my gut tells me. But until enough of "us" do enough of the one thing of which each of us is capable – sharing our vision and what we believe in; until we make a lot more socialists - *any difference will be transitory*. To bring real and lasting change for the benefit of all, the world needs socialism. Is that too audacious to hope for?

ALAN FENN

Sources: Shane Bauer "Iraq's New Death Squad", *The Nation*, 3 June (<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090622/bauer>). Dahr Jamail, "The Dirty War", *Mideast Dispatches*, 9 July (<http://dahrjamailiraq.com/the-dirty-war>).



Above: General Stanley McChrystal, commander in Afghanistan and commander of US Special Operations Forces in Iraq for 5 years.

Japan : the road to Pearl Harbor

No-one can even pretend that the second world war in the East was other than a naked clash between imperialist powers over markets and raw materials.

The Second World War started for Japan in 1937, with its attack on China, four years before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The roots of the Pacific side of the conflict, however, went back a century. The seeds of conflict were sown in the unfair treaties enforced by Western powers in the Pacific, nurtured in their maintenance, and the racist exclusion of Eastern nations from equal recognition; and brought to fruit with trade restrictions and the struggle for US-UK naval supremacy.

While Japan had reformed economically under the Tokugawa Shogunate, in the 16th century, its closure to the outside world meant an almost complete lack of an accompanying industrial revolution. This ended in principle with the arrival of Perry in 1853 and his warships, returning a year later to sign an unequal trade agreement at cannon-point. Further unequal agreements with European powers followed. Japan was not the only victim. The pattern began with the British triumph in the First Opium War, leading to the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 (also signed under the threat of British naval bombardment of the city). This was probably what Marx was thinking about when he referred to capitalist trade being the cannons that knocked down Chinese walls. The Chinese were forced to drop tariffs and open ports to trade, without any reciprocation by Britain. The Japanese experience was similar (incidentally, the Japanese learned quickly; they imposed similar unfair agreements on Korea even before Western powers got round to it, in 1876).

Strong Army

This last, Korean example, is probably the key to later developments. The Japanese rulers, or at least the modernising, trade faction, realised that in a world of naked aggression enforcing unequal trade agreements, on a model well-rehearsed by Western powers, they needed to copy the West, build up a strong economy and a strong military, and muscle in on the racket. All of the unequal agreements had been based on humiliating military defeats or demonstrations of raw military technological power. The expression of this was the Meiji Resto-

ration of 1868 : the modernisers promoted their own emperor candidate, and under the slogan "Rich Country, Strong Army" set out to construct a modern Japanese state. The extent of the new, post-treaty Japan was established in 1876 when Japan conceded Sakhalin to Russia, retaining the Kurile Islands. Japan's imperative now was simple: in a country with no mineral resources of note, to build a state of sufficient economic strength and military power to become the ruler of the Western Pacific, cast off the treaties of the West, and impose its own.

The politics of the Meiji Restoration reflected this integral militarism.



The romanticism of Samurai history helped cement a firm base for nationalism and militarism in Japan

The Constitution promulgated in 1890 created an extremely strong executive, following the Prussian model, and allowed only an extremely limited franchise (about 5 percent of males, no females) based on a property qualification. In principle, the emperor had unlimited power; this was qualified by the tradition that, in practice, the emperor would not act so imperially. The military answered to the Emperor alone, not to the Cabinet. This meant that the military held a constant veto over the cabinet: since only a full cabinet could rule, and the Navy or Army minister had to be from them, either

the Navy or the Army could withdraw their minister and bring down the government. This was not a problem at first, but helps explain the later military dominance of the government.

The first objective was control of Korea, in a conflict referred to as the first Sino-Soviet war of 1894-5 : Korea, described as a 'dagger pointing at the heart of Japan', was the subject of pressure from China, but Japan struck first. A quick victory ensued, further weakening the Chinese Qing dynasty: Japan gained Taiwan, other territory, and a large indemnity that was ploughed straight back into industrial development. This was followed by assisting Western powers in the suppression of the Boxer uprising (probably the last straw that led to the fall of the Qing in 1911 and to the new Chinese government of Sun Yatsen). There followed the first match against a Western power, the Russians, in 1904-5: seizure of Port Arthur, the humiliation of the Russian fleet in the straits of Tsushima, and control (later annexation) of Korea and part of Manchuria, saw Japan's re-evaluation by Western powers. By taking back half of Sakhalin, in the Treaty of Portsmouth, Japan also tore up one more of the 'unequal agreements', and established de facto dominance in the area, frustrating Russian ambitions and limiting them to Vladivostok, a port which froze in winter and thus insufficient for their Pacific needs. This was also a show of strength against the Western powers who had overruled Japan at the end of the Sino-Japanese war just a decade previously, forcing them to hand Port Arthur to Russia which Japan had originally wanted for herself.

Post-war carve-up

Anglo-Japanese alliance, signed in 1902, led to Japan's entry on the 'Allied' side in WW1, gaining easy pickings from indefensible German territories both in China and island chains across the Pacific. At Australian and New Zealander insistence, even this early, Japan was limited in acquisitions by latitude and territories in reach of these Australasians which went to the US (which of course had not been idle in the Pacific: having annexed Hawaii in 1898, its war against Spain in 1898-99 yielded almost all

of Spain's possessions including the Philippines and Guam). German New Guinea (itself gained out of the disintegration of the Spanish empire in 1899) thus was split into the Marshalls, Carolines, and Marianas for Japan, Samoa for the US, and the Territory of New Guinea formed after WW1 to encompass all the territory that the Australians wanted to control. (The usual 'mandate' agreement).

Thus the battle lines were drawn for World War 2.

The problem was Japan had largely acquired barren lumps of rock. The rich territories of New Guinea were denied them. While some of these lumps of rock were useful (Iwo Jima, for example, does mean 'Sulphur island') and the island chains were rich in fish, by and large Japan had acquired an expensive police operation, while being short of the new naval fuel, oil, required to patrol them and trade between them.

While the US occupied Vladivostok in their attack against the Bolsheviks, the Japanese took the opportunity to occupy every city in the Russian maritime region (the US had asked them to send 7000 troops : the Japanese obligingly sent 70,000). Following the execution of Kolchak and thus the stabilisation of the Bolshevik regime, the US pulled out in 1920, but the Japanese continued their occupation until – note this – being forced to leave in 1922 due to pressure from the US and the British. Anti-Bolshevik policies count for nothing when Realpolitik demands the curbing of an erstwhile ally's power.

Excluded

The early interwar years were characterised by the disastrous Kanto earthquake (Kanto being the area around Tokyo), which killed 100,000, injured half a million and led to widespread rioting. Much of the damage was due to fires following the quake: the Japanese secret police helped fuel rumours of foreign agents and communist malcontents setting fires, resulting in a double win: the deflection of rioting from the government, and the opportunity to round up political opponents, especially anarchists and Bolsheviks. The cost of rebuilding was only the first economic insult. The Japanese suffered from several economic shocks even before the Great Depression, and their progressive exclusion from the world economy. The vast migration of poor peasant workers to the city, first generation proletarians, caused labour unrest and discontent amongst those who remained on the fields. This rural backlash against the cities, combined with a romanticism of past Samurai

history, cemented a firm base for nationalism and militarism outside of the cities – a similar pattern of rural support for nationalism/militarism also pertained in German support for Nazism. Politically, crises consistently led to increasing military control over the government.

Japanese trade was based on the import of raw materials, plus an agricultural sector devoted to silk production, and their working up to produce cheap textiles for the international market. These funds were used to buy what Japan lacked for her heavy industry and military production : coal, oil, scrap steel, and chemicals for munitions and plastics. In short, Japanese expansion was based on women's underwear. The silk trade was devastated by the development of rayon and nylon for stockings; attempts to diversify were more or less unsuccessful. During the Depression, also, the world divided firmly into trade blocs: the Sterling area, the Gold



An infant survivor of Japanese bombing, Shanghai

Standard, the Yen Bloc, the Soviets, and the direct transfers that characterised gold-poor Germany. All of these erected strong tariff barriers and strict quotas on goods that they sold themselves: for example, the Sterling Bloc (Imperial Preference) allowed only trivial sales of Japanese textiles due to their own excess production that they expected their colonies to absorb. One of the main reasons for Japanese attacks on China, culminating in the second Sino-Japanese war of 1937, was expanding the Yen bloc and finding markets for their products. The US, insisting on their 'Open Door' policy (basically the legacy of the 'unequal agreements' of the 19th century, imposed progressive sanctions against Japan, culminating in the freezing of Japan's dollar accounts (the most important factor) and the oil embargo. Britain, on the other hand, recognising its weak position vis-à-vis

the Japanese, and unable to maintain sufficient fleet assets in the North Sea, Mediterranean, and Singapore simultaneously, was extremely reluctant to antagonise the Japanese, yet forced to stay in step with the US for fear of alienating them in the European struggle. The Dutch were also bullied into trade, but in dollars, and with strict quotas imposed by the US and UK (the UK needed these resources for war; the US wanted to apply pressure).

Military adventures

Japanese military adventure overseas was driven by the army, not the cabinet. The method was the long-held Japanese tradition of 'Gekokujo' or principled insubordination by junior officers, Civil government was thrown into chaos as the army invaded Manchuria in 1931 (an easy victory, followed by problematic pacification campaigns; the Korean resistance movement included Kim Jong-Il as early as 1935, when these forces were absorbed into the Communist forces). In 1937 Japan attacked China, forcing the Nationalists and Communists into an uneasy alliance: and in 1939 the Japanese lost a test of strength against the Russians at Khalkin Gol (though the armistice, on essentially the same border, lasted till 1945). In 1940-41 Japan moved to occupy first part, then all of French IndoChina, following the fall of Franc, This gave them bases in range of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.

And so we have the recipe for Pacific war. A country with a strong military, an extremely militaristic government and regimented society, and no resources to speak of, bankrupted both by the slings and arrows of outrageous depression economics and the deliberate screw of US policy in China, bogged down in a China whose defence was being funded and stiffened by US funded war materiel passing through UK and French territory, set out to gain by force what was denied them by the rules of peace. Oil in Borneo and Brunei, rubber and tin in Malaya, and above all the ability to pay for what was conquered with yen rather than now non-existent dollars. All this was well known to the allies. The UK in particular had made its plans to defend against the predicted assault, while desperately trying to forestall it. In short, the Japanese attack was one of the least surprising surprise attacks in history. The US simply underestimated their ability to strike at a distance.

The rest, as they say, is history.

BORIS BLACK



– the ultimate evil?

Capitalism stinks. It stinks of corpses. The millions starved to death, dead of preventable diseases, killed in war, worked to death: and the myriad mundane vicissitudes of class life, beaten to death in the petty squabbles of humans thrown together against their will, coughing out their final days with coaldust on their lungs or dying of lung cancer from tobacco, promoted to children, killing them in old age, ending with the suicide of those who can no longer stand the ruin that capitalism makes of a modern life.

For those of us who remain amongst the living, capitalism is a constant trial, mocked gleefully in the soap operas that, like fairground mirrors, reflect the ugly truth of our existence, misshapen and distorted. Rather than simple poverty, capitalism runs the full gamut of a life with a void at its centre: poverty of the underweight, poverty of the overweight, poverty of the deluded in their temples, poverty of the disillusioned who bear the absurdity of life lived not even for another, but for a number, a bank account, in more or less terror for their sanity.

I say all this to put my next statement into context. Nazism is not a special, nasty kind of capitalism. Everything undertaken in the regimes called Nazi, or fascist, finds its parallel in the capitalism of other areas, whether the 'free world' or the 'communist'. As captain Willard said in *Apocalypse Now*, of Vietnam, "charging a man with murder in this place was like handing out speeding tickets in the Indy 500". It's capitalism with a black shirt on.

In case there's still resistance to this notion, consider the rivers of blood that European powers – amongst which we should really number the United States – waded through in the Americas, treading a bloody trail from sea to shining sea, exploiting and murdering all those in their path. Or the British Empire, whether addicting millions to opium or starving them to death through either discipline or incompetence. The supposedly communist, in both

Russia and China, starving millions of their own people in famines both intentional and accidental. Millions have been worked to death in slave conditions within capitalism, from the plantations of the Americas, through the Gulags of Stalin, to the Nazi work camps. Today, of course, the whole world is a work camp, with the barbed wire replaced by immigration control and the richer parts of the West and other parts as gated communities.

So when I say that Nazism is no different to capitalism generally, I am not exonerating Nazism. I am damning capitalism. I am damning the Stalinists who still claim 'at least we defeated fascism' as their sole claim to fame – while Stalin killed more than Hitler ever did. The so-called liberal democracies claim that they could never go to war, and their forces are only for defence: yet they have slaughtered their way across the globe on the flimsiest of pretexts, such as the sinking of the USS Maine leading to the Spanish-American War in the late 19th century – a purely imperialist grab against a weakened Spain, fulfilling the Monroe Doctrine just as closely as the Nazis with their Lebensraum. Other incidents, such as the Gulf of Tonkin, are now known to have been ruses; there is no need to enter into vast conspiracy theories to say that a disproportional response is no different to a war of aggression. At least ironically, one could credit mad dictators with honesty; the drive to profit inherent in all capitalist regimes, in them is closer to the surface and less buried in doubletalk.

In fact, one can measure the bankruptcy of a political position fairly accurately by the need to resort to 'we're better than the Nazis' as an excuse. It means that their wages are 5 percent better, they kill 7 percent less civilians, their press is 13 percent less prone to lies and censorship; but they still force their citizens to work, they still murder for profit, they still lie to keep 'their' workers in line.

Racism, for example, is not some special product of a diseased

ideology. It is a basic part of state building in the early stages, reused at those times when international trade is low and protectionism, coupled with aggressive or military action, becomes a state priority. There is not a magic race ogre that leads people, Pied Piper fashion, down the road to bigotry: in class society it is a well-travelled highway.

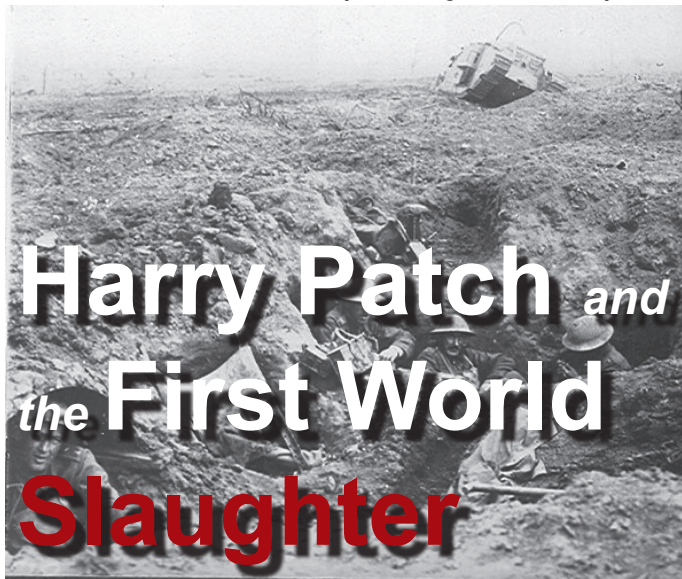
In short, capitalism is a thing that should fill us with disgust and revulsion. To pick and choose isolated moments of its history and claim that they are the true evil is to attempt to rescue the whole, like Bolsheviks bickering over whether the charnel house that was Russia in the 1930s would have been better or worse with Trotsky or Stalin at the helm: or, really, like any US presidential election, for the rest of the world. Kennedy or Nixon? Carter or Reagan? Every one of these men has been prepared to turn the world into a radioactive cinder, yet people still debate their relative merits.

We have had a century and more of capitalists trying to bolster their pathetic reputations by showing how much better their labour camp is than that run by those next door. Whether it's Nazis, Bolsheviks, Maoists, or Prussians, Russians and the Inscrutable East, every single one of these societies has been built on the energies, the lost hopes, and the bones of workers, both at home and abroad. To single out any one of these as the one root of evil is to try to whitewash capitalism itself, to deny that there is evil at the very root of our whole world.

This is why socialists oppose all capitalism, and refuse to take sides. We recognise that some circumstances are better than others, but none are worth a drop of workers' blood, especially not when all of our energies should be turned towards rooting out capitalism as a system. We do not set up fascism against capitalism – we set up capitalism against socialism. Join us in the real human crusade.

SJW

“War is organised murder and nothing else”. “It was not worth it, it was not worth one let alone all the millions” (Harry Patch)



Two of the last known surviving combatants of the first World Slaughter died in July. Both were over a hundred-years old. The second of the two, Harry Patch, had some very enlightening views on the subject of the slaughter. Not surprisingly some sections of the media, not wanting to upset the military and other dealers in death, were not inclined to give some of his views the prominence which they deserved.

The “Great War” (great for whom? Undertakers? Arms salesmen?) was supposed to be the war to end all wars. Given that there has not been a single day since 11 November 1918 when there has not been some armed conflict going on, it can only be said to be a failure in this respect. This can hardly be a surprise to anyone with even the slightest grasp of socialist principles.

In 1914 many people were led by propaganda to think of themselves as belonging to the same “nation state” as their so-called “betters”. Kitchener’s famous poster of “Your Country Needs You!” is simply put down by the socialist maxim that the workers of the world have no country. Alas, countless thousands were intimidated, bullied, coerced or simply blindly led to the slaughter. Those who have chuckled at the antics of Rowan Atkinson as captain Blackadder might like to reflect that behind the humour there is more than a grain of truth in these episodes.

This article is not written to dwell on the horrors of trench warfare, the introduction of gas and tanks or the futility of the mass bloodshed to gain a few yards of Belgian mud. There are countless other articles doing this. Suffice it to say that even though the trenches were an insult to humanity most troops actually gained weight whilst in the army, not that army rations were so good, just food at home was so poor or non-existent. Others covered also the horrors of conscripts, many who had lied about their age to enlist and who should have been back at school, being shot at dawn for cowardice.

Harry Patch’s point was that the war was simply a family squabble which was not worth the shedding of one single drop of (working class) blood for. In that most of the (unelected) royal houses of Europe were related by marriage and blood, he was correct in this respect. Not without good reason were the Empress Maria Theresa and later Queen Victoria known as the Grandmothers of Europe, their children and

grandchildren having married into Europe royal houses.

It may or may not be true that Victoria thought submarines were unsporting and ungentlemanly and shouldn’t be used or that her grandson Kaiser Wilhelm was being a naughty boy. It may also be true that the monarchy and their hangers-on had more influence then but the war was simply a continuation of business by other means.

Wars would not be fought unless the profits of some important section of business was under severe threat. The capitalist (ruling) classes are not daft enough to allow their workers to be killed without good reason. And, taking a lesson from the slave owners, they did not expect soldiers to fight well if their stomachs are empty. No access for business to markets, resources or investment outlets = no profits = war. That is the simple logic which condemned so many men and women to death. A fight with other workers who in most cases did not even have a common language, let alone a quarrel with them. Workers who on both sides would rather have been with their families or going about their everyday (peacetime) tasks. Almost 100 years later nothing has changed.

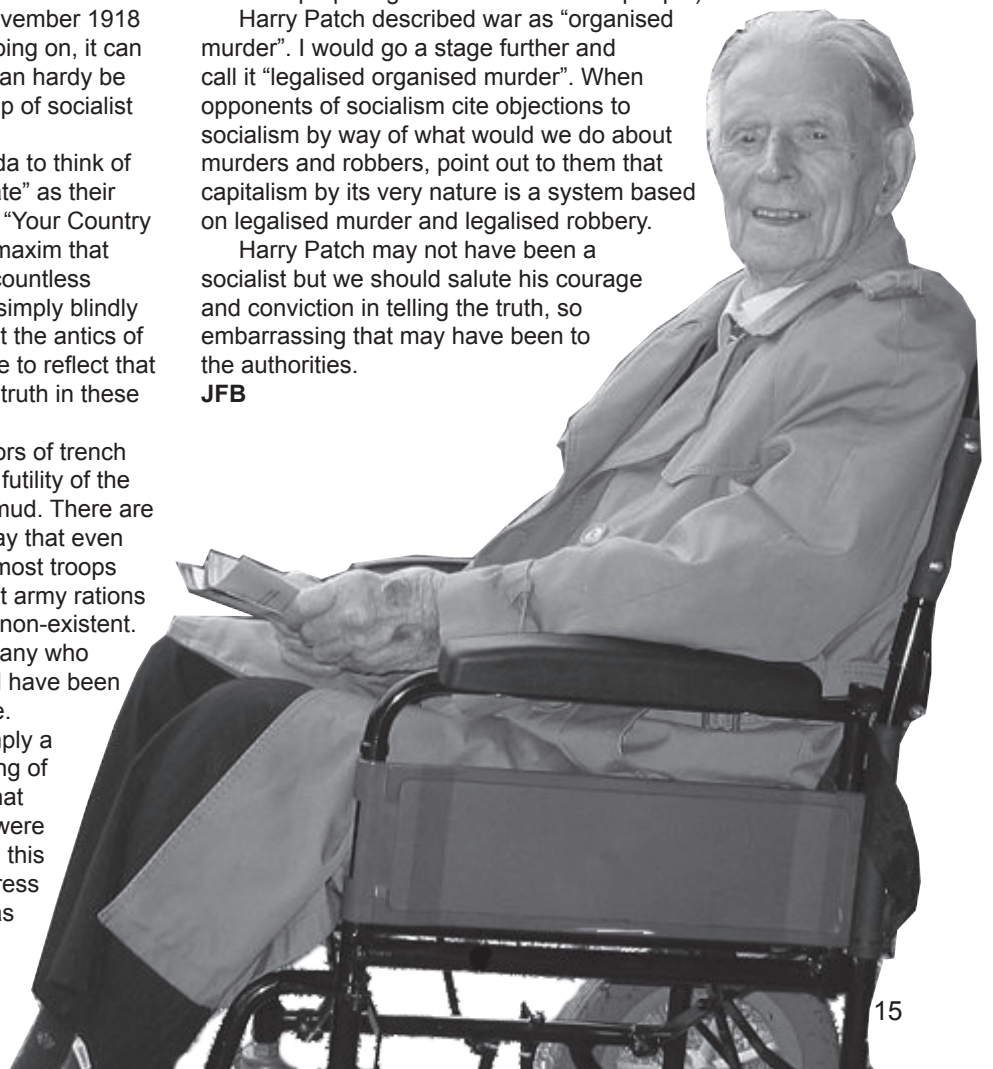
The profit motive shows its head even further. In the current events in Afghanistan troops have been killed because allegedly their equipment was not sturdy enough or up to scratch. Should we or they be surprised? Of course not. The ruling classes want to win their wars as quickly and cheaply as possible and if that means a few more casualties so be it. (Arms manufacturers of course want the war to be as long and expensive as possible).

Harry Patch’s bravery was a type that some might not recognise. His gunnery team made a pledge not to shoot at the “enemy” (with whom they had no personal quarrel or animosity) unless absolutely necessary and then only shoot at their legs to wound them and not kill them. (In subsequent wars weaponry has been designed not to kill but to cripple; wounded combatants coming home minus limbs is bad for moral – ask Thatcher why the wounded of the Falkland’s were not allowed to appear at the “victory” parade – and tending the wounded when they are back home “wastes” valuable resources which could be preparing to kill or maim more people).

Harry Patch described war as “organised murder”. I would go a stage further and call it “legalised organised murder”. When opponents of socialism cite objections to socialism by way of what would we do about murders and robbers, point out to them that capitalism by its very nature is a system based on legalised murder and legalised robbery.

Harry Patch may not have been a socialist but we should salute his courage and conviction in telling the truth, so embarrassing that may have been to the authorities.

JFB



A Post-Conflict World

Imagine a world without war

FOCUS ON conflict; spiralling to encompass more and more areas of the world; bringing "terror" into all cities east, west, north, south; wreaking chaos on whole countries; creating friction between different sections of the population – between people who previously had no reason to be suspicious or fearful of the other. This is what those in power around the world would subject us to and in this they are having no small success.

Now focus on how it *could be* if the majority of the world's people were to have their say, and imagine a world without conflict following a transformation in thinking. A transformation in thinking that comes about through the realisation and understanding by individuals who alone or in small numbers have little influence over what they can achieve against the powers of a state but when working together for common aims can bring the power to the people where it belongs. Not military power. Not economic power. Decision-making power.

States, i.e. governments, (or even small sections of government) have the prerogative of violence. All means are in their control and they allow themselves the sole right to use violence, to use police and armed forces against whomever they label as enemies, as a threat to the state or as a threat to national security. The citizenry can't be a party to the details. In fact even discussing making them a party to the details in itself will be heralded as risking national security further and giving them the excuse to restrict us even more. But, imagine gradually more and more people, seeking an egalitarian and peaceful society, protesting at their government's armed interventions in other countries, as for example today in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And more and more daring to protest at the level of violence at home perpetrated by the authorities towards citizens on the streets. More letters written to more newspapers and to representatives of the people at all levels; more emails flashing around the globe to encourage others to get involved; more websites and blogs to which people can add their name to show dissidence; more meetings and demonstrations displaying withdrawal of support by the masses for their so-called leaders. Bertrand Russell told CND many years ago,

"If all those who disapprove of government policy were to join massive demonstrations of civil disobedience they could render government folly impossible." It's not impossible to believe that numbers could become such that members of the forces of repression and armed aggression decide that they will no longer act against fellow citizens or against citizens of another nation. Significant numbers have already spoken out against such aggression, more of them beginning to feel the pressure of society, a society of which they are a part, (not apart from!) a society made up of their friends, family members, school mates, neighbours, a society whose interests they are supposedly engaged in defending. In the case of civil disturbances, strikes and demonstrations they will now join ranks with their own masses preventing repression at home and opposing interference in the destinies of other societies which conversely have no argument with them.

Imagine the power falling away from those who have used it recklessly around the world and into the hands of this majority seeking an egalitarian and peaceful society. Imagine the armed forces, now under the democratic control of the people, committed to securing all weapons, armaments, vehicles, planes, helicopters, ships, submarines, war materiel of all kinds including factories and depots; securing them from any further use whilst and until they can be dismantled, recycled or made safe.

Are people to stand by passively observing societies descend into the dystopian dissolution that many see as inevitable or shall they stand up together against aggression in all its manifestations in a process of struggle and achievement? Imagine this amazing specimen of revolution, this fantastic human organism, coming together at last to realise its full potential – for what the preamble to the UN Declaration of Human Rights refers to as dignity and worth, freedom, justice and peace.

As Edward Said has written, "There is always the possibility of another social model."

J.S.



Hunting in the morning

IT WAS a good idea. To take Marx's passing comment in the *German Ideology* that in a communist society (socialism) he could "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" and put it to the test. The trouble was that this was done by a free newspaper, handed out at London tube stations, aimed at twentysomethings whose usual interest is the goings-on of celebrities.

According to Andy Jones who carried out the test:

"A mantra drawn from the teaching in Marx's 1867 book *Das Kapital* (but sexed up for the modern reader) tells how he predicted the working classes would increasingly buy expensive goods and houses until their debt became unbearable. And when all this went belly-up, the State would have to turn to communism as a way out. In the ensuing communist Utopia, Marx reckoned the average working man should be able to go fishing in the morning, work in a factory in the afternoon and read Plato in the evening". (*The London Paper*, 17 April)

Actually, this wasn't Marx's exact suggestion but it could have

been and Jones seems to have enjoyed himself engaging in his three activities in a single day.

But where on Earth did he get his version of what Marx is supposed to have taught? Certainly not from Marx himself as it bears no resemblance to anything he wrote. What Marx actually wrote in *Capital* about how he thought the end of capitalism would eventually come was:

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. Thus integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." (Volume I, chapter 32).

Nothing here about workers getting more and more into debt by buying expensive goods and houses. Rather the opposite if anything.

We do in fact know the source of Jones's nonsense. It was this

Why are we waiting?

Reflections of a man in a queue

What are you waiting for? For a certain little lady to come by? For world peace? For that moment when you can slap a parking ticket on that stationary vehicle whose owner has committed the heinous crime of being one minute longer than they should have been? For the chance to appear in 'Big Brother'? For the dentist to call you in and prove that you have nothing to fear but fear itself? For the weekend when your life feels like it belongs to you and no one else? For the arms of Morpheus to envelop you? For the price of petrol/train season ticket to become more affordable? For your team to win promotion this season? For someone to bid on that eBay item you're trying to sell? For the replacement of a social system predicated upon the pursuit of profit, profit and more profit?

The local newsagents/post office. Lunchtime. Three counter positions. Two of them closed. Surprise, surprise! Long queue building up behind me. Metaphorically, I pull out my flask, sandwiches and copy of the Beano and settle down for a long wait. I try uttering the mantra, "patience is a virtue," but this doesn't work as my concentration is disturbed by the mucky magazines in my eye line. Ian Drury's song, starts

hoax email that did the rounds:

"Can you believe that this was said by Karl Marx 142 years ago (1867)! What do you think, doesn't it apply today???! PRONTO !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 'Owners of capital will stimulate the working class to buy more and more of expensive goods, houses and technology, pushing them to take more and more expensive credits, until their debt becomes unbearable. The unpaid debt will lead to bankruptcy of banks, which will have to be nationalised, and the State will have to take the road which will eventually lead to communism.' Karl Marx, Das Kapital, 1867" (see <http://www.hoax-slayer.com/karl-marx-quote.shtml>)

The suggestion is that this false quote was made up either as a joke or by someone opposed to the Bush/Obama policy of the state acquiring a majority stake in banks. Which of course was state capitalism and had nothing to do with communism (or socialism, the same thing)..

running through my head, "In my yellow jersey, I went out on the nick. South Street Romford, shopping arcade, Got a Razzle magazine, I never paid, Inside my jacket and away double quick." (*Razzle in my pocket*)

Last time I was rooted to one spot for so long without moving was in a traffic jam just outside Worcester. On the satnav I watched an hour of my life go to waste as I fumed in the queue. I'm just on the point of turning to someone and saying, "When I was a lad we didn't have queues this long you know!" Fortunately, I manage to avoid turning into bore number 147.

I move through ninety degrees and peruse those behind me. I'm

"Are those queuing behind me aware of their role as wage slaves within a capitalist system?"

not that sensitive to other people's moods but even I could sense their resentment. Their blood pressure is rising exponentially with every minute of inactivity that passes. I gauge this by the angry flush which is appearing on their faces and the muttered imprecations which are beginning to sound more and more and like an audition for a collective of Wiccan worshippers in that Scottish play by Shakespeare.

I too join in the muttering. I am debating with myself whether I should give in to an overwhelming urge to fix them with a glittering eye and expound upon the benefits of a social system based upon production for use, not profit. After all, my fellow wage slaves are the ones who actually run the system on behalf of a minority.

Waiting for Godot is a play by Samuel Becket. There are two characters called Estragon and Vladimir who, in a two day time frame, engage in various activities whilst waiting for a character called Godot to arrive. In the first scene Estragon after trying hard to remove his shoe, and failing, says, "Nothing to be done."

"Nothing to be done!" has resonance amongst those who are constantly propounding empirical

reasons why this global social system, capitalism, has fulfilled its historical purpose and needs to be replaced. "Nothing to be done!" is an oft-repeated response from other members of the working class when real socialism is explained to them.

Go on the comments section of some internet blogs or media sites. Amongst the jeering, insults, and puerile name calling you will find countless posts complaining how tough times are and how they are going to get tougher. These tirades are often directed at individuals, e.g. politicians, organizations, e.g. political parties, or institutions, e.g., the European Union, who appear, in the eyes of those posting, to hold some malignant influence over their lives. For the sake of veracity, it has to be said, that 'socialism' is often cited in less than complimentary terms.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that the 'socialism' referred to as being more scary than the bogeyman is state capitalism as practised by the ex-Soviet Union and by regimes such as North Korea, Cuba and others today. Moaning and whinging seems to be becoming an art form. In the art of not doing anything. A pervasive fatalistic air is apparent. Amongst many who are who are posting on the internet anyway, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it," (Karl Marx). Well, here's the tough love; whining about it ain't gonna change anything!

The local branch of the bank that likes to be international and local at one and the same time. Mid-morning. Once upon a time there were five counter positions. Now there are only two. One of which is shut. Yet another queue. The frustrations emanating from the increasingly exasperated wage slaves wasting time trying to avail themselves of the banks 'services' are palpable. Are those queuing behind me aware of their role as wage slaves within a capitalist system that daily exploits them in its ever more desperate attempts to fulfil its *raison d'être*? The thing about capitalism is that it's fulfilled its historical function to lay down the necessary social conditions for a transition to a wageless, moneyless, leaderless, classless, stateless society. It's just that the vast majority of paid and unpaid members of the working class don't

continued on page 19

As things are now

The third part of “Then and Now – how we live and how we used to live”. What life might be like after socialism has been established.

The world has certainly changed a lot in these last few decades, to an extent that I wouldn't have thought possible had I not lived through it all. During the final stages of capitalist society, the past was often spoken of as a golden age which people looked back to with nostalgia. Well, not any more. I speak for the vast majority in heartily wishing the past good riddance.

Take houses. In comparison with the old wreck of a building my family and I choose to live in, with its leaky drains and crumbling brickwork, the homes that have been built or modified recently are marvels of comfort, efficiency and safety. They are earthquake-proof and built well away from flood-prone areas. The sanitary blocks and most of the kitchen appliances in the new communal living centres are virtually maintenance-free. Even so, once in a while any dwelling place needs sprucing up. Of course they are all common property, like every other major resource; so whoever is there at the time just gets out the cleaning equipment and gets on with it. Fifteen minutes and the job's done.

We could move into one of these new places if we wanted but actually, the house we live in is just a base. Quite a lot of the time I am elsewhere, helping on forest renewal or food growing projects in different parts of the world. My partner usually comes with me and joins in with the child mentoring activities of whatever locality we are in.

Many different social patterns are emerging and the dwellings being built reflect them. There are still many conventional houses and flats for people who prefer the old family-style arrangement, but there has been a huge growth in communal hotel-like accommodation, some catered, some self-catering, in campsite and kibbutz-style arrangements and in staffed care homes for the infirm and disabled.

There's nothing to stop you from trying out any type of accommodation, subject to availability of course, but that is rarely a problem. Some people are constantly on the move and never stay in the same place for very long. Being frequent travellers, we experience all types of living styles ourselves and I must say that in the larger communities sometimes it's very hard, if not impossible, to know whose children are whose or where one family begins and another ends. But the children all appear well-fed and well looked after.

The more primitive tribal communities are flourishing again, now there is no threat of their lives being swamped by the economic monster – they may choose to carry on living in their traditional ways, but of course they too have access to all the food and medical care they need.

Local infrastructure is more or less self-administering; every community has its own food stores and growing areas, transport pools, maintenance depots and medical centres, with experts always on hand to sort out emergencies or the more tricky jobs. If you want food you just take what you need and record what you've taken so it can be re-stocked. While they are at it, most people have a general look at what else may be running short and make sure that's recorded too. And these places are kept tidy – nobody would dream of walking out and leaving them in a mess. They belong to us, after all.

Today we take for granted that we use our energies for contributing to and improving the common lot and hence our own lives in the process. The very idea of being paid sums of

money for what we do is absurd. We do what is necessary to keep society working as we want it to work, we do it voluntarily and mostly we enjoy it because those repetitive, unproductive tasks that have not been automated are shared amongst an abundant and self-defining group of volunteers. Indeed, the sharp distinction that existed in money-based society between work and leisure is now almost non-existent since the vast majority of tasks and projects that occupy us are intrinsically worthwhile and enjoyable. Of course, some aren't - but when did the prospect of an unpleasant job deter anyone from rolling their sleeves up and getting on with it if it was necessary? Compared with the mind-numbingly dull and dirty jobs people had to put up with in capitalist society, they are a drop in the ocean.

We are used to being able to enquire on a regular basis what work is needed, whether it be in our particular locality or hundreds of miles away, registering our availability and suitability in terms of experience and qualifications, then turning up if and when required and getting on with it. We can do several different jobs at once, some may be long-term, some may last only a few hours. We can register with a competence agency to train and qualify for a variety of specialised jobs and if our more expert peers deem us suitable, we can be drivers one day and teachers the next. In fact very few people choose to stick exclusively to the same type of work for any length of time. There again – I know a doctor who does a 60-hour week and loves every minute.

There is a worldwide resources database which records such things as global stocks of food and other essential goods. Areas of temporary shortage are quickly identified and production is then geared up to meet it. Where possible this is done locally, otherwise the food and goods are moved to the areas that need them as quickly and efficiently as possible: no import duties, no demands for payment, no unnecessary delays.

I hope it goes without saying that the potential impact on the environment of the goods and machines we produce is assessed very carefully such that pollution and wastage of energy and resources are kept to a minimum. Nothing is wrapped in redundant packaging; where possible everything is made from recyclable material, and all factories and modes of transport emit virtually no toxic exhaust fumes. The days of smelly, polluting mill chimneys and petrol and diesel engines are over. It's still a bit too early to say but the signs are that the damage done to the environment by advanced capitalist society will almost completely be reversed in time.

We do have “possessions”: our homes, though strictly speaking communal property, effectively belong to us as individuals or groups because there is no reason for anyone else to wish to eject us, and, of course, we have personal effects; but, unless they have personal significance for us, we see no need to take them with us when we move, since similar items for our use will be available wherever we decide to go. There is no trauma at the loss of such articles, no need to claim monetary compensation, and, since they are available to all, the notion of theft is simply absurd. Of course, if you are someone's guest, you don't just help yourself to their food or goods, you wait to be asked – but that's just common courtesy.

And because there is no pressure to change for the sake of change, or to buy to make someone else rich, things are built to last, at the highest quality, and nobody feels the need to constantly replace them for something better or different.

The first generation to be born into a world free of money, leaders and national divisions is now grown up. They have a totally different outlook on life and could no more think of reverting to a money-based existence than our early 21st century forebears could have gone back to that even more rigidly structured period known as the middle ages...but I must say I can't understand some of these young kids even when they talk slowly - and as for what passes for music these days, I really do give up. Some things never change.

Rod Shaw



A salaried economy, no thanks

"From the hawkers, rickshaw drivers and shoe shiners on the streets of downtown Jakarta to the cash-in-hand car mechanics, cleaners and nannies in the smart neighbourhoods of London, the underground economy is booming", said the *Times* (24 April) commenting on a report that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had just published. Entitled *Is Informal Normal?*, the report estimated, according to the *Times*, that in the world "a record 1.8 billion workers are employed in underground activities, compared with 1.2 billion in the formal sector".

Actually, "underground activities" is inaccurate. The term preferred by the OECD is "informal" by which they mean buying and selling activities that are not declared to the tax or social security authorities. In developed capitalists such undeclared economic activities are "underground" but are only marginal. In other parts of the world, however, – India, Indonesia, most of Latin America, Asia and Africa in fact – they amount to over 50 percent. This is mainly because they don't have to be declared. In a chapter on "Informal Employment and Promoting the Transition to a Salaried Economy" an earlier OECD report explained:

"In less-developed non-OECD countries, statistical estimates usually include purely informal work, which is unregistered but not hidden because there is no effective requirement for it to be declared. Formal employment with payment of tax and social security contributions becomes an 'island' in a large 'sea' of informal work. The formal sector may still account for over 50% of GDP – due to its higher relative productivity – suggesting that the benefits from a longer-term transition to a salaried economy through progressive

expansion of the sector can be large" (www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/25/34846912.pdf).

A "salaried economy"? As one where most paid work is done by people paid a wage by an employer to do it, it's another name for a capitalist economy since capitalism is based, precisely, on waged labour. The rickshaw drivers and shoe-shiners of Jakarta are not wage-workers. They are workers in that they work and provide a use-value, for which they are paid. But what they get from selling their service is only enough to allow them to cover the costs of being able to keep on working. They don't produce a surplus over and above this and so don't contribute anything towards economic development, i.e. capital accumulation.

What difference would it make if instead of selling their service directly to the customers, they were to become employees of a rickshaw or a shoe shining company? They would still be doing exactly the same work as before and getting more or less the same money. The difference is that employers are not philanthropists. They only employ someone if there's something in it for them - if they can end up with more money than they had invested in buying the materials and hiring workers. In other words, if they made a profit on their capital.

Marx explained that the source of this profit is the unpaid labour of the employees; they not only transfer the value of their own upkeep to the product but also a further amount for which they are not paid and which belongs to the employer. This extra value is new value, most of which is accumulated as new capital. The OECD wants to turn rickshaw drivers, shoe shiners and the like in countries where informal work is currently high into salaried wage-slaves because this is what the capitalist development they favour involves. As socialists, we stand for the "Abolition of the Salaried Economy".

from page 17

know that yet.

The couple at the counter finally sorts out their business. She apologies to us all for keeping us waiting. I say out loud, it's not your fault, it's the banks. In my mind I'm screaming, "We don't need banks! Abolition of the wages system! Free access of goods and services! From each according to his/her abilities, to each according to their needs! Had I said all this aloud in one of the temples of the moneychangers what response would I have got? Would I have been dragged kicking and screaming into a police van or into a conveyance to the local mental health hospital. Well! What a looney! (Political correctness in the use of language hasn't permeated to my part of the world). Elimination of money? Cor, we might be getting seriously peed off wasting our life in this queue but that suggestion is just ridiculous. Isn't it? Hell, I don't want to bring back more counter positions in banks and post offices. I want a social system where money and the need for financial transactions of any kind are no longer necessary.

"I'm so tired, Tired of waiting, Tired of waiting for you." (Ray Davies and The Kinks). I've reached an age where "Time's winged chariot hurrying near" resounds much more loudly nowadays. I think I can legitimately describe myself as a 'grumpy old man.' Thing is, I don't think that you have to be old to be grumpy and dissatisfied to know that there's something wrong with the way that we live. Like the Kinks I'm getting increasingly frustrated waiting for the transition to a better social system which will supersede the one we have now. Capitalism has outlived its usefulness and is inhibiting the personal, and collective, growth of everyone

on this planet. The problem is this better life isn't going to happen without us all putting in some serious effort to bring it about. "It's your life, And you can do what you want." So what do you want to do? Are you happy with your life? It's down to us all. What are we waiting for?

DAVE COGGAN



Harry Potter and the Unchanging Church

AMONGST THE crazier news items to captivate the hacks of what used to be Fleet Street surely the one about the Pope and Harry Potter must takes a bit of beating. In a world of widespread poverty and hunger, global pollution and the threat of a nuclear conflict, *The Times* saw the necessity of devoting a spread to this non-event.

"Once condemned by the Pope for undermining the soul of Christianity, Harry Potter has been forgiven. In 2003, two years before he was elected Pope Benedict XV1, Joseph Ratzinger, then a Cardinal and head of Vatican doctrine, said J.K. Rowling's stories of the boy wizard threatened to corrupt an understanding of Christian faith among the impressionable young. ... Now however the Pope seems to have fallen under the Potter spell. The latest in the film series, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, is on general release in Britain today, and has won surprising praise from the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*" (*Times*, 15 July).

The basis of the *Times's* surprise seems to be the changing of the unchanging church, but the history of the Roman Catholic religion is one of change to accord with the changes in the non-spiritual world. Indeed the church's backflips have been many and the *Times* article even listed a few of them.

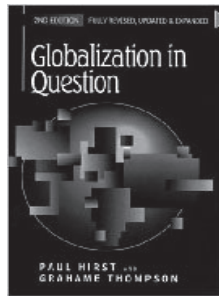
Until the Second Vatican Council, in 1962-65, Catholic Mass was celebrated only in Latin. In 2003 the Church withdrew a threat to excommunicate the parents of a Nicaraguan girl aged 9 who had an abortion after being raped. 26,000 signed a petition against the move. In 2007 they abolished Limbo, a sort of halfway point between Heaven and Hell. All these recent changes are in addition to Pope John Paul II in 1992 finally admitting that the Church was in error 359 years before when they condemned Galileo for claiming that the Earth revolved around the Sun.

In order to survive the Roman Catholic Church has had to change in line with how secular society changes. There are some unchanging tenets of their practice however - their unfaltering support of private property and their collecting dishes at church services. The Lord may provide for the gullible faithful but the clergy rely on something more tangible for their income.

R.D.

Book Reviews

***Globalization in Question.* By Paul Hirst, Grahame Thompson and Simon Bromley. Polity Press, 2009**



Globalization is one of the key concepts of our time, accepted by both the right and left as the cornerstone of their analysis of the international economy. In both political

and academic discussions, the assumption is often made that globalization of the past few decades is a qualitatively new stage in the development of international capitalism; that integration of national economies into the international economy is an inevitable process to which national governments are largely powerless. This book challenges these notions.

The authors, using detailed evidence, argue for the following conclusions. The present highly internationalised economy is not unprecedented. In some respects, the current globalized economy has only recently become as open and integrated as the regime that prevailed from 1870 to 1914. Genuinely transnational companies are relatively rare. Most companies are based nationally and trade regionally or multinationally on the strength of a major national location. There is no major trend towards the growth of truly global companies. Foreign direct investment is still highly concentrated among the advanced industrial economies, and the Third World remains marginal in both investment and trade. The emergence of India and particularly China has disrupted this picture, though it has not significantly shifted the centre of gravity from the already advanced countries. Investment, trade and financial flows are concentrated in the Triad of Europe, Japan/East Asia and North America, and this dominance seems set to continue. Supranational regionalization (e.g. European Union, North American Free Trade Agreement, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) is a trend that is possibly stronger than that of globalization. The major economic powers, centred on the G8 with China and India, have the capacity, especially if they coordinate policy, to exert powerful governance pressures over financial markets and other economic tendencies. Global markets

are therefore by no means beyond regulation and control, though this will be limited by the divergent interests of states and their ruling elites.

The authors show some awareness of the historical development of capitalism, though they view this largely as the history of technological innovation. As the above shows, the emphasis in this book is on the institutional arrangements (social, economic and political) and their interrelationships within capitalism, with no real comprehension of the underlying dynamic of capitalism. As a result they do not explain that it is the competitive accumulation of profits which is the driving force of capitalism's inherent tendency towards globalization.

LEW

Globalisation Laid Bare. Lessons in International Business. Industry and Parliament Trust. 2009. £11.99.



The Industry and Parliament Trust is a body set up to promote "mutual understanding between the UK Parliament and the worlds of business, industry and commerce" and this is their

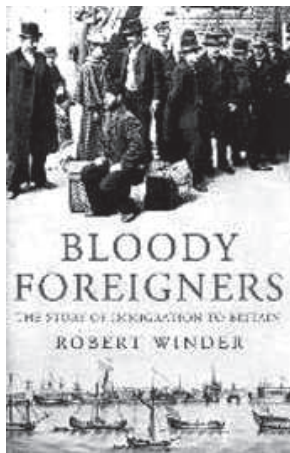
take on globalisation. Introduced by Sir Richard Branson, it is a collection of short articles by various other capitalists and their academic and political supporters.

The contributors main concerns seem to be how to avoid protectionism re-emerging in the current crisis and how to accommodate to China as an emerging industrial and commercial power. The contributors from the three main parties (Vince Cable, Alan Duncan and Baron Mandelson) all say the same thing - "down with protectionism" and "keep liberalising world trade" - reflecting their common perception of what is in the best interest of British capitalism.

The only dissenters are "Indian ecofeminist" Vandana Shiva and Clare Short.

ALB

Bloody Foreigners – The story of immigration to Britain. By Robert Winder. Abacus, 2004



“In 1859 Friedrich Engels poked a man in the eye with an umbrella and soon heard from the man’s lawyers. ‘Needless to say’, he wrote, ‘these blasted

English don’t want to deprive themselves of the pleasure of getting their hands on a bloody foreigner.”

This book is an account of the ‘tangled roots’ of history that make up the mongrel ‘British nation’, pointing out that from the amalgamation of Jutes, Saxons, Romans, Danes etc. up to the present time one would be hard-pressed to find a true (pure) Englishman. Immigration, and conversely emigration, has been an intricate part of its development. In the 12th century came French Jews to London, Lincoln, York and Norwich; in the Elizabethan age Italian musicians, German businessmen and the first African slaves; then Protestants from the Low Countries seeking religious tolerance; Huguenot refugees from France ‘en masse’ in the 17th century; likewise Greek Christians fleeing from the Turks. In 1768, courtesy of the slave trade, there were 20,000 black Londoners out of a total population of 600,000 and in 1840 400,000 Irish escaping the potato famine came to Manchester, London, Liverpool and Glasgow. By the end of the 19th century 40,000 Italians and 50,000 Germans had settled here plus 150,000 Jewish evacuees from Tsarist pogroms in Russia. At the time of their arrival most of these groups suffered hostility of varying degrees but as the generations rolled by they were gradually accepted.

Some of the well-known immigrants and their institutions include Rothschilds, Reuters, Marks and Spencer, Trust House Forte, Tesco, Joseph Conrad, Harold Pinter, Doris Lessing, Simon Schama and Linford Christie.

Kings were imported from Germany and Holland, queens from France and Spain and fighting forces

from the wide world were drafted to fight in World Wars 1 and 2 and then post-WW2 large numbers of workers were actively recruited from the colonies.

As a result of intricate research Winder exposes the manipulations, lies and exaggerations of media accounts of more recent waves of immigration and asylum seekers, e.g. in the Thatcher era, with immigrants making up 4 percent of the population, she gave her vision of what made Britain ‘Great’ – 9 percent felt there were too many immigrants before she expounded compared with 21 percent who admitted to being worried afterwards. Other examples reveal the actual state of monetary and housing benefits to immigrants which are wildly different from the stories abounding in the media.

Poor bloody foreigners – they’re just used as a convenient group, easy to label and point the finger at. Instead of falling for the divide and rule tactics which weaken us all, workers should recognise who their real enemy is and work together to defeat the system that enslaves us all.

J.S.

The Rise and Fall of Communism. By Archie Brown. Bodley Head. 2009. £25.



Archie Brown, an Oxford professor and expert in the subject, begins by defining his terms. By Communism (with a capital C) he means what existed in Russia and 14 other countries and which still exists in varying degrees today in five of them (China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba and Laos), characterised by the monopolisation of power by a Communist party, organised on rigidly hierarchical lines and severely disciplined, the state ownership of the main means of production and a top-down command economy. By communism (with a small c) he means the “self-governing, stateless, co-operative society” which the Communist parties proclaimed as their long-term aim - and which was Marx’s aim too (and also our, only and immediate, aim, even if we prefer to call it socialism).

Taking this into account, this 700-page tome is an objective account of the coming into being, history and demise in Europe of Communist (what we’d call state capitalist) regimes which he sees as the salient fact of the 20th century. Unfortunately for us genuine communists, apart from the suffering imposed on the workers of the countries concerned, this dragged the name of communism (with a small c) through the mud, so making the task of spreading the idea of a stateless, classless, moneyless society as the alternative to capitalism all the more difficult.

ALB

Rare doings at Camberwell and Muzak to my ears, Past Tense £1.50 and £1 respectively (p&p 50p for one item, 80p for two) from Past Tense, c/o 56a infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 (cheques to A. Hodson)

Muzak to my ears, the history of canned music, as well as a commentary on its present use, is a welcome reminder of how capitalism penetrates every facet of our lives, perverting and twisting human behaviour to its own sick requirements. Like all Past Tense publications, it is exceptionally reasonably priced and well-presented, as well being informative and novel. The author is fortunately by no means trite enough to suggest a “solution”, merely stating the facts and leaving the reader to reach their own conclusions. I think you know ours. *Rare doings in Camberwell* is a local radical history production. It is very wide ranging in its scope, and if there is no mention of the real radicals - social revolutionaries - that is because such are rare birds anywhere.

KAZ

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Meetings

London

at 52 Clapham High St, SW4

Sunday **6 September**, 6.00pm
"The free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves"
Speaker: Jim Lawrie

Wednesday **16 September**, 7.30pm
CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM?
Public debate between of the Adam Smith Institute (Eamonn Butler) and the Socialist Party (Richard Headicar)

Sunday **20 September**, 6.00pm
OUR OWN WORST ENEMY? – HUMAN NATURE AND SOCIALISM
Speaker: Dick Field

Manchester

ONE-DAY SCHOOL
Saturday **12 September**, 1pm - 5pm
CAPITALISM AND THE CRISIS
THE LATEST RECESSION
Speaker - Adam Buick
CASSANDRAS, JEREMIAHS AND CHICKEN-LICKENS
Why it's dangerous to hope for the worst.
Speaker - Paddy Shannon
Friends' Meeting House Mount Street
City Centre (next to Central Library and Manchester Town Hall)

Socialist Standard

Bound volumes (2005-2007) for £25 plus postage, each, order from HO, cheques payable to
"The Socialist Party of Great Britain"

West London

Tuesday **15 September**, 8 pm
TWO YEARS OF CAPITALIST CRISIS
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4
(nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

Glasgow

Wednesday **16 September**, 8.30pm
THE RISE OF THE BNP
Speaker: R.Donnely
Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road

Manchester

Monday **28 September**, 8.30 pm
PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM
Unicorn, Church Street, City Centre

The Inhumanity of War



All modern wars are the outcome of economic clashes within Capitalism. As this month is the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of the last world war, the effects of which are still with us, most of the articles in this issue of the SOCIALIST STANDARD concern the Socialist attitude to war.

War can solve no working class problem. It cuts across the fundamental identity of interest of the workers of the world, setting sections of this class at enmity with each other in the interests of sections of the capitalist class.

War elevates force into the position of arbiter in place of the common human desire for mutual peace and happiness. Its effect is wholly evil. It depraves all the participants by forcing them to concentrate upon the best methods of producing misery and of annihilating each other.

War elevates lying, cheating, disabling and murdering opponents into virtues, confers distinctions upon those who practise these means most successfully.

Young men and women, in their most impressionable

years, have the vile methods of warfare impressed upon them so thoroughly that they lose a balanced outlook on life and are impregnated with the idea that force, with all its baseness, and not reason is the final solution in all problems.

Socialism is completely opposed to war and to what war represents. At the same time it is the only solution to the conditions that breed war. It is a new form of society in which the people of the world will work harmoniously together for their mutual benefit, for there will be neither privilege nor property to cause enmity.

No coercion will be needed in Socialism because each will gain from co-operating harmoniously with his fellows. But it is a new social system that demands understanding of its implications from those who seek to establish it.

With the establishment of Socialism war will disappear and humanity will have taken the first step out of the jungle.

(Editorial, *Socialist Standard*, September 1959)

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.



Alan Milburn – Days Of Despair

The aftermath of polling in the general election will be a stressful, disorientating time for us as we struggle to adjust to the loss of so many of those we have loved for their readiness to turn back on their promises and distort hard facts. Particularly to be mourned in this way is the Right Honourable Alan Milburn, ex-Secretary of State for Health and Member of Parliament for Darlington. Milburn will not suffer the predicted humiliation at the polls because he announced in June that he would not be standing for Parliament again after a career, notable even among MPs, for its labyrinthine application of the arts of politics. As a child in the little County Durham town of Tow Law, once dependent on its iron works and its coal mines until it was devastated in the slumps of the 1970s and 1980s, he never knew his father and was cared for by his mother. From that – often unpromising – start he blossomed into one of the highest paid Labour MPs with a six figure income from his “extensive outside business interests” (which is perhaps what he meant when he told his constituency Labour Party that he was resigning the seat to give him “the time to pursue challenges other than politics”)

Haze of Dope

“Challenge” is a word too easily used by politicians – especially those who have something awful to disguise. For Milburn, it has been a varying concept, as became obvious when he left Tow Law for the wide, hard world where words mean what the user needs them to, for as long as is useful. He went to study history at Lancaster University (not then feared for any rigorous application in its standards of scholarship). His next challenge was to try for a Ph.D at the rather more expectant Newcastle but this proved beyond his powers of endurance and he gave up – which he ascribes not to any lack of tenacity on his part but to his aversion to studying on his own. So in his twenties he could be found, appropriately shaggy and bearded, jointly running a left-wing bookshop in Newcastle. This hive of delusion advertised itself under the name Days of Hope which was popularly translated as the Haze of Dope.

Declaring himself to be a Marxist or a Trotskyist according to which was the more challenging in the circumstances, Milburn became active in CND and helped run a campaign to save the doomed shipyards of Sunderland. Applying the kind of insidious skills to prove later so useful in the jungle of Westminster, Milburn oozed charm and a consummate ability to exploit the attention of the media. Perhaps he and the other campaigners – not to mention the desperate shipyard workers – were impressed by all of this; if so they overlooked the fact that their opponents could use more cutting and decisive, Bankers in the City at first workers reason for hope abruptly withdrew. Prospective buyers from abroad turned out to be nothing of the kind. The bitter confusion of doubt was finally settled on 7 December 1988 when the Tory minister

Tony Newton told the Commons that the yards would close – “reluctantly, with great regret” he said but then he would, wouldn’t he. Days of Hope it was not.

Influence

This episode might have been instructive for Milburn as an example of how capitalism operates, producing wealth such as ships not as a favour to human beings but as a means of profit for a minority class, so that employment is not a social service but the imposition of wage slavery. This system works in disregard of someone like Milburn and his delusional ability to charm and manipulate. Faced with this cruel reality he chose to blame the failure to defend the shipyards onto his lack of influence, which he would remedy by joining the Labour Party. Moving up the Greasy Pole, from trade union official to MP to junior minister to a seat in the Cabinet he used his “influence” in ways which dismayed many people who were unwise enough to have believed in him; among other labours he oversaw energetic privatisation of Labour’s sacred state health service. Stolidly he supported the war on Iraq, the replacement of Trident, student tuition fees... In this way he earned the recommendation of “leadership material” from the embittered bruiser Charles Clarke but whether this was helpful is a matter for doubt.

Whatever theories Milburn may have spouted to the bookworms of Haze of Dope about influence rightfully stemming from the democratic decisions of the people did not prevent him, after he resigned from being in charge of the Department of Health, taking a £30,000 a year job as consultant to Bridgenorth Capital – a venture capital firm with big interests in the financing of private health companies breaking into the NHS. Notable among these was Alliance Medical which in June 2004, just a year after Milburn had left the Department of Health, was awarded a £95 million contract to supply and operate 12 mobile scanners to the NHS over five years. This nice little earner was signed up to by John Hutton, Milburn’s successor at Health, at a time when many scanners were lying idle because the NHS Trusts could not afford to run them, forcing some patients to travel as much as 20 miles for a scan. A year later the whole scheme was being denounced by doctors as a “disaster” and panicky Labour officials were trying to stop MP Kevin Jones asking questions about it.

Social Mobility

Milburn’s last fling, before he leaves Parliament in time to evade the ban on MPs holding other jobs, was to chair the grandly titled commission on social mobility, which purported to investigate, and make proposals about, the chances of improving a person’s life prospects. To the customary media hysteria, the commission concluded that a person’s “social mobility” was related to their level of poverty. There is a wealth of evidence which reaches the same conclusion – about education, health, ambition... So what was the point of yet another dead-end enquiry into the ravages of this abominable social system? To provide a discredited Labour leader with the illusory comfort of “influence”?

IVAN





Voice from the Back

This Is Democracy?

The US government are very fond of lecturing other governments about democracy and extolling the virtues of democracy as opposed to one party regimes. Where it suits their economic interests, such as in oil-rich Middle East states they are less adamant about democracy though. Nevertheless, compared to dictatorship like Saudi Arabia and North Korea, the USA would seem to be a model for the superiority of democracy. However on closer examination the US model is far from perfect. "In 2000, Jon Corzine spent tens of millions of his personal fortune to vault himself from political obscurity to the United States Senate. In 2005, he spent millions more to jump from Washington to Trenton and become New Jersey's governor. This year he's opening his wallet again as he looks to overcome a steep deficit in the polls to win re-election, in what could be the ultimate test of whether money trumps all in politics today. Throughout American history, personal wealth has often played a significant role in winning political office. But as campaigns are increasingly decided by 30-second TV ads and sophisticated get-out-the-vote efforts, the two major parties are increasingly looking to recruit individuals with personal fortunes that can help bankroll campaign costs that now more often than not run into the tens of millions of dollars" (*Yahoo News*, 9 July). In US-style democracy anyone can become politically powerful but it does help if you happen to be a multi-millionaire.



if you have more money you eat better than those with less of the stuff. Likewise when it comes to accommodation the rich live in palaces while the poor live in inadequate housing. In education,

recreation and every other human pursuit money allows for the best of everything and consequently lack of the stuff leads to the cheap and the shoddy. A recent example

of this was provided by a review of the treatment of mental health patients in the NHS. "A bleak picture of a mental health service that tolerates bullying and houses children alongside adults in breach of guidelines is revealed in a damning report from a government monitoring body. The Mental Health Act Commission claims many more patient deaths will occur through inadequate staffing and lack of training. The 248-page study, the last by the commission before it is replaced by the new Care Quality Commission, highlights how patients put on suicide watch are often poorly observed, leading to tragedies half-concealed by 'falsification' of nursing records" (*Observer*, 19 July). Needless to say this sort of treatment is reserved for those who cannot afford the luxurious treatment

provided for the very rich. As the Bob Dylan song has it - "Money doesn't talk, it swears!"

Las Vegas, Another View

We are all aware of the Hollywood depiction of Las Vegas as a fun-loving city, full of casinos, nightclubs and good times, but the reality for its growing homeless numbers is far from idyllic. As jobs and homes disappear many of the dispossessed street dwellers are subject to attacks of violence. Now even the streets are being abandoned by the homeless. "Some of the Las Vegas homeless resort to living in a maze of underground flood channels beneath the Strip. There they face flash floods, disease, black widows and dank, pitch-dark conditions, but some tunnel dwellers say life there is better than being harassed and threatened by assailants and the police. 'Out there, anything goes,' said Manny Lang, who has lived in the tunnels for months, recalling the stones and profanities with which a group of teenagers pelted him last winter when he slept above ground. 'But in here, nothing's going to happen to us'" (*New York Times*, 7 August). In one of the most sophisticated urban areas in the world some members of the working class are living like sewer rats. What a hellish system capitalism is.

The Power Of Money

It is axiomatic in capitalist society that

What lies beneath the fairytale ...



Free Lunch

by Rigg

