

Revolutionary

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Perspectives

22



After Genoa — the Real Face of the Capitalist State

Class Consciousness and Political Organisations (2)

Unemployment • Italian strikes

Crisis in Argentina • Zimbabwe

Racism in Britain • Autism

Ireland • Son of Star Wars

Capitalism's Third Sector

Revolutionary Perspectives

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British Affiliate of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

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The basic positions of the CWO can be found on page 6.

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A Deepening of the Crisis Means a Sharpening of the Attacks

For thirty years, despite all the hype, the capitalist system of production has been stagnant. During that time, workers all over the world have been in retreat. War and famine have devastated swathes of the periphery whilst in the richest countries full-time secure and permanent jobs have been replaced by low-paid, part-time, temporary and precarious work. And yet they boast in Britain that more people are in work than ever before (for the real truth on that see the article on p.5). And the further you move away from the big centres of capital the worse it gets until you finally reach the areas with new levels of child labour and slavery used to produce commodities for Western markets.

In Britain in the 1970s workers fought back but the crushing of the steelworkers strike in 1980, and then the miners and printworkers in 1985, plus the fact that unemployment reached (in absolute numbers) the same figure as in the 1930s Depression, meant that the balance of forces swung decisively towards the capitalists. It wasn't neo-liberal Thatcherism that defeated the workers but failure of workers themselves to unite their struggles and go beyond the attempt to defend jobs in each industry on its own, that paved the way for the tax-cutting (for the rich), benefit-cutting (for us) agenda, which New Labour are currently pursuing.

After all the pain of the last 30 years some might assume that we have suffered enough. However this is capitalism. It cannot exist without economic crisis. Already in 2001 hundreds of thousands of jobs have gone in manufacturing world wide. In Britain 13,000 jobs have gone in the last 3 months in everything from Corus to Motorola. And still the capitalists want more productivity from fewer workers.

Postal Workers

In Britain, as we noted in *Revolutionary Perspectives 20*, there has been a new, if muted, mood to fightback. This is especially true in the Post Office which, in changing its name to *Consignia*, has given notice that it intends to privatise services, in order to become an international player in the world delivery system. To get there it is using the most provocative methods to try to raise productivity (so workers can pave the way for their own redundancies). The postal workers have fought back. Half of all strike days lost in Britain this year have been in the post office and 90% have been wildcat strikes. This has often been due to the fact that the Communications Workers Union have ignored places where the majority want to strike. They have either ignored the result of strike ballots (such as the counter staff in London who voted 80% for a strike) or pretended to be holding a ballot then called it off because they have negotiated some minor concession from the management. Worse still it is clear that the vultures are gathering to pick off bits of *Consignia* and the workers are only fighting locally. First it was London, then Watford, then Northampton, then the North West. In some places like Sheffield the delivery workers don't know what is happening even in areas quite close to them. They were balloted for strike action for the beginning of August and then it too was called off by the CWU. Recently *The Independent* (16.7.2001) published a secret memo from *Consignia* showing the extent of their plans. The CWU response?

Bill Hayes, the union's general secretary, said the memo was very aggressive. "We want to sit down with them and engage with

them on issues such as productivity".

This is the role of unions today. They sit with the management to manage labour problems. Proof of this was the statement by the CWU that they were trying to work with management to prevent wildcat strikes. The more the CWU cosies up to *Consignia* the more jobs will be lost and worse the working conditions for those who remain. Postal workers, like every other sector of workers cannot fight in isolation.. or else we face another thirty years of misery...

Bilan & Perspectives



Editorial: Pour la Reprise de l'Initiative Proletarienne
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After Genoa

The Battle Lines Are Clearer

According to which paper you read there were between 200,000 and 300,000 demonstrators against the G8 in Genoa on July 21st. No-one actually really knows as the demonstrations often took part in different parts of the city, involving different organisations. And this is significant. Catholics, Greens, liberals and other reformists are not actually “anti-capitalist” at all, whilst others who claim to be (such as the Tute Bianche or White Overalls) have no idea what they would replace it with. Certainly no-one but the most unrepentant Stalinist would want to replace it with Rifondazione Comunista. Amongst these people, as we have been arguing for several issues [see especially *What is anti-capitalism?* in *Revolutionary Perspectives 18*] there is a total lack of reality. George Monbiot, darling of the liberal Greens, stated after Genoa that

Ours is, in numerical terms, the biggest protest movement in the history of the world. We have a better opportunity for generating progressive, democratic change than at any time in the past 50 years.

He was obviously in a different Genoa to everyone else. Leaving aside the point we have already made that the protests were not united the idea that “democratic change” can come about by protesting under the present system died along with Carlo Giuliani. Not only was his death deliberate, but so too was the planned provocation by the police who had infiltrated the so-called anarchist “Blocco Nero” (Black Block). Every eye witness present, including our own comrades, have testified that the Black Bloc went around unmolested, whilst the police reeked revenge on the most peaceful of the demonstrators. The blood on the walls of the of the organising rooms of the peaceful (and pacifist) Genoa Social Forum was enough evidence that the intention was to inflict such damage on the participants that they would never attend another demonstration again. The episode underlines too, for those who still have not accepted it, that the parliamentary game is not where our rulers’ power really lies. The carabinieri who beat people

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Carlo Giuliani murdered by the Italian state

unless they repeated that the carabinieri were the real rulers only underlined what was correct at that time. Italy, far from being a modern European state had reverted to the position of being a South American police state. In parliament the recently elected right-wing government of Berlusconi claimed it did not know what its forces of law and order had planned. The leaflet we are printing here is not the one which our comrades gave out in their tens of thousands to the workers who were in Genoa but one issued for the massive demonstrations against the state which took place all over Italy within days of Genoa. What it reminds people is that a similar attack by carabinieri, customs police (guardia di finanza) and the municipal police took place in Naples on March 17th when the left-centre coalition was supposed to be running the country. The fact is that the people who own the property will not give it up without a fight and they can pay enough goons to carry out the attacks of intimidation if they need to. Genoa demonstrated that the ideas of the “non-violent” demonstrators like Tute Bianche are tolerated when they are seen to be charming adornment to democracy. Once they however threaten something bigger (and the only threat lay in the numbers present) then the state shows us its true face.

Blair’s Crusade for Capital

But whilst many of the world’s leaders remained silent on the

violence the chief personification of free enterprise capital this side of the Atlantic was quickly on his feet to condemn the “unacceptable” violence of the demonstrators in “a world gone mad”. To blame the police he said was to “turn the world upside down”. We wish it were so easy, but Blair, according to the *Financial Times* [2.8.2001], now thinks Genoa was a good thing. He can now say that he is the real statesman who sees the big picture, and that the only way the world will get richer is if the rich get richer first. What he loses in originality he makes up for in outright nastiness. He has prevented both his Europe Minister and Foreign Minister from speaking to the Italian government about the fate of those British citizens held in Genoa and he is preparing new authoritarian measures to deal with violence back home. The new Prevention of Terrorism Act passed last year has made it a felony for using Britain as a base for struggle against a foreign tyranny (wonder where that leaves the Iraqi exiled opposition?). It also makes anyone on a demo liable to be charged with aggravated trespass, obstruction of the highway or even with stalking. Fascism does not lie in the antics of the BNP’s thick racists. No, we have a far more dangerous enemy in front of us. Those who went to Genoa thinking democracy will listen had better think again...

The IBRP leaflet for Genoa [in 3 languages] is published in Internationalist Communist 20

After Genoa

A Drift to the Right, Prepared by the Left

The present events in Genoa show two things:

1. The government in office is visibly shifting the political axis of the Italian State. It has taken the most murderous and repressive right turn, which resembles the South American regimes of the 70's, as well as overturning the course of Italy's participation in Europe, with, for example, enthusiastic, as well as ideological, support for the American space shield.

2. Some of the weapons today used openly by the right are those previously prepared by the centre-left government, a shocking sequence which ought to be enough to show how, essentially, there is little difference between the centre left and centre right (here we refer in particular to the freedom given to the "Arma dei Carabinieri"¹, to the extent of being able to develop "special" operations unbeknown to the government itself).

A victim of the clashes killed in the streets; this had not happened for 24 years. And never in so-called democratic Italy has there been seen the treacherous police assault on a press office and operational base of a movement, like that which occurred during the night between Saturday and Sunday, justified in the most scornfully absurd way by the Minister for Police. To accuse Agnoletto and the Catholic Lilliput network of covering for the Black Bloc² is as idiotic as it is clear evidence of a high level of political danger.

Whether the government, which obviously centrally directed the military operations at Genoa, was informed or not, by now it has been proved that the "Arma" had its agents

dress all in black first, to carry out the now famous devastation, and then to return to the march in order to justify the attack by the Carabinieri and Police.

Where did this violently repressive act come from? From a legitimately elected government, according to the rules of bourgeois democracy. Would things have been different under an Olive³ government? Perhaps so, in the form (but only perhaps, because it was the Olive government which directed and justified the killing at Naples), but not in the substance of the relationship between the State and social demands.

So what really happened? Faced with a civil movement (which GSF is) which was asking for, amongst other things, the commitment of the advanced world in a real struggle against diseases like Aids, the 8 great powers could only agree to donate the grand sum of 600 lire per year for each sick African⁴. And with serious faces, which only their servile agents could ignore, they called the donation "a sacrifice by the rich to help the poor". If the media lapped it up, this was not the case for the huge, expanding group of citizens demanding real action.

The centre-right government has stated that the only possibility was to attempt to disperse that concentration of citizens with batons and tear gas - or its patience would have been exhausted. Is anyone prepared to say that the centre-left would have done anything differently?⁵

These, like so many others, are problems which capitalism cannot resolve, and which, on the contrary, capitalism increases, in number and

intensity.

As a result, demands for greater democracy are pointless - the response will be even greater repression. The real fear, both of the right and left, is that faced with the growing devastation caused by capitalism, the interclassist civil movement might leave the stage and a class movement may pose the fundamental question; allow capitalist barbarism to carry on or stop capitalism and start the communist reconstruction of society.

That is what we went to Genoa to say, to pose the parallel problem of the reconstruction of the political organ capable of leading the class revival and the revolutionary perspective. And that political organ can only be the Party, the International Party.

Leaflet distributed by our comrades of Il Partito comunista internazionalista - Battaglia comunista

Notes

1 The full name for the "carabinieri" who are actually a section of the army which carry out police duties. As the name suggests they are more heavily armed than other police forces. The Italian state has given itself at least four police forces but the carabinieri are under central government and army control, although Prime Minister Berlusconi told the Italian parliament that he did not know what they were doing in Genoa on July 22nd so "control" may only refer to the Army High Command.

2 Agnoletto is the president of LILA (an Italian AIDS charity) who organised the ultra-reformist Genoa Social Forum (GSF) including every reformist and religious organisation present. Lilliput are the equivalent of The Fair Trade movement in Britain.

3 The centre-left coalition take as its symbol the olive tree (Ulivo). It was replaced by the right-wing coalition of National Alliance (ex-Fascist MSI) and Berlusconi's Forza Italia in this year's election.

4 Or 20p.

5 And in Britain certainly St Tony would have done the same thing according to his own admission

And before Genoa ...

*We have translated here a leaflet given out on 6 July 2001 to the 100,000 Italian Engineering Workers' (of Fiom¹) who were on strike in the weeks before Genoa. It was to reach these and other workers in Genoa that our comrades were present there. The leaflet they distributed in Genoa can be found in **Communist Internationalist 20**, central review of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (for details see advert in this issue).*

No to Moderation Yes to the Class Struggle!

For years Union bargaining has only led to losses in the purchasing power of our wages and increased job insecurity. In particular the July '93 agreements, the swindle of deliberate inflation and the linking of wages to productivity and labour flexibility have resulted in ever more exploitation and impoverishment of the workers.

Things are even worse for the young who manage to get into the workplace and for all those who have been forced to change jobs, because they have had to accept even lower wages and less stable occupational conditions.

The violent assault by the bosses and the Berlusconi government upon the world of waged labour is largely in continuity with the politics and perspectives of the plan set out by the previous government, only the form, rhythm and tempo of the attack differs. In fact, the contractual platform presented by the CGIL-CISL-UIL² aimed to arrive, if not so quickly, at the same objectives as the bosses: **ridiculous wage increases** planned to be reduced during the bargaining period, (wage increases of a maximum of 135.000 lire in two years for the 5th level, which go down to 116.000 lire for the 3rd level, which most of workers are in, asked for by the unions, which is nowhere near what has already been lost to inflation); **no opposition to productivity bonuses and new forms of piece work; full agreement to flexibility upon entry to the job and the freedom to gradually allow the right of dismissal; active collaboration with experiments in ever more sophisticated forms of exploitation in every workplace.**

CISL and UIL, for shopkeepers' political motives, and to sell themselves better to the new governmental gang, have lately decided to undersell the platform and sign any business contract proposed by the bosses (such as at FIAT). The CGIL, for different political motives, have apparently taken on the role of intransigent defenders of workers' interests, but really they want to moderate workers' anger to channel it in favour of the political interests of the same centre-left which has so severely punished the entire proletariat. Besides, it's a movie we have seen so many times.

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So we have to reject the shameful FIM-UILM³ platform - that means striking together - without falling into the trap of demanding the defence of the old common platform; neither platform defends wages or jobs, neither oppose increased exploitation in the workplace, nor do they oppose growing job insecurity.

Over the next few months all the most important job contracts will expire (some expired months ago); it is the right time to unite all workers in a vast front for struggle – going beyond divisions by job, or even worse, by nationality, in the defence of common interests.

But the unions, without exception, do not want this, because it risks fracturing the climate of social peace they have imposed over recent years.

And if the unions do not defend our interests, we have to do it for ourselves; we have start in the factories to reject both versions of the contract and send a strong signal to Confindustria, to the government and the unions that we are no longer willing to accept without a struggle the worsening of our social condition.

Let's organise rank and file opposition to the union platforms in every workplace

**WE SAY NO TO RUBBISH CONTRACTS!
LET'S ORGANISE OUTSIDE AND AGAINST THE
UNIONS!
FOR THE INTRANSIGENT DEFENCE OF
WAGES AND JOBS!**

Partito Comunista Internazionale (Battaglia Comunista)

1 The engineering workers federation of the formerly Communist-controlled CGIL union confederation

2 The three main Italian union federations.

3 The engineering workers' federations of the two "moderate" or right wing union federations, the CISL and UIL.

Blair's Britain

The Crisis as Before

With business closures and job losses a daily occurrence the real reason why the government didn't want any further delay to the election is now apparent. In line with the rest of the world the UK economy is once again facing declining growth. Not that most of us will notice the difference.

Workers have got used to precarious employment and we'd be surprised if any of our readers could tell us who has benefited from the 'wage inflation' that has supposed to have resulted from a 'tight labour market'.

created 250,000 jobs but which the National Institute for Social and Economic Research calculates is more like 45,000¹ — the real rate of unemployment has not changed since 1992, the time of the previous official recession. It is a reality of chronic under-employment which bears out what we have been saying for years about capitalism's inability to overcome its long drawn out economic crisis.

In truth the UK labour market is anything but 'tight'. Everybody knows that the official unemployment figures — which count the number of people actually receiving benefits, not even the number of claimants — underestimate the real rate of unemployment. Anyone who has tried to claim benefit knows there is an intimidating set of bureaucratic hurdles to get over before 'signing on' means also 'receiving benefit'. Still, the fiction is maintained that the official figures are a reliable guide so when this year's second quarter figures were announced, showing a "record number" of people employed in the UK (28.1 million) and a 12,000 drop in the unemployment figure, taking it to below one million for the first time since the Seventies, this was duly reported as an achievement by New Labour. Well, it is some sort of achievement, as the economy slides into recession and after decades of governments making it more difficult to claim benefit, to have driven the number of benefit recipients even further down.

Assuming the figures are available, a clear and readily understandable way to determine something approaching the real level of unemployment is to subtract the total number of people classified as employed from the total number of people of working age [minus students, those on training schemes, etc.]. Using this approach, a number of economists at something called the Centre for Economic Performance have revealed just how wide off the mark the official government figures are. According to a summary in the *Financial Times* of 21st June,

The economically inactive proportion of the working age population was 21% in 1992 and is still 21% today...²

This is despite the recent economic 'upturn' that is now melting away into an undeniable 'downturn' which can only mean an increase in the 'economically inactive' proportion of the population. So, in the 21st century in one of the world's richest states, when we are told that communism has failed and capitalism is the only viable alternative, more than one in five of the working age population — or 14.4 million — is excluded from paid employment. The only thing that has really changed about the

The Case of the Vanishing Unemployed

Behind the fiction, however, lies economic reality. Despite the government's 'New Deal' for the unemployed — which it claims has

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La vittoria di Berlusconi

3

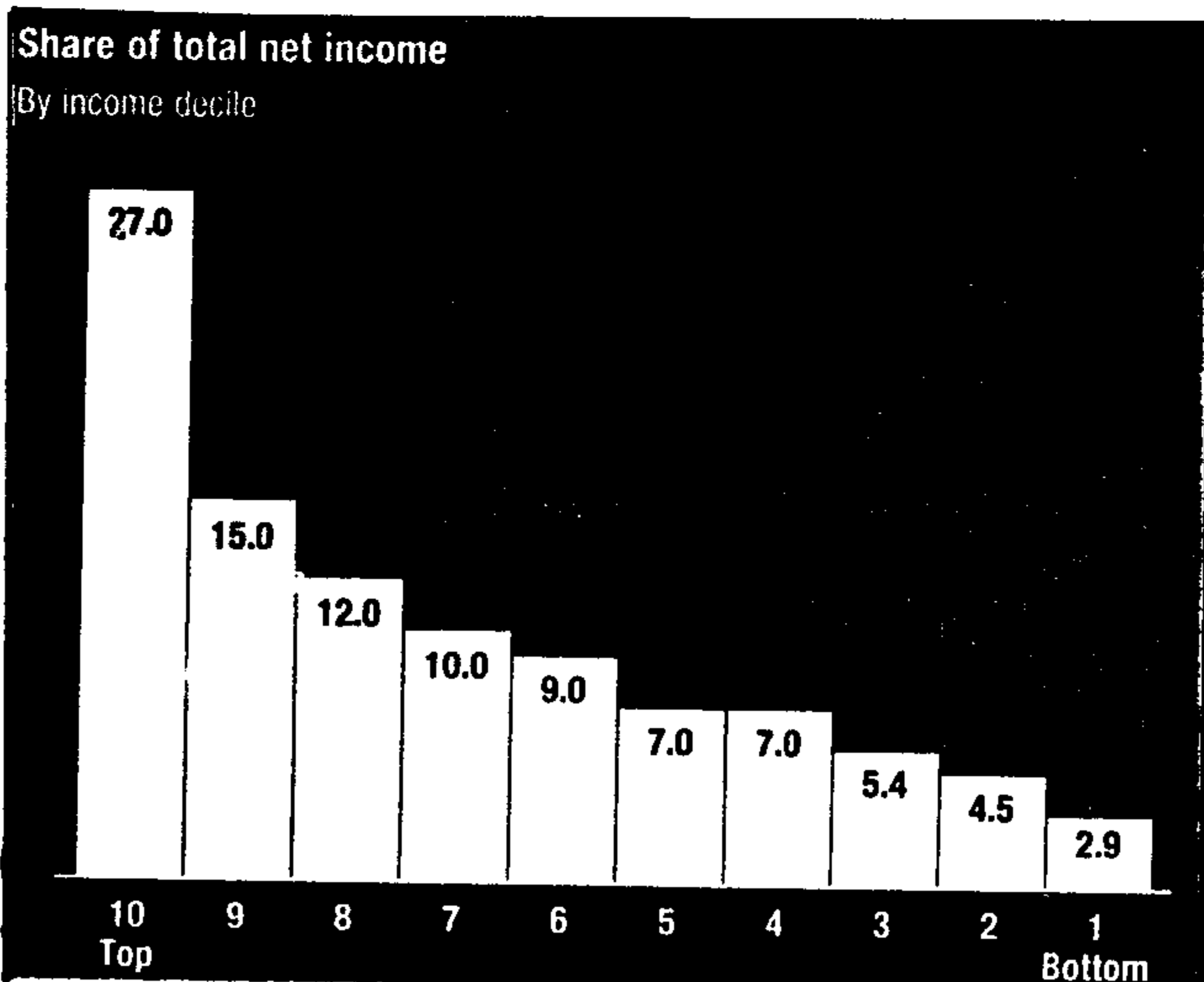
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'economically inactive' population over the last nine years is its make-up. In 1992 29% were women and 13% were men. Today 27% are women and 16% are men. Whoopee for women's liberation!

The Poverty of Capitalism

Of course, we have to be careful here. Amongst the 'economically



inactive' are the swelling ranks of the seriously rich and the comfortably wealthy: not just the million and billionaires, but those the banks call the 'mass affluent' market of folk with at least £50,000 to invest and, more lucratively, the 'core affluent' — those with at least £500,000 (£300,000) who are being targeted by the bigger banks.³ We haven't seen any figures to reveal how many of the 14.4 million 'economically inactive' are simply rich parasites but we can assume a substantial minority. Equally, though, we can only assume that the majority are in no position to live on investment earnings. How else to explain the anomaly between the official unemployment rate of less than 3.5% and the officially admitted figure of one in twenty households in Britain without a wage earner?

New Deals, working families tax credits, child benefit increases, none of these has changed the number of children (1.2m) officially living in poverty. And, according to the government's own figures, there are

still 10 million people living in what they call "relative poverty" (with below 60% of average income). In fact the picture of 'relative poverty' is much worse than that. Even using the official statistics (issued by the Department of Work and Pensions!) a simple calculation shows that the top 10% of the population (about 6 million) are richer than the bottom 50% put together.

This situation is by no means limited to the UK. All over the world, especially the advanced capitalist

world, "the rich are getting richer and wealth is concentrating", to quote one investment banker.⁴ We have moved on from the question of hidden unemployment to the related issue of growing poverty and increasing inequality of wealth. But, although poverty is not confined to

the ranks of the 'economically inactive' there is a link. As Marx explained, a pool of unemployed serves to keep down wages. This, combined with government Catch 22 poverty trap schemes, means that capital need no longer fear a surge of the money militancy strikes and wage demands which haunt their memory of the post-war boom. Today there is no such thing as a 'tight labour market' and there is going to be no return to 'full employment'.

From a working class perspective too it means there is no going back. There is no future for us under capitalism. To get anywhere, the struggles of tomorrow are going to have to challenge capitalism itself and place on the agenda the establishment of a new kind of community where nobody who is able will be 'economically inactive'. But in a society where production for profit, money and wages have disappeared, this will have nothing in common with Stalinist gulags or Stakhanovite work norms our rulers warn us against. Rather, everyone

who can will contribute an hour or two of labour time a day to fulfilling social needs and the old socialist motto of **From each according to his ability, to each according to his need**, will finally come into play.

ERayner

Footnotes

¹ *The Guardian* 4.8.01.

² Information is derived from 'Non-Working Classes', Dickens, Gregg and Wadsworth, Centrepiece, Summer 2001.

³ Article on the increasing number of millionaires world wide in the *Financial Times* 26.5.01

⁴ *ibid*

The CWO's Basic Positions

1. We aim to become part of the future world working class party which will guide the class struggle towards the establishment of a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Marx): Communism.
2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.
3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an international political party for the promotion of world revolution.
4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist societies anywhere in the world.
5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve — the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!

Riots

Fighting Racism or Fighting Capitalism?

Introduction

The recent riots in the northern cities which have been branded race riots by our ruling class have highlighted the way the bosses use the issue of race as a tool to divide workers against each other. While workers of different races are fighting each other they cannot fight their real enemies the capitalist class. For our rulers this is simply the strategy of divide and rule - a strategy which ruling classes have used from the birth of class society. In fact the bourgeoisie does not really care at all about race, colour, religion, sex or whatever of workers. Its only real interest is exploiting their labour power. As long as exploitation is going smoothly it does not want anything to interrupt this exploitation. In fact, divisions in the working class are a positive advantage because they prevent them uniting and rebelling against their exploiters. This is another strategy stretching back through history. The Athenian silver mines, for example, used slaves who all spoke different languages in their chain gangs, so they could not cooperate in escaping or opposing their exploiters. In capitalist society it is only when the process of exploiting the working class runs into difficulties that the bourgeoisie encourages race riots, pogroms and so on.

The Asian and West Indian workers were brought to Britain to provide labour power for the post war reconstruction period. While capitalism was booming the ruling class couldn't bring immigrant workers here fast enough. It was only when the reconstruction period ended and the boom collapsed into crisis, that racial divisions were emphasised. The recent riots are also part of this pattern since they occur in cities where the textile industries have collapsed and there is high unemployment. It is very useful for ruling class to divide the unemployed and let them fight each other even if they trash a few shops burn a few cars and injure a few cops.

Despite Labour's hand ringing and tears at what has happened they are the most skilful executors of the bourgeoisie's policy. At the same time as they are fostering racism using asylum and immigration laws, they are preparing to bring in masses more immigrant workers. These are not only the skilled workers we hear so much about but also unskilled workers. These will be necessary to replace the older workers due to be pensioned off in the next decade as the post war baby boom comes to retirement.

The bourgeoisie hate riots. When they see a riot they see the seeds of their own destruction. So we get two responses; much hand wringing about how to make capitalism less repressive, brutal and de-humanising, and how to ensure adequate levels of state violence against future outbreaks. The past few months have given the bourgeoisie plenty to worry about, with riots breaking out in Bradford, Oldham, Leeds, Brixton and Burnley. The response of politicians and bourgeois commentators to all this has been predictable. Blair called the riots 'thuggery'. Blunkett's response, after the usual condemnation of wanton destruction and violence, was to suggest some 'summer activities' to keep people happy, similar to the Anti-Nazi League's call for a carnival (the best way to combat Nazism is always to do a spot of disco dancing, it never

fails). The feminists denounced the riots as male aggression. The Labour MP for Keighley, Ann Cryer's suggestion was to force people to take an English test. This isn't so far removed from the racist ideas of the BNP with whom she is competing since Keighley has a BNP presence but only a small Asian population. By coming up with a racist suggestion like this she shifted the blame for high levels of unemployment amongst Asians from racist employers to the unemployed workers themselves, many of whom are highly educated. And Terry Rooney, the Labour MP for Bradford North, anxious to echo his racist leader, said at an Anti-Nazi League rally that the whole thing could simply be blamed on criminals.

It's almost exactly 20 years since the last wave of riots in Britain. They were blamed on a combination of

hot weather and racial unrest, even though the people rioting were from a fair mix of races. The reality of the new wave of riots is that they are not new at all. Riots have been happening in Britain ever since the early 80's; in Newcastle on the Meadowell estate, in Bradford in 1995, in Portsmouth last year, on the Oxmoor estate in Huntingdon in May. For the media, most riots aren't worth a mention. But when they think there's a racial dimension, that's a different matter. Class unrest can't be mentioned, but anything that smacks of racial tension will be plastered over every paper.

The Race Card

Only the BNP have played the race card harder than the Labour Party. Whenever you see a

Labour politician these days, the Union Jack isn't far away, and nor are vicious speeches about 'bogus' asylum seekers. Jack Straw never missed an opportunity to denounce racism on the one hand, and turn up for a photo opportunity of him catching illegal immigrants, on the other. No British Government has treated asylum seekers more brutally than New Labour. Their policy is to make the whole asylum process so unbearable that people won't flee violence and torture to head for Britain. This in itself is based on the wholly racist belief that asylum seekers are here to line their pockets at the expense of ordinary (i.e. white) taxpayers.

So, barred from working, the newly arrived asylum seeker faces life in a detention centre with often appalling conditions, is given vouchers which won't even cover the basic cost of necessities, and is then subject to a dispersal system which has cost a fortune and been a miserable failure from the start. The Refugee Council has just criticised the dispersal scheme, introduced last April, for sending people away from any family or friends they might have to other parts of the country, usually run-down

council estates, without bothering to make people already in those communities aware of the problems asylum seekers are facing. In areas where this policy is held up as a success, such as Newcastle, it works despite the council, not because of it, because a lot of locals have been eager to help people who have been dumped in their area, often with small children, and no real means of support to help them survive.

Racism is ingrained in every aspect of democratic life in Britain, from the police — who have not cleaned up their act after the Macpherson report following the murder of Stephen Lawrence and who seem wholly incapable of ever doing so — to housing and education. It is worth remembering that the mountains of

reports produced after the Brixton and Toxteth riots of the 80's which pinpointed police brutality as a trigger for the unrest seem to have had no impact on the police whatsoever. The recent riots in Brixton and Leeds blew up after two men, one black, the other of Bangladeshi origin, were attacked by the police. The first was shot dead because the police thought his cigarette lighter was a gun and the second was sprayed in the face with CS gas. By the Government's own admission only the 'easy side' of the 70 recommendations of the Macpherson report have been put into action, and for all the publicity



Manningham, Bradford, July 2001

on 'refining' stop and search, both Stephen Lawrence's father and the bishop of Stepney — the only black adviser on the inquiry team — were both stopped by the police. It is hardly surprising then, that when people face racist attacks they don't see the point in reporting them to the police.

Likewise with education. Labour has a policy of pushing for segregated schooling. It plans still more faith-based schools for the future, keeping children of different races away from each other. This is little more than apartheid. Housing, in many cases, is not much better. Definite ghettos have been created in some areas such as Oldham, where families of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin, barred by the

council from council housing in the fifties because of a two year residency rule, have been crowded into poor standard private rented or owner occupied housing, much of it built before 1919. Those who manage to get council housing find themselves in almost segregated sink estates. When the council do pour money into areas for 'regeneration', the result is further separation, with communities forced to compete with each other to bid for scarce resources, helping build up resentments and suspicions. Even when an area wins money, most of it goes to businesses, leaving ordinary workers with nothing. Most

Section 11 money went to the Asian bourgeoisie to keep the Asian youth — most of whom had not rioted in 1981 — quiet. The most successful schemes are often most damaging of all, since they push up the market value of an area which means poorer families are priced out. The truth is that most regeneration schemes fail. For all the millions spent on the Meadowell estate after riots there the area is still as unpopular as ever. Unemployment is as high as ever and so are levels of poverty. Even the council now admit they made a mistake. The scheme in Halifax in 1995 pumped money into the area but unemployment is still 3 times the national average.

Elections — A Forum for Bigots

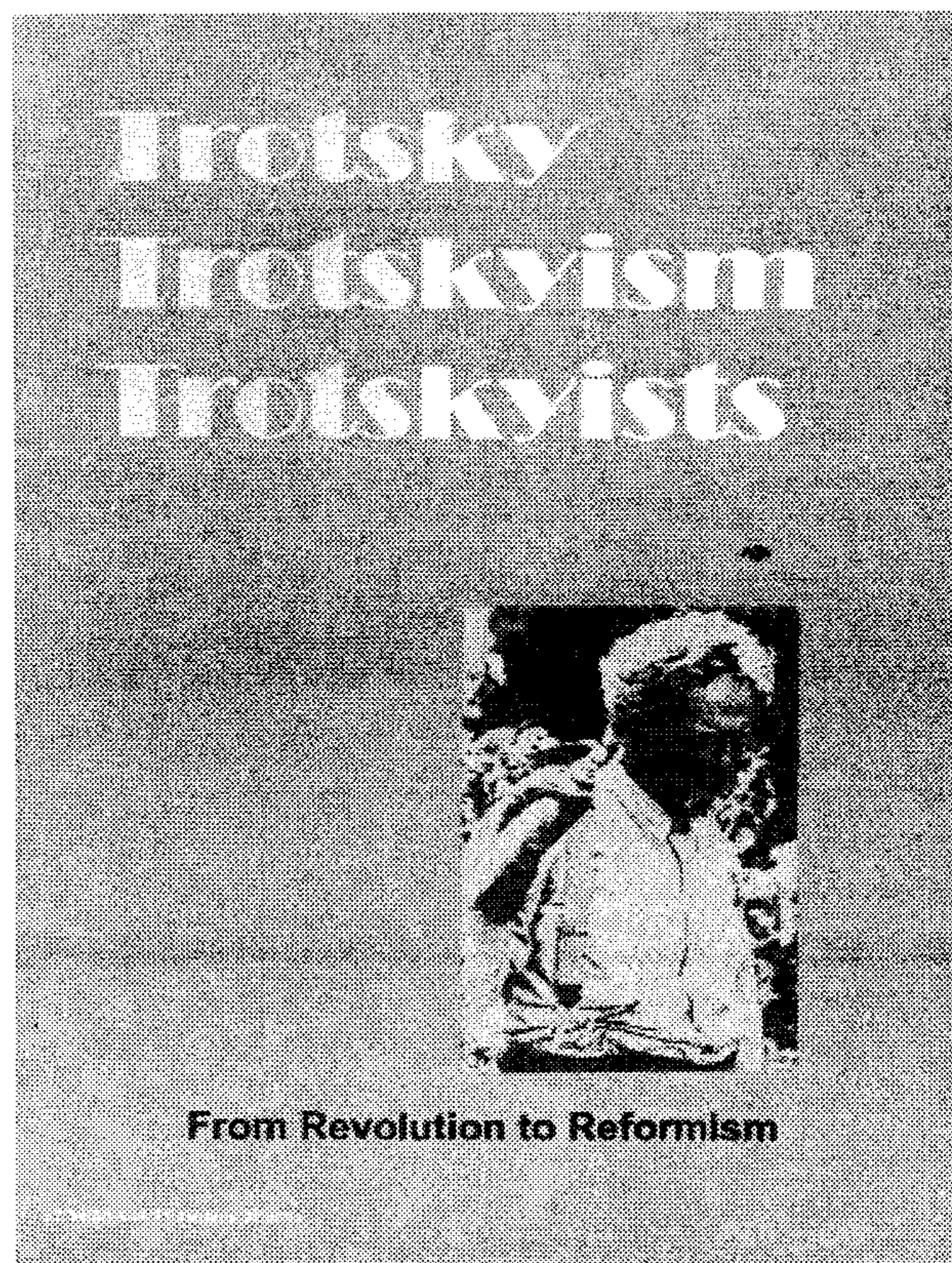
Which brings us on to the greatest expression of democracy there is — the election system. The general election very kindly gave every last racist nutter a platform to spout their rubbish. For some people, it was just a short step from voting Labour to voting for the BNP. In Oldham the BNP got 11% of the vote, aided and abetted by the local racist media who ran stories about Asian race attacks on white people and gangs creating no-go zones for whites. The *Oldham Chronicle* ran an article entitled 'Huge rise in race attacks on white

men,' based on no truth at all, and this was picked up by most of the media, with the *Mail on Sunday* screaming 'Whites Beware'. They all ran the story of Walter Chamberlain, the white pensioner who had been mugged by Asian youths. They quoted the Greater Manchester police as saying "we are treating this as a racist incident", but didn't quote his son who said 'As a family we don't think it was a race issue at all.' The election did its bit to create racism, with Labour slowly seeping out their anti-asylum propaganda. Little wonder then that rioters in Bradford torched the Labour club as well as a BMW garage.

Anti-Nazi — Pro-democracy.

Enter too the anti-fascist circus. It is a mystery to some of our readers why we oppose anti-fascism. Many anti-fascists consider themselves revolutionary but in fact anti-fascism isn't about change. It is ultimately a kind of united front for democracy. It is capitalist democracy itself that breeds racism and its Nazi supporters. By only focusing on the distant Nazi threat the anti-fascists actually divert

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attention away from the capitalist system as a whole and the far more serious threat from the capitalist mainstream organisations (who allow the BNP, or before that the National Front, or even before that the British Movement the space to operate when it suits them). The only way fascism can be beaten is by attacking capitalism directly. The most cynical and most manipulative of these anti-fascist organisations is the Anti-Nazi League which is a front for the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP present the BNP as a great threat because they hope to use the Anti-Nazi League to recruit new young people to an organisation which claims to be revolutionary but is actually an ardent supporter of capitalist democracy. Its vision of socialism gets no further than nationalisation. By concentrating its attacks on the BNP it lets capitalism firmly off the hook. But then the aim of the SWP has never been the destruction of this failing, violent, putrid mass of contradictions, it has always been just statified capitalism without the nastiness of Stalinism.

Where Now for Workers?

Given the incessant drip of racist lies and propaganda from the media, the government and its institutions, it is a wonder more racial unrest hasn't been evident. But despite the best attempts by the bourgeoisie to divide the working class along race lines, racial unrest is not the real underlying cause of the riots. The real cause is the worsening condition of the working class, especially those workers who face the brunt of the ever-deepening capitalist crisis. Capitalism needs two things: a cheap labour force and a scapegoat. Many

Asian workers bear the burden of both. For the most part workers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are in serious poverty. Figures from the Policy Studies Institute's national survey shows that 80% live in households where the income is below the national average, and men are two and a half times as likely to be unemployed as white men. Those in work can expect to earn only two thirds of average earnings. In Oldham the unemployment rate for young Asian men is ten times higher than for young white men. It is no wonder that Asian youth are beginning to shake of the defensive attitudes of their elders. The problem is that the same forces which are pushing white working class kids towards drugs and anti-social behaviour are doing exactly the same amongst Asian youth. Capitalism has no answer to unemployment or poverty and as long as it sees racism as a way to divide the working class it will push forward racist policies and propaganda. Capitalism has nothing to offer except more of the same and worse, but it can shrug off riots as long as they have no political content and put forward no demands.

The working class has always been a migrant class, by its very nature it has to move to survive. As we said in *Revolutionary Perspectives 21* it is

...the dispossessed of history who have had, and still have, no alternative but to find a means and whereabouts to sell their labour power. While the politicians debate whether and how much migrant workers have contributed to the 'British way of life', workers themselves might consider what the British way of life, or rather the British capitalist crisis, is doing for them.

In the long term the working class has never had any option other than revolution to destroy the bourgeoisie and its bigots. It is an international class and its international solidarity is the key to its freedom. In the meantime the only defence against capital and its attacks is to organise politically in communities against the state and its defenders, no matter what ideological garb they come in. RT

American Imperialism's New Arms Race

The recent release of the film *Pearl Harbor*,¹ as with all blockbuster movies carries with it the message of its financial backers amongst the US ruling class. Its xenophobia, racism and general demonisation of its Japanese imperialist rivals is accompanied by the other banal myth (so brilliantly portrayed by Ronald Reagan as the B movie President) that the US is a reluctant imperialist but, well, shucks, the bad guys are gonna get it.

The idea of isolationism, or what the first Republican isolationist President Warren T. Harding called "normalcy", bites deep into US ruling class thinking. What "isolationism" meant in 1919 was **not** signing up to a League of Nations which might hamstring the newly won US position of world domination - the clear outcome of the First World War. What it didn't mean was that the US washed its hands of imperialist competition. Britain's decline during the First World War had enabled US interests to replace them in many countries. The flag followed trade especially in the Latin American republics where not only were Cuba and Nicaragua invaded but there was also blatant interference in the governments of most South American states. All this was in accordance with the Roosevelt Corollary (1904) to the Monroe Doctrine (1823) which stated that the US has the right to act as "an international police power" wherever "chronic wrong-doing or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilised society" required intervention. Usually it was the United Fruit Company's interests which required the civilising effects of US intervention. US arrogance had become so extreme that in 1933 Franklin D. Roosevelt had to announce that from now on the US

would stop interfering in the internal affairs of Latin America and follow a "Good Neighbour Policy". In fact by then the main focus of US interests had already shifted to the Pacific Rim.

Justifying War

In 1931 the Japanese Army had invaded resource-rich Manchuria and this was followed by a full-scale invasion of China proper in 1937. The US now cut off Japanese markets and, more significantly, cut off Japan's oil and scrap steel supplies (80% of the former and 75% of the latter came from the USA) until it pulled out of China. The two states negotiated for the next four years but when the Japanese signed the Tripartite Pact with Mussolini and Hitler in September 1940, the US responded by persuading the Dutch to cut off their oil supplies from Indonesia. The Japanese next move in this game of international chess was to sign a neutrality pact with the USSR in April 1941. This ensured that when Hitler attacked the USSR two months later Japan was still free to concentrate on the USA. The Japanese militarists were now about to spring one of the greatest gambles in history. A knock-out blow at the US forward base in Hawaii which would leave the Japanese Army the opportunity to take the European and American

colonies in South East Asia and the Pacific. In particular the aim was to get the desperately needed oil production of Java, Borneo and Sumatra.

Although Roosevelt realised that US imperialism could not tolerate Japanese imperial expansion in the Pacific the US population was not only not prepared for war, it was positively against it. What was required was an act of provocation which could not be ignored. This explains why the US, the most powerful military apparatus in the world did not seem to be aware that a Japanese taskforce was approaching Hawaii across 3,400 miles of the Pacific in December 1941. In fact the British and Americans had already

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broken the Japanese codes (the "tora" (tiger) in the film *Tora, Tora, Tora* was the nickname for the pro-war party in Japan) and were fully aware of the situation. This is why Roosevelt was able to order the US aircraft carriers to sea so that they were absent from Pearl Harbor on Sunday, 7th December, 1941. Although eight battleships and seven other vessels were destroyed these were largely pre-First World War battleships like the *Utah* and *Arizona*. And whilst the loss of 188 aircraft sounds a lot it has to be remembered that US annual aircraft production had reached 26,200 by 1941.² Critically the Japanese Imperial Navy failed to destroy the large oil reserves kept at Pearl Harbor. What they did wipe out was about 3,500 American and Hawaiian lives³. For Roosevelt the object was achieved. He was able to address Congress and tell them that December 7th, 1941 was "a date which will live in infamy" and that the American people "in its righteous might" would now go about replying to the "dastardly" foe. Gripping stuff and very much in the vein of more recent US Presidents. 90% of the US public, according to opinion polls now supported the war. The "reluctant imperialist" theme was now fully established.

Which brings us back to the present day. Pearl Harbor remains the nearest thing to an attack on American soil

since the British tried to take New Orleans in 1812. In terms of casualties all the foreign wars the US has been involved in have not produced anything like the total number of deaths in the four years of the Civil War (1861-5). Pearl Harbor is the only time US civilians not serving abroad have been casualties⁴ of bombing. The USA (like Japan before it) is a curiously un-invaded territory, a fact which only seems to increase the paranoia of its ruling class. Star Wars, and the so-called "Son of Star Wars" currently being peddled by Bush, are policies based on maintaining this unviolated security, or so it would seem...

A New Arms Race?

It's a curious fact that the US has spent billions of dollars on missile defence shields but not one of the projects has yet worked. Every test carried out under the Clinton regime failed as the interceptors simply did not hit the missiles they were targeted at. Most defence experts don't actually think missile defence can ever work. However the Republicans have a particular love of the idea for two reasons.

The first is the perception that it was the announcement of the Reagan "Star Wars" project which threatened the old USSR with a new arms race which led to its collapse because it was threatened with a new arms race. In fact the Soviet Union could not even sustain the old arms race before it, since 25% of the USSR GDP went on weaponry, compared with 6% of the US. No matter, the perception is that an arms

race is good for the US since it underlines its superiority over its former friends and potential rivals in Europe. With the Europeans creating a force which can act militarily independently of NATO, and the Japanese ruling class choosing ever more virulently nationalist leaders the US, despite its position of unprecedented dominance, has also never been more challenged. This has been further underlined this year on three issues.

The most significant was the isolation of the US at Bonn after its refusal to ratify Kyoto once again. In an unprecedented degree of unity, the Europeans and Japanese ostentatiously carried on trying to keep to the Kyoto agreement. The US delegate, Paula Dobriansky was even heckled by the "distinguished" delegates from the other governments. The US is also going against its former (?) allies in insisting that it will tear up the 1972 ban on biological weapons. Here the US Government argument is "not with the principle of arms limitation" but with the fact that after nearly 30 years no international mechanism for supervision of biological weapons had been agreed. But as the US has been the biggest opponent of inspections of its own facilities this is a bit like Hitler criticising the break down of law and order in the Weimar Republic because the Nazis had a million SA thugs on the streets! What the rejection of constraints on biological weapons development and the National Missile Defense system (to give "Son of Star Wars" its formal title) have in common is that for the US they are seen as areas where they have a commercial lead and intend to keep it. As the *Financial Times* put it

...the Bush administration says that the proposed inspections would undermine its own biotech industries. By imposing regular site visits, it says trade secrets would be compromised under the guise of arms control.⁵

What the US Government has made clear is that they don't think the US should be treated the same as other countries. John Bolton, the US undersecretary of state for arms control made this clear.

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*Instead of a situation where the cops and robbers sit down in a room to discuss how they are going to address civil society, those countries that have a real concern about biological weapons could take action amongst themselves.*⁶

The good guys and the bad guys theme here is just a repetition of the so-called "rogue states" theory used by the US over the last decade. Whatever the US does is "noble" and "saintly" as the *New York Times* remarked under the Clinton era⁷ whilst its enemies like Cuba and Iraq deserve only bombing and starvation. At least the New World Order which the elder Bush talked of now has a clearly identifiable shape. The increasing misery of the world's population as neo-liberal capitalism rocks from one crisis to the next (see the article on Argentina in this issue) will be met with ever heavier policing by the USA.

And this is where economic and political motives really get mixed up. Whilst National Missile Defense appeals to the idea of a protective shield around the US it also sends a signal to the rest of the world that US interests are even more stridently being asserted. Time and again Bush has given the message that the interests of the US come before anything including even the long-term survival of humanity. Last year US greenhouse gas emissions doubled amidst further scientific evidence that they really are the causes of global warning. The USA produces 25% of the world's greenhouse gases but to cut emissions would harm US industry. This is one issue which unites all shades of US ruling class opinion, including the unions. The recent vote by the House of Representatives to allow oil exploration in the Alaskan Wildlife Reserve was achieved because the Teamsters Union put pressure on Democratic representatives not to oppose the plan as it would create jobs for their members.

Arms and Accumulation

It is the same with National Missile Defense. Since the Second World

War US industry has relied on the contracts that the Federal Government has dished out for defence projects related to fighting the Cold War. Today the collapse of the Soviet Union means there is no threat on anything like the same scale to justify massive contracts to US defence firms (with all the knock-on consequences this has for their suppliers throughout the economy). The further the US plunges towards recession the more attractive does the project of a massive defensive system become. Indeed there is a certain nostalgia for a return to the past. The post-war boom years are identified with this massive defence spending. Chomsky puts it well

*... World War Two was a grand success economically; there was a kind of semi-command economy, directed by corporate executives who flocked to Washington to run it, and they learned the lessons. It was confidently predicted across the board that the US would go right back into depression after the war; therefore something had to be done. The business press was frank about it. **Fortune** and **Business Week** reported that high-tech industry cannot survive in a "pure, competitive, unsubsidised, 'free enterprise' economy" ... "the government is their only possible saviour".⁸*

It is not only conservative US thinkers who believe that these subsidies were the secret of the post-war boom. The leading economic thinker of the Socialist Workers Party throughout this period Michael Kidron, argued that it was the "permanent arms economy" which kept accumulation going. As his theory has never been rejected and re-appears in the writings of Chris Harman, the editor of *Socialist Worker* it obviously still holds some currency for the SWP. The only thing wrong with this theory is, in the word of Blackadder that it is ... bollocks. The post-war boom ended in the late sixties and early seventies when US defence spending during the Vietnam War was at its height. What caused Nixon to devalue the dollar was the fact that the US economy was no longer producing enough surplus value to prevent a massive escalation

in US debt on defence and other state spending. The US boom had really been based on the fact that the Second World War had destroyed so much value (in terms of both constant and variable capital) in the world economy that a new round of accumulation was possible. The US, with the only productive apparatus still functioning was in a perfect position to take advantage of the European and Japanese recovery. It lent money to the rest of the world so that the rest of the world could buy US products. But by the late sixties the level of accumulation had once again reached such a point that profit rates had begun to fall.⁹ We had reached the end of another cycle of accumulation and, despite all the various policies (extreme deficit financing, accumulation of debt, monetarism etc.) the world capitalist system had not been able to adequately raise profit rates.¹⁰ Defence spending has been a sine qua non of US state monopoly capitalism but it has not been the reason for either the post-war boom or the post-seventies slump.

However the US ruling class don't know this any better than the SWP and they are now increasingly looking to increased arms spending as the next great stimulus for the US economy. To achieve it they are prepared to tear up the 1972 arms limitations treaty (the Bush administration hope to have missile silos built in Alaska next spring) and the only argument in ruling class circles in Washington will be about whether Bush has gone the right way about it. By promising (as usual) to let the British have some minor aspects of the defence contracts, they have been able to get Blair to try to sell the idea that Britain will act as a forward warning station for the system. Fylingdales and Menwith Hill, the listening stations in North Yorkshire, have already been upgraded and Bush has held out the promise of more contracts for Britain. More importantly it has, once again divided the potential European opponents of the system. The problem for the US is that the number of aggrieved former allies are now increasing and the policy of divide and rule may become increasingly unsustainable especially as the US drags the world into a new recession. With the

Russians actively courting any one who will listen to oppose National Missile Defence, with increasingly nationalist politicians (such as Koizumi in Japan, and Putin in Russia) raising their heads all over the planet, the world is moving into an infinitely more dangerous situation than it has been since the New World Order began...

AD

Footnotes

¹ This article isn't intended to review the film. For a review which details the subsequent cover-up of the US Government's knowledge of the imminent attack see *Internationalist Notes* Vol. 3 No. 2 from the Los Angeles address.

² All figures taken from John Ray *The Second World War* Chapter 5 [Cassell 1999]

³ There seems to be no accurate count of this either as many books give quite wildly fluctuating figures. This one is taken from Ray op. cit. p. 136

⁴ Hawaii was a colony of the USA in 1941. It became the 49th state of the USA in 1960.

⁵ See *Bio-warfare deal scuppered by US*, 26.7.2001.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Quoted in N.Chomsky *Rogue States* (London, 2000) p. 11

⁸ op. cit p.196. Although Chomsky, being an idealist, puts the fact that they spent money on defence and not social services down to the fact that people would argue about the latter but not about the former and this would "democratise society". This is a consequence of Chomsky's virulent, and it has to be said, ignorant, anti-Marxism. The material fact that the latter would have raised variable capital (i.e. wage rates) and thus undermined US competitiveness internationally seems a much more persuasive reason for the capitalist class to go for defence spending. This is why the current proposal to raise the military budget by billions is also accompanied by further cuts in social spending.

⁹ In 1935 the ratio of the organic composition of capital [constant to variable] in the US was 4.92. In 1945 it had fallen to 2.64 and in 1960 it was back at 4.20. Figures from S.M. Madge *The Law of the Falling Tendency of the Rate of Profit* in *New Left Review* 84 p.72.

¹⁰ The massive retreats by the working class and the reduction in living standards globally have helped to raise profit rates in certain sectors but this has not been enough to generate a new round of accumulation.

Ireland – Elections change nothing

For many decades socialists have argued that elections within capitalism are a blatant sham. The influence of the capitalist establishment and the power of the media ensures that votes are generally stacked according to the wishes of the ruling class. This of course is not an iron law. The last American election showed that other peripheral factors can affect election results. Where the bourgeoisie is confused or divided unclear results can ensue. Bourgeois factions may occasionally "buck the trend" against the prevailing wisdom of the majority of their class.

Our critique of elections is not centred on the ruling class's ability, or occasional inability, to impose the governing political faction of its choice. The core of our understanding is far more deep-rooted. In short, the election of a governing party or coalition can make no fundamental difference to imperialist domination over any part of the world. Politicians are ultimately constrained by and within the decaying capitalist world system.

The electoral charades in Northern Ireland are living proof of the meaningless nature of electoral gimmickry. The switching of votes to the Nationalists of Sinn Fein and to the Democratic Unionist, supposed opponents of the Anglo-American strategy, may briefly alter appearance but will not alter a shred of the underlying reality.

Ireland – a pawn in the Imperialist game

The political settlement in the whole of Ireland remains dominated by the machinations of British and American imperialism. Certainly there are tactical differences between the way in which the local bourgeois factions

have accommodated to that domination. The political link between the six counties and Britain, for example, keeps Northern Ireland in both NATO and the sterling area. In the Republic of Ireland, the bourgeoisie, having benefitted enormously from membership of the European Union, have entered "Euroland" and retained their historic refusal to join NATO.

A superficial understanding of the last sentence could imply that the Irish bourgeoisie are likely candidates for an emerging European bloc, independent from and a potential rival to the USA. That would, however, not be an accurate understanding. The underlying reality is that the Irish bourgeoisie still make their territory available as part of a geo-political bridge between USA and Euroland, the preferred vehicle of German and French imperialism. In that sense the Irish bourgeoisie inevitably act as junior partners to their British counterparts, trapped between their "special relationship" with USA and the pressures of European integration.

This uneasy "ménage a trois" between the British, American and Irish ruling classes has underpinned the political settlements developed in Northern Ireland during the last twenty years. The "Good Friday" agreement and the Northern Ireland Assembly were, and are, merely another stage in that process.

Not for the first time the leaders of Ulster Unionism have found themselves trapped with their historical ideological commitment to British Imperialism no longer matching British Imperialism's current strategic needs. While Britain is intent on embedding the Republicans inside the new political settlement the Unionists wring their hands as they see their position of privilege, long since more illusory

than real, irrecoverably under threat. At the time of writing, early August, it seems likely that the American godfathers will apply sufficient pressure on the IRA to squeeze enough movement from them to keep Unionist politicians within the process.

Workers paying the price

Of course, as in all the frictions within the bourgeoisie it is workers who pay the price. The Unionist politicians wave their fists at both the British Government and the Republican gangsters cum politicians. That political posturing is translated into the brutality of the bombs and bullets which have, in this phase, been predominantly aimed at working-class Catholics.

Meanwhile, George W Bush has visited London to cement the continuation of the Anglo-American strategy in Ireland. That strategy will continue to dictate events in Ireland irrespective of the continuation or otherwise of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Workers can reap no benefits from the constitutional machinations which may take place during the next few months. This applies whether rule from Westminster is adopted, Trimble achieves resurrection or Donaldson accepts the poisoned chalice. It will equally be the case if the bourgeoisie decide to play their electoral card and call fresh Assembly elections.

As we have pointed out many times before, the agreement between the British, Irish and American ruling classes means suffering for the working-class irrespective of the levels of violence at any particular time. At the heart of imperialism's plans is the "normalisation" of Northern Ireland as an "investment opportunity" with cheap labour based on a divided and cowed working-class.

A class response is needed

The working-class in Northern Ireland has suffered decades of oppression and violence from the state and from the para-military mobsters. The bosses' political manoeuvres offer no way forward for working people. What is needed is an independent class response to confront all the attacks which the capitalist order imposes on them.

In common with the rest of Western Europe, the traditional concentrations of workers at the point of production in Northern Ireland, particularly around ship-building and engineering, has ceased to exist. More and more workers have shifted into the service industries (call centres etc., leisure and tourism). That shifting pattern has been accompanied by low wages, loss of assured employment and growing part-time and short-term contracts. Despite these problems the reappearance of significant struggles in and around workplaces would be a welcome step in the working class beginning to reassert itself.

Equally, a re-emerging class-consciousness would reflect itself within the working-class

communities. Only the emergence of class-consciousness can offer an antidote to the twin bourgeois ideologies of Republicanism and Loyalism. The development of class struggle as an alternative to sectarian ideology would challenge the ability of the murder-gangs to carry out their acts of barbarism.

Communists look to the emergence of class struggle as the way forward from the bloody morass which is the reality of the Anglo-American "peace plan". We are confident that workers in Northern Ireland, in common with their class brothers and sisters world-wide, will rediscover their ability to fight on their own terrain and for their own interests. The re-emergence of class struggle and consciousness will create the basis for, and in turn be strengthened by, the development of Communist nuclei in the whole of Ireland.

Once more the choice between Socialism or Barbarism is posed as the real alternative confronting the working class.

KT

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The International Nature of Argentina's Crisis

Introduction

The following article was written by a South American comrade in June before the austerity package which the Alliance coalition government of Fernando de la Rúa tried to push through to meet IMF demands was announced. The plan to cut state employees wages and pensions of anyone earning over \$300 a year was met with a wave of strikes. In a country that already has an official unemployment rate of 16% this was another step towards further misery for the working class. In the event the strikes so worried investors that the plan was amended so that cuts were only made on those who earned more than \$1000 a year. Although Argentina has since announced that it has enough money to pay this year's interest, the Argentinian bourgeoisie have been withdrawing their savings from the country (7% of the total deposits in the country vanished in 26 days in July). The crisis is yet one more occasion when a major player in the world economy (Argentina accounts for 20% of the investment in the so-called "developing world") threatens to default so badly that it affects other countries (as far afield as Turkey, Poland and Russia, but also including Brazil). As the following article makes clear Argentina offers another insight into a world capitalist economy living on massive and unsustainable debt.

The prolonged Argentinian crisis has been through especially intense moments.

In an international framework characterised by the slowdown of the U.S. economy, the increase in investment insecurity and generalised lack of liquidity, international capital markets are reacting by increasing the spread of their risk. On top of this is a domestic situation which has seen the reduction of its international reserves, an increase in interbank interest rates and the reduction of net assets due to the global financial system which has re-emphasised Argentina's label of "high risk country".

In order to give an adequate picture of the development of the crisis — which is no more than a particular phenomenon of a general process — it is also necessary to consider the possibility of a financial crack in the European Union, whose first signal has been the devaluation of the Euro. This possibility figures amongst the repercussions of the collapse of the value of the principal financial entities of the US

economy, given the decisive role played by the European Union in the financing of the North American debt over the last two years. To this has to be added the virtual paralysis of Asia. With these signals, lenders will no longer agree to the refinancing of highly indebted groups. Since, even before the virtual closure of credit markets, Argentina found itself deprived of sources of finance, the recession has sharpened, as well as the fiscal deficit essentially destined to absorb the impact of the debt. Money capital in the hands of the financial sector sought greater returns by migrating funds abroad, used to pay for the cancellation of deposits or to authorise new loans to the State. The latter, via the placement of titles to public debt at annual interest rates of 16% on the local market, absorbed money capital to such an extent that industry and the economy were literally without access to credit. Thus a paradoxical situation has arisen. Whilst internal speculative revenue resulting from holding financial instruments, (particularly State debt bonds) is rising substantially, there is no

stopping the shrinking of the real economy. In this way even the counter-actions taken by the Argentinian government during the second semester of the year 2000 and the beginning of 2001 — based on the issue of debt bonds — are technically no more than the prelude to the declaration of bankruptcy.

Debt and Speculation

Despite occurring in the midst of a situation whose essential feature is the fall in shares in world debt, and especially of the most dynamic enterprises (whose debt/repatriation relation exceeds 100%), the "Argentinian" crisis has been presented as a simple political scandal, confined to the "national" polemic due to bribes in parliament and the public bureaucracy and the under-valuation of privatised enterprises. Nobody talks about the already all too obvious decomposition of the constitutional régime, but its roots are far from political. In previous articles we have confirmed that the critical state of Latin American countries revolves around the evolution of the world crisis, in a process whereby the centres defer the most explosive consequences of their own tensions by displacing them onto the periphery, which faces its negative results. The Argentinian crisis belongs to the same chain of financial crises which three years ago plunged Russia into disaster and two years ago provoked the devaluation of the Brazilian real, one of her principal commercial partners.

Today nobody can hide the fact that the genesis and growth of foreign

debt and its statification are at the heart of the general debacle through which that country is living, whose monetary policy depends on the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and whose fiscal policy belongs to the holders of its foreign debt. If it were only for the fact that any failure to pay the Argentinian debt² would imply a financial panic perhaps greater than that produced by Russia stopping payments almost three years ago, its "internationality" would be worthy of consideration. The Argentinian bourgeoisie shares the same sin as the world monopolist bourgeoisie: participating in the attempt to take the capitalist economy beyond its limits by the mechanism of credit doping and adopting the speculative alternative as a quick fix. Today capitalism's faltering hides behind an anonymous mass of papers, obligations, titles and bonds issued from the second half of the 80's with the right to 220,000 million dollars (160,000 by the State and 60,000 by the private sector) of the patrimony of those who inhabit the territory of Argentina. Therefore

the debt constitutes the socialisation as much of the losses and costs incurred by the capitalist's determination to accumulate and obtaining profits as well as the expenditure on the part of the State against the working class and the material and social reproduction of bourgeois society. The conduct of the bourgeoisie is no different from that of its metropolitan counterparts: in fact, if the State became indebted to strengthen its repressive apparatus, enrich its kleptocracy and maintain its clients, the Argentinian capitalists, like the telecommunications giant AT&T, the North American finance company FINOVA, the German monopoly Telekom and the most important capitalist enterprises, they used debt to acquire rival enterprises or to buy back their own shares with the objective, in each case, of raising revenues for shareholders. But the political crisis and the crisis of the Argentinean bourgeoisie are no more than the product of the crisis of finance-led global capitalism which is expressed in miniature

through the danger of a stoppage of payment of the Argentinian debt.

The World Crisis in Miniature

Considered together the external debt of the public and private sectors (\$220,000 millions), had to pay in 2000 around 32,000 million dollars in repayments and interest alone. Under these conditions insolvency is universal. Faced with the increase in debt and the concentration of short term payments, international consultants reduced the risk rating of Argentina. With this, their difficulties in placing bonds on the international markets are ever greater; so the so-called "Argentinian crisis" illustrates in a miniature the future collapse of global capitalism. With the impossibility of issuing bonds due to the greater spread, the mechanism which the State habitually uses to pay off expired loans with fresh funds, achieved through the issue of new titles, breaks down. Therefore, although its foundation is the over-accumulation within the monopolistically centralised economy, the point of inflection of world debt coincides with the progressive exhaustion of the sources of exaction in the peripheral countries, whose sacrificial lamb is today Argentina. The credit doping of the capitalist system and, especially the maintenance of stability in the metropolitan centres could be coming to an end.

Although towards the end of last year the increase in North American interest rates had given "a blow to the possibilities of policies of deflationary adjustment in Latin America", the bourgeoisie breathed a sigh of relief, when Alan Greenspan, of the North American Treasury announced the lowering of interest rates. They seemed all the more relieved following the consent of the IMF in arbitrating the famous financial "protection" finalised in December of 2000 — and the new credit authorised by the Spanish government for a thousand million dollars. However these two circumstances do not change the outlook of an eventual failure to

continued on page 25



As the rich take their money out of Argentina homelessness, unemployment and wage cuts are on the increase

Zimbabwe

On the Brink

General Strike

On the 3rd and 4th of July Zimbabwean workers staged a general strike which brought the country to a standstill. All industry and 80% of commerce was paralysed. This strike was in protest against a 70% rise in the cost of fuel, which the government had announced in mid June, and its demand was that the government withdraw this increase.

The strike was led to defeat by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), who gave the authorities advance notice of it and limited it to two days. The government for its part prepared its regular forces of repression, the police and army, and its irregular thugs, the so-called war veterans, to engage the strikers. The ZCTU urged workers to spend the two days at home and did not organise any marches or rallies. Workers were thus prevented from feeling their collective strength or the possibility of victory for their demands. Instead the focus of the strike was directed to the presidential election in March 2002, and the chance of removing Mugabe and replacing him with Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Chilebe ZCTU general secretary stated:

We are angry with the government because it has failed in its responsibility for good economic management.

In other words the government should be replaced because of its incompetence. This massive demonstration of proletarian anger was thus channeled towards a bourgeois election campaign and the

power struggle between two rival factions of the bourgeoisie.

The 70% rise in fuel prices is a massive attack on the working class. This will rapidly affect food prices and it is widely predicted that inflation, which is today 75%, will rise to 100% by the end of the year. A family of 4 need £180 per month to survive and, according to ZCTU officials, many of their members earn only £37 per month. The economy has contracted for the last 3 years and unemployment is now over 50%. The desperation of Zimbabweans is further illustrated by the stream of refugees who are pouring into South Africa. 47,000 illegal refugees were caught and sent home in 2000, but it is estimated that at least 100,000 got in without being caught.

A further indication of the state of the Zimbabwean working class is provided by the other struggles going ahead in Zimbabwe. For example, there is, at the time of writing, an indefinite strike of nurses and doctors continuing nationwide and the state has had to draft in army doctors to try and prevent the collapse of the health service. Because of the real situation of the Zimbabwean workers it is inevitable that this general strike will be the prelude to further massive struggles.

The ZCTU has been forced to respond to the desperate situation of its members and, after the strike, demanded talks with the government. It threatened an indefinite general strike if the government did not respond, but did not give a time

period for a response and by August no response had been received. This situation cannot, however, continue indefinitely.

Economic collapse

Zimbabwe's economic situation is so critical the country faces economic collapse. Despite being one of the richest countries in Africa, with enormous mineral wealth and agricultural resources, it is critically short of foreign exchange and due to run out of food by the end of this year.

This situation has arisen because the Mugabe regime has flouted the dictates of the leading sections of western imperialism for the last 6 years. The measures adopted by the regime have become ever more desperate as the agents of western imperialism have tightened their economic stranglehold on the country. The most immediate hold they have on the country arises from its indebtedness. Zimbabwe, although it does not qualify as one of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC's), still has an extremely large debt in relation to its Gross National Product (GNP). Paying interest and capital on its debt amounts to approximately 35% of the GNP annually.

One of the regime's first confrontations with the IMF was its failure to carry out part of the structural adjustment programme demanded by the IMF. These structural adjustment programmes, which basically demand reductions in state spending, privatisation of

key sections of the economy and opening the economy to international capital, are conditions of IMF and World Bank loans worldwide. Fulfilling them is extremely important and the IMF and World Bank are generally unwilling to reschedule debts or advance further loans without compliance. Zimbabwe's failure to do this in 1995 resulted in the suspension of loans. Since then loans have been resumed and re-suspended several times. However, as the economic situation deteriorated and the regime became more unpopular two further points of confrontation arose. Firstly the regime started to expropriate the large scale white-owned farms. This was a wild gamble to try and win popularity in rural areas before the June 2000 elections¹. The move was, however, bound to result in massively reduced agricultural production which, since it still amounts to 40% of the country's export earnings, would reduce its ability to repay loans. Secondly in 1998 the regime entered the Congolese civil war. This adventure is estimated to be costing \$3 million daily, and obviously money used for financing the war cannot be used for repaying loans. These issues led the IMF and World Bank to suspend all further loans in October 1999. Zimbabwe, however, continued to service the loans until May this year when payments on outstanding loans, which amount to \$5 billion, were stopped.

This suspension of payments and the massive rise in fuel prices are a measure of how desperate the situation has become for the regime.

As we predicted in RP 18², the division of the large-scale farms into peasant plots has led to a massive decrease in agricultural production. The shortage of infrastructure for the smaller plots e.g. roads, buildings etc. and the governments failure to provide seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and so on has meant that many of the landless are not even taking up the plots offered them, let alone producing food for the market. Recently a government minister warned that those not taking up the plots offered them would risk losing

their rights to the land. It is estimated that the country will need to import 600,000 tonnes of maize, which is the staple food in the next 6 months to prevent famine. It needs to be remembered that Zimbabwe has always in the past been a net exporter of maize. In addition foreign exchange earned by export of other agricultural products such as tobacco has fallen by a third. Similar falls in production have been recorded for exports of minerals, e.g. gold. Under these circumstances the country does not have the ability to import essentials such as fuel.

In carrying out the expropriation of the large-scale farms the regime has further outraged the international bourgeoisie by flouting bourgeois law. As the government had no money to acquire these farms it demanded that Britain compensate the farmers³. When Britain refused the regime used its irregular supporters, the so-called war veterans, to carry out the seizures without compensation. Since this was contrary to the law, the farmers obtained injunctions ordering the state to intervene, but the police were instructed to assist the expropriations and the judiciary were attacked and several judges forced into retirement. The breakdown of law and order later extended to the industrial and commercial spheres, as described below. Britain and the EU suspended bilateral loans and, in early June, the EU gave Zimbabwe an ultimatum to restore the rule of law in 60 days or face cancellation of all further lending. There has also been condemnation from Commonwealth countries and Canada has actually imposed sanctions on the country.

International capital is concerned that the lawlessness of Zimbabwe could spread to the most important country in the region, South Africa, and there is evidence that this could occur as witnessed in the recent land occupations in that country. The instability in Zimbabwe could also create a refugee crisis in the whole region. South Africa is already beginning to experience this. Zimbabwe's problems have also apparently moved it closer to Libya and there is suspicion that Libya is paying part of the bill for the

Congolese war. It is significant that after the latest Organisation of African Unity conference in Lusaka Gaddafi travelled by motorcade to Zimbabwe and publicly pledged \$50 millions to help ZANU's election battle next year. Libya is, of course, still defined as a "rogue state" by US imperialism and its every action is closely monitored. Western imperialism has therefore many reasons to wish to be rid of the Mugabe regime.

Attack on the working class

It is clear that the regime has decided its only hope is to squeeze a larger surplus out of the workers. Although this was successful in 1998 when a similar increase in fuel prices was imposed, this is still a risky strategy. In 1998 there were riots and two general strikes which caused the regime to use troops against strikers and shoot a worker dead. Today the conditions of the working class are more desperate, a food shortage is looming and the regime is much more unpopular.

The regime appears to be hoping that it can break the resistance of the urban workers by the use of methods similar to those used in the seizing of the farms, i.e. intimidation and lawlessness. In June an alternative labour federation, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) was founded. This federation is composed of so-called war veterans, fiercely loyal to Mugabe and violently opposed to ZCTU. In an attempt to split workers from the ZCTU and to break the support for the regimes main rival, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)⁴, this federation began organising raids on factories and businesses. Not only were workers intimidated but the bosses were beaten up and forced to pay money to workers who had been dismissed. These actions, which were clearly sanctioned by the regime, were directed against businesses, which supported the MDC. In these raids the regime was using the ZFTU primarily to attack its political enemy the MDC and cut off the sources of its support via the foreign

bourgeoisie. Its secondary aim was, however, to split unions from the ZCTU and get them to affiliate to the ZFTU through its militancy. The ZCTU is, of course, also the main internal supporter of the MDC whose leader, Tsvangirai, was previously president of the ZCTU. However, during the general strike the ZFTU revealed its true colours by not supporting the strike but, on the contrary, organising to attack strikers. It is interesting to note that the use of an alternative union federation to attack workers and scab is a strategy used by the apartheid regime in SA in the 80s. The Inkatha movement, which was supported by the apartheid regime, organised UWUSA to attack COSATU, the main labour confederation, because it supported the ANC. This shows the fundamental similarity of bourgeois regimes in times of crisis whether they call themselves white racists or African Nationalists.

For the international bourgeoisie the attacks on their factories and businesses were intolerable and howls of protest began to be delivered to the government in Harare. The most significant of these was from the ANC government in South Africa, which controls Zimbabwe's export routes and sources of fuel. Following these protests the regime changed tack and ended the raids. However, the result has been a further erosion in bourgeois confidence and withdrawal of capital and factory closures.

In fact the only political force able to get the Zimbabwe workers to accept the governments austerity programme is the ZCTU itself and by using the ZFTU to attack it openly and violently the regime is making this more difficult. The regime's strategy is therefore extremely dangerous and its hesitations indicate it is becoming aware of this.

The new imperialist order

Mugabe and ZANU are relics of the national liberation struggle

of the 60's and 70's. In the 20 years since they came to power the world has changed significantly. In particular the demise of the Russian imperialist bloc has drastically reduced the room for manoeuvre which nationalist regimes such as ZANU have. International capital has tightened its grip on all the countries of capitalism's periphery and such countries defy its orders at their peril. The regime is being taught this lesson at a terrible cost, which is being paid by the working class. It is clear that international capital wants the regime removed. Tsvangirai the leader of the MDC has recently been feted in Washington, London and EU capitals who hope that he can be installed as president in the elections next March. There has even been open speculation about a coup and reports that the SA regime has been sounded out for approval⁵. The ZANU government is, however, unable to make a dignified exit from the political stage as it has a number of skeletons in its cupboard, which it does not wish its enemies to investigate. The two most significant of these are, firstly, the massacre of approximately 20,000 people in Matabeleland in the 80s during political in-fighting with its rival at the time, ZAPU. And secondly, the appropriation of the spoils from the war in the Congo which have enriched the ruling elite in both ZANU and the military⁶. Hence its desperate attempts to hold onto power at all costs.

The recent acceleration of the economic crisis and the threat of famine in 4 months time have rattled the regime and produced the first hints of a change in direction. This can be seen in two recent developments, firstly Mugabe's acceptance of a commission of Commonwealth ministers to advise on the resolution of the country's economic crisis, and secondly, the appeal by the finance minister Mr. Mahoni for donations of food aid. The second of these represents a pathetic climb-down by the regime.

This appeal to international capital illustrates the hold which imperialism has over all peripheral countries, even those who have spring from a successful liberation struggle. As we wrote in RP 14⁷,

The so-called independent states are dominated by international capital as never before.

The working class and the myth of National Liberation

When the ZANU regime came to power in 1979 it described itself as Marxist and Socialist and pretended it stood for the interests of the entire oppressed nation of black Zimbabweans. Twenty years later this lie has been completely exposed. Today it forces austerity on the working class, outlaws strikes, terrorises workers and even shoots them down in the streets. In fact there never was such a thing as the interests of black Zimbabweans. In capitalist society there are only interests of classes and this was as true in 1979 as it is today. ZANU represents the interests of a sector of the Zimbabwean bourgeoisie and nothing more. Today the complete opposition of these interests to those of the workers is blindingly obvious. The regime, like capitalist regimes the world over, is continually attacking the workers living standards and increasing their exploitation. By their struggles the Zimbabwean workers have shown that the regime is their enemy against which they have to fight, just as the Smith regime was before. The fact that workers gave their lives in the struggle to install this regime has prevented them raising their own class interests against those of their exploiters. This is part of the disastrous legacy of National Liberation Wars in Africa⁸.

Zimbabwe workers were used as cannon fodder in the national liberation struggle, but today when the bankruptcy of National Liberation is exposed, they are being mobilised as infantry in the struggle of the MDC - the bourgeois opposition movement. It is necessary for Zimbabwean workers to break from the politics of the bourgeoisie and raise their own independent class politics. Both the MDC and the ZCTU stand in the way of this. There is an urgent need for Zimbabwean workers to form a revolutionary minority who can articulate its demands independent

of, and in opposition to, all factions of the bourgeoisie.

In the immediate future workers are going to have to take on the regime and fight it over these massive price rises. This cannot be avoided and it is necessary to prepare for an indefinite general strike. Such a strike needs to be run by elected committees with democratic control and frequent mass meetings to give workers a sense of their collective strength and a vision of how victory can be won. This struggle must not, however, be sidetracked into the struggle for installing another bourgeois gang in power in Harare. No support should be given to any faction of the bourgeoisie. An MDC government will continue the attacks on the working class though it may approach this task in a different way from Mugabe.

In the longer term Zimbabwe's problems cannot be solved in Zimbabwe. This is because they are part of international capitalism's problems, which cannot be solved without the destruction of the capitalist system itself, and the construction of a communist world. Today's struggles are essential preparation for this task. It is however, necessary for the Zimbabwean workers who understand this to forge links with the international communists elsewhere to lay the basis for this revolution.

CP

Footnotes

- 1 See RP 18 "Rival capitalist gangs struggle for power"
- 2 See RP 18 ibid
- 3 See RP 18 ibid
- 4 See RP 18 ibid
- 5 See Guardian 25/05/01
- 6 See RP 14 "Zimbabwe - Class struggle threatens the regime"
- 7 See RP 14 "National Liberation in Africa"
- 8 See RP 14 ibid.

Autism - Capitalism's Cinderella Syndrome

The proletariat can and must liberate itself because when the proletariat is fully developed, its humanity and even the appearance of its humanity has become totally abstract; because in the conditions of its life all the conditions of life of contemporary society find their most inhuman consummation; because in the proletariat man is lost to himself but at the same time he has acquired a theoretical consciousness of this loss, and is driven by the absolutely imperious dictates of his misery - the practical expression of this necessity - which can no longer be ignored or whitewashed, to rebel against this inhumanity. However the proletariat cannot liberate itself without destroying the conditions of its own life. But it cannot do that without destroying all the inhuman conditions of life in contemporary society which exist in the proletariat in a concentrated form."

K. Marx *The Holy Family* Chapter 4.

This article is mainly concerned with the social exclusion of autistic people and people with the related condition of Asperger Syndrome and the problems which this causes for their carers¹, although the essential point which is being made could be applied to all those who are currently marginalised and indeed the whole of the working class. Whether they are the victims of silicosis, asbestosis, asthma or other conditions more clearly identifiable with the way in which this system reproduces itself, they have to contend with a world made in the image of an alien power — that of capital and whose historic task is not this or that reform or improvement, but a revolutionary assault on the totality of existing society to create a world where we truly belong.

Autism is a condition which is barely understood by modern medical science and which is difficult to define as it manifests itself in a variety of ways, sometimes quite subtly. It is fertile soil for stereotypes and negative myths, these often generating further problems for the autists who

do not conform to these crude portrayals² and who therefore struggle through life without the condition being diagnosed, or misdiagnosed. Nor does it intend to explain autism, other than to mention that it involves difficulties with communication, social skills, imagination and, sometimes, sensory problems, problems which take on a myriad of diverse forms. What the article wishes to point out is the extreme social exclusion and difficulties autistic people and their families contend with and the suggestion that the environment of the capitalist world which only allows participation in the workplace with the aim of exploitation, and relegates those unable to compete in the workplace to economic poverty has no interest in meeting the needs of the majority of people on the autistic spectrum who are in fact of average or above average intelligence, nor those autists not included in this category.

A Mass Phenomenon

Before exploring some statistical evidence regarding the plight of

the autistic, it is well worth pointing out that the problem of autism is quickly becoming a mass phenomenon, touching in the U.K. some 1% of the population, a ten fold increase over the last decade, from which it is reasonable to extrapolate a major problem. Also, it is necessary to consider that an autistic person affects an entire family as well as other agencies such as social services, education, etc. It is also worth stating that the cause of the rise of what was once an extremely rare condition has been suspected by some to be found in capitalism's pollution problem, in fact a recent BBC news programme featured an expert who specifically pointed out dioxins as a possible culprit.

The statistical evidence which follows is taken from the National Autistic Society's report for Autism Awareness Week 2001. Although this organisation looks to government for a solution to the problems it uncovers, it paints a harsh picture of the current situation for the autistic.

- Only 38% of people with autism and Asperger syndrome have a community care assessment. Of these, only 45% are actually receiving the services specified in the assessment.

- Late diagnosis is common. Only 43% of lower functioning adults were diagnosed before 5, 18% not until beyond 16. 46% of people with Asperger syndrome were not diagnosed until over the age of 16. Late diagnosis has tremendous negative effects on the autistic person's education and mental health.

- 49% of adults with autism or Asperger syndrome are still living at home with parents. "Families are shouldering **the burden of care** for their adult sons and daughters, most of whom are unknown to health and social services".

- Using the above figures: 59,237 adults could be living independently with only a few hours support each week

27,217 are actually living independently (either fully or with some professional or family support)

Therefore 32,020 are capable of living independently with a few hours support each week but are not doing so at the moment.

- People with autism or Asperger Syndrome have little choice in where they work, live and who looks after them. Only 2% at the lower end of the spectrum and 12% of higher functioning adults are in full time paid employment. A quarter are doing nothing at all. "In the adult survey over 80% of the more able adults who are not currently in any paid employment said they wanted to be. The number of people in the UK estimated to have high functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome is 207,500 of whom 160,100 are adults"

- Almost a third (31%) are involved in no social activities at all.

- A third of parents reported their son or daughter had experienced mental ill health. Of these 56% had suffered depression, 11% a nervous breakdown, 8% felt suicidal.

Society and Autism

The complex problem of autism then is one which is an element of, and reflects the reality of³, a society which exists not for the benefit of its members, not to enrich human experience, to provide for its members' needs and development, but for the cruel, barbaric end of profit. Superficial solutions deal with those people from whom the capitalists cannot extort surplus value, but all they can expect is life reduced to mere survival, and in this category we can include a much larger slice of the population than the not numerically insignificant autistic population.

Once more the validity of Marxism is revealed in the light of contemporary reality, the specific

problems each one of us suffers are part of a crisis stricken, decadent social reality which has no further useful contribution to make to the progress of suffering minorities, the entire working class or humanity as a whole. Of course the entire "proof" of Marx's extraordinary brilliance will be provided with the assault on that social reality and the establishment of a society where humanity will finally know what it is to be human.

Ant

Footnotes

¹ "The effects on families were also devastating: families were excluded from any 'normal' life. They reported that families' social lives were destroyed, including holidays; frequently one parent had to give up their career to care for the child (then adult) at home, siblings were neglected, marriages torn apart. The emotional stress is devastating. Most parents fear what will happen when they become too old or frail to care for their son or daughter" (Ignored or ineligible? The reality for adults with autism spectrum disorders. Published by the National Autistic Society for Autism Awareness Week 2001.

² "The local NHS paediatrician advised that 'he can communicate...and so he is not autistic...what are you (parents) worried about?'"

(Parent of man in his 30's, medium functioning, diagnosed in his 30's and who now has acquired mental health problems.)

³ Necessity consists in this that the whole is sundered into the different concepts and that this divided whole yields a fixed and permanent determinacy. (Hegel *The Philosophy of Right*)

“The Third Sector”

Ragged Trousered Philanthropy¹ – Papering Over the Cracks in Capitalism

The deepening of the crisis of profitability across the globe has directly resulted in squeezes on the surpluses which can be used for state welfare systems. Pension and health provision has been increasingly privatised, state run Social Services have been replaced by networks of private providers aiming to run at a profit, both for students, and the poorest workers on social benefits, grants have been replaced with loans provision; closures of hospitals has been replaced with “Care in the Community” leaving those most at risk even more vulnerable.

As the state has abandoned the responsibilities which it could afford during the long post-war reconstruction boom (at a definite end by the mid-1970s) it has sought ways to shift the burden without, of course, biting into the restricted pool of surplus which the working-class generates under capitalism. Increasingly the state has sought and found co-operation from a so-called “third sector” in an attempt to fill the gaps in this necessary provision.

The term “third sector” is in itself a masterly piece of bourgeois mystification. According to the schema presented by the state bureaucracies and their academic ideologues the three “partner” sectors are private capital, state functions followed by a swathe of “Non-Governmental” organisations and initiatives – the third sector² within the process. The illusion that the state and private capital are

competing sectors is a piece of fiction completely at odds with the reality of late capitalism in which both in wartime and, in what passes for peace, the two have become inextricably intertwined and mutually dependent. Contrary to the naïve dreams fostered amongst community activists the brutal truth is that the “third sector” is just as firmly cemented in as a pillar of capitalism.

The third sector – an arm of capitalism

The third sector has grown partly from the national and local traditional charities which tend to be seen as the “voluntary” element of the voluntary and community sector. The community sector tend to be organisations, usually located in particular localities to address perceived local needs and drawing its core resource from local voluntary labour. The tactical interests of those two elements, and the organisations they embrace,

The term “third sector” is in itself a masterly piece of bourgeois mystification.

often vary. That friction is one which the state bureaucracies are able to manipulate as they select the most compliant “partners” for any particular programme.

Historically the role of charities has been embedded in capitalist development. The charitable sector took up some of the responsibilities that might otherwise have lain at the door of the state. All sorts of things were provided by this economic area – medical research and care, aid and succour for children, the old, the disabled, the homeless. It also provided some educational help, some finance for the poor and unemployed, to list but a few. It also combined paid employment with voluntary labour.

Many charities originated from bequests and donations from surplus wealth and profits from the aristocracy, individual capitalists or capitalist firms. That, however is long in the past. The resource which funds contemporary state sponsored activities is funded from taxation with a particularly unpleasant source in Britain being the funds available because of the National Lottery. The Lottery is, in fact, a form of voluntary taxation, disproportionately burdensome to those on low income and combined with the most cynical bourgeois marketing techniques.

Britain and Europe – complementary state functions

In common with other areas of socio-economic activity, state intervention stems from both the national (British) level and also

from the transnational (European Union) level.

Since the onset of capital's crisis, from the late 60s onwards the European Union and its predecessor organisations has gradually added layer upon layer, programme upon programme, to its attempts to redistribute capital. This has been purely to ameliorate the worst effects of the crisis. It has been an attempt to create social peace much in the same way as the welfare state was just after the last world war, where dangers of unemployment, poverty and generalised decline have put that peace in possible question (in that given no attempts by the state to ameliorate the issues at hand people may begin to properly question the system as a whole).

Through a series of funds³, known as the Structural Funds, drawn from the member states the European Union controls a significant resource. In 1998, the Structural Funds' projected overall allocation for the period 2000 to 2006 was 286 billion Euros (between £170 billion and £200 billion depending on the exchange rate).

The Co-option of the Third Sector

The moves to further enmesh the third sector into the state and its activities is explicit in statements from the key participants. British Government comment about two of the "flagship" projects from the last few years make it quite clear.

The re-launched SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) will include a new emphasis on building the capacity of local partnerships to devise and implement regeneration initiatives. The release of funding will be dependent not just on partnerships demonstrating such capacity and achieving adequate management systems and competence in project appraisal, but also on local communities being directly

involved and supportive of the regeneration activities planned.
(John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, July 1998)

The programme will be delivered through partnerships formed between local people, community and voluntary organisations, public agencies, local authorities and business. These must be robust and inclusive, each prepared to take responsibility for tackling the problems of social exclusion It also means harnessing the active involvement of the local community - not only during the lifespan of the programme, but afterwards as well.
(New Deal for Communities, Launch statement, September, 1998).

It has been an attempt to create social peace much in the same way as the welfare state was just after the last world war...

Of course the "active and direct involvement" of the community is only welcomed if the community (i.e. the third sector organisations) are prepared to abide by the rules and strictures from above. To gain access to the available funds the organisations must comply with the outline and detail of the state's projects and be prepared to abandon their nominal and superficial independence.

The Corrupting of Unpaid Labour

The essence of the working class as a collective class is continually reflected in numerous examples of mutual support without any thought of individual financial gain. Facilities

for youth are supported by volunteers, in some cases totally. Volunteers at Citizens Advice Bureaus and similar bodies provide support which would only be otherwise available at considerable cost. Formal and informal networks exist to support isolated or vulnerable people. Credit Unions grow in working class estates to defend local people from the worst excesses of the loan sharks. Day in and day out working-class communities are forced to invent and re-invent practical measures to defend themselves against decaying social provision and collapsing local economies.

This freely given time and effort shows the working class's instinctive collective response in contrast to the capitalist's wages system where our ability to interact, work and create is merely another commodity to be bought and sold.

Faced with this defiance of capitalist convention, the co-option of "the third sector" into the state scheme serves to channel unpaid activity into the straitjacket of state control. Projects which comply will be allowed resources, of course these will still be limited and conditional. Those which fail the bureaucrats endless guidelines, procedures, benchmarks and other mumbo-jumbo will be starved of resources and marginalised.

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The jumping of bureaucratic hurdles is one of the most easily identified problems for voluntary activists in the third sector. The issue is often expressed in terms of programmes and processes being "exclusive" (i.e. making it difficult or impossible for those "not in the know" to reap any benefits. In fact, that is only part of the story. The underlying reality is that the appearance of "exclusivity" is only the other side of the coin of maximising state control. Interested Community organisations are forced to seek the advice of consultants or the directly appointed experts all of whose base remit is to progress applications which fit in with the rules from above while filtering out activities which are not in harmony with the "regeneration" agenda and ultimately, of course, the preservation and extension of capitalist good order.

Eroding class solidarity

The competition for available resource drives wedges through the heart of working-class communities. The system provides a permanent ratcheting up of jealousies, suspicions and the appearance of particularist cliques and factions. Observers have long identified the "Treasure Island" syndrome where the granting of resources to one area and estate immediately highlights the lack of resources on the patch down the road. In turn jealousies arise between estates or even parts of estates and divisions are driven between areas whose fundamental problems and interests are identical.

Similarly, funding will be allocated to post-codes or other arbitrary lines on maps with the result that desperately needed support may be available on one side of a street but not on the other.

Of course, the wedges which are driven in are not simply geographical. Local organisations are drawn into a scramble against each other to achieve "best-favoured" status from the local bureaucracies. Resentments are built-up as the "politically-correct" flavour of the month will

temporarily receive relative largesse until the decision-makers' attention flits elsewhere.

A bizarre and irrational scramble for funds is constantly stoked up as funds ebb and flow and criteria and priorities within programmes are chopped and change to suit the state's agenda. A layer of consultants and specialist advisers finds their niche within this mayhem drawing layers of the funds towards themselves as the third sector organisations struggle to improve their chances in this casino.

A key criterion is invariably the degree to which "matched funding"⁴ will be engendered from voluntary labour. Naturally, compliance with the "partnership" principles will also be insisted on. That concept of "partnership" which underpins the state's success in enmeshing the third sector depends on the voluntary organisations bending their agendas and activities to fit into the boundaries established by those who control the resources i.e. the state and capital.

As well as hammering wedges into the working class the funding regimes steadily drive those involved into increasing involvement in the capitalist bureaucratic-political machine.

The pinnacle of this process is the power vested in the political agents, lobbyists, M.P.'s,

Councillors etc. to influence the allocation of resource. Those prepared to work according to the politicians' agenda are "rewarded" with their place around the table and their politician friends in turn will intervene both in the shaping and the implementation of programmes.

Extending low-pay and deepening exploitation

To receive funding projects are pushed towards, and often left with no other option, than acting as agents for the latest state run cheap labour scheme. These have changed their name regularly during the

deepening crisis, describing themselves variously as Adult or Youth Training schemes and now linked to the "New Deal for Unemployed". Although the details vary over time they share many obvious common features. They are invariably lowly paid with a growing trend towards "benefit-plus" type regimes where participation only results in slightly enhanced welfare benefits rather than even a pretence of "a living wage".

Increasingly there is a degree of bullying and compulsion⁵ with benefit claimants being forced onto programmes with the reality of the Government's "New Deals" meaning that "Those who can work must work". Irrespective of a worker's aspirations, circumstances or desires, participation may be enforced, with the threat of benefits being reduced below the normal miserable level.

Workers are often forced into such schemes as a desperate measure, in the often unfulfilled hope of 'buying' their way into a better paid job at a later date. Just as bad, along with some economic 'aid' comes a cart-load of ideology. All funded projects have to fit into a layered straitjacket', an almost evangelistically provided series of 'social democratic' beliefs. Workers have to be flexible, have to adapt, and have to put up with ever more grotesque forms of badly paid wage labour.

The third sector – a force for capitalism

The vast majority of the workers who contribute their resource to voluntary and community organisations do so for the best of reasons. They seek to defend themselves, their neighbours and their communities from the worst ravages of the capitalist crisis and commit endless hours to a struggle which inevitably involves collective organisation, decision-making and varying degrees of internal accountability. These are all features embedded at the heart of the working class as a class "in itself".

However that activity and those features are invariably and inevitably "recouped" by and within capitalism.

During the election leftists such as the Socialist Alliance boosted "Community Activism" within their all-embracing alliance of "progressive forces". Years of living experience of those activities shows their real nature. Year after year well-meaning and enthusiastic volunteers will contribute their scant resources to tasks which can only patch over each problem as it appears. Like the mythical Sisyphus they strain might and main to push the stone to the top of the mount only to awake the next morning to repeat the task.

The activities of these willing and, in the best sense, philanthropic

volunteers is indeed often an example of workers organising as "a class in itself". Those activities have become more and more openly a tool for the state to replace comprehensive welfare systems with the contribution of volunteers. Only when workers begin to organise independently of capital and the state will the "class for itself" abandon the task of Sisyphus and lay the basis for a society permeated with genuine and thoroughgoing collectivism. That communist future will see "Ragged trousered philanthropy" forever replaced by human solidarity.

Footnotes

1 "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists" is a novel by Robert Tressell written early in the 20th Century dealing with the lives of a group of workers. The irony within the title is used to show that despite suffering the most severe hardships and deprivations the

workers out of, totally unconscious, philanthropy (the love of their fellow human beings) donate a large proportion of their product to maintain the lifestyles and prosperity of the employing capitalists. That act of charity (!) was of course accomplished by the mystification of wage labour, referred to by Tressell as "The Great Money Trick".

2 The "third sector" is also variously referred to as the "voluntary" and/or "community" sector. More recently the term "voluntary, community and faith sector(s)" has also started being used to ensure that openly ideological (i.e. religious) groups are able to influence the programmes and take a share of the resources.

3 The two largest funds are the European Social Fund mainly dealing with training workers for capital's changing needs and the European Regional Development Fund which acts as a merry-go-round to shunt investment towards the current poorer areas. There are also separate funds concerned with agriculture and fishing.

4 The majority of significant funding regimes will not pay the full cost of any project. They insist that contributions whether in cash or "in kind" (e.g. voluntary labour) from elsewhere are identified before they will commit their own portion.

5 An article (Observer, 14th January, 2001) by David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for

continued from page 16

Argentina

make payments, whose origin is to be found in the international economy. Its sharpest expressions in the last three years have been the Brazilian devaluation, the dollarisation of Ecuador and the shrinking of overvalued share quotes on Wall Street and the international stock exchanges. The Argentinian crisis occurs in a global context of an increase in the risk rating on the debt of both the most dynamic enterprises on the world market - which today are paying high rates of interest for their own debts at the same rate as the so-called "emerging" countries - and that of the emerging countries themselves. The stoppage of Argentina's payments has been configured in the concert of the international market and the most immediate cause of its being unleashed is, in fact, the generalisation of the insolvency of the most important monopolies on an international scale. The involvement of the U.S. banks with the financial companies' crisis is one of the most significant. Such enterprises took on fabulous debts to speculate on a rise on Wall Street. Today they face a fall in the shares quoted on the Stock Exchange, especially that of the U.S Nasdaq index.

It must not be forgotten that, if the system of fixed convertibility between the dollar and peso has brought "price stability" to Argentina, the cost of maintaining this measure above all has been a recession without end. In these conditions the risk surcharges imposed by international creditors are ever harsher. From 600 points in September - beginning of October and 800-987 from mid-October, settling at an average 773 points in December of 2000. The Central Bank of that country informs that its payment up to October of that year was equal to 1.5% of GDP (US\$4.500 million), which "doubled the deficit forecast in the 2001 budget"; meanwhile, since mid-October the "potential growth of the financial burden by interests was some 9000 million dollars". With the maintenance or increase in risk surcharges, many of the so-called "emerging markets" in America, Asia and the East of Europe would be unavoidably affected by a reduction of investing demand. Faced with the lack of economic growth and income, nobody will now want their money invested in

Argentinian shares nor keep titles denominated in unstable currencies within economies in recession. Perhaps this explains the beginning of speculation against the peso last year, the consequent devaluing effect of which will make itself felt as a devastating blow. In this context the new resources which they are trying to obtain via the fiscal measures set out by the IMF are insufficient to cover the high surcharges on the external debt imposed by its international proprietors. Such measures will bring the deepening of recession and pauperisation, but will also lead to outbreaks of class conflict.

Footnotes

1 The IMF recently informed, for example, that the AT&T debt went from 7 000 million dollars to 66 000 million dollars from 1996 to the present. At risk international debts are paying interest rates 80%- 100% higher superior to those of U.S. Treasury bonds, whilst the most solvent monopolies have to pay a differential of 33%. According to the same source, the surcharge on "risk bonds" of the large international enterprises, like for example, German Telecom went from 435 points towards the end of 99 to 793 points last October. See Gaceta Mercantil Latinoamericana 13 November 2000.

2 The proportion of the same is between a quarter and a fifth of all the saleable debt of emerging countries.

Class Consciousness and Working Class Political Organisation

Part Two: How Working Class Consciousness Develops

The communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

The Communist Manifesto

At the end of the first part of this article we left readers with an apparent contradiction in Marxist views on consciousness. Whilst Marx, on the one hand, could declare in the Provisional Rules of the First International that,

...the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves.¹

he had earlier seemed to offer no hope of proletarian emancipation at all.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

The German Ideology p.176²

It is generally true that in all class societies the ideas of the ruling class dominate and yet society

changes and the ruling classes are overthrown. How does this occur?

The Development of Bourgeois Class Consciousness

While the ideas of the ruling class are generally the ruling ideas in society it is obvious that their domination can never be total. The material reality of class society, with its inherent conflicts and insoluble contradictions, is continually generating the basis for ideas which oppose those of the ruling class. It is not classes as such which challenge the received ideology but the struggle between them that generates, at certain points in history, the ideas of both the exploited and the exploiting class.

Lets start with our current class enemy. How did the bourgeoisie begin its rise to domination under feudalism? The bourgeois began life as mere supplicants under feudalism. Monarchs and local aristocrats gave them charters with rights to set up markets and to produce outside the system of serfdom because they provided goods and services which the feudal military system could not. They themselves accepted restrictions on trade via the guilds in order to protect their own wealth. But when that wealth had reached such a proportion that it dwarfed the aristocracy's landed wealth they began to demand more. They demanded an end on feudal

restrictions to the growth of their wealth (internal customs duties, tax immunity for the aristocracy etc.). When feudal society responded by refusing to honour their contribution to the state because of their "low birth", then the bourgeoisie unfurled the ideological banner of "freedom" and became the standard bearer of the anti-feudal forces in the Third Estate. The bourgeoisie didn't say that their "liberty" was only liberty for the property owner. They didn't say only those who actually owned a bit of the country's wealth could be citizens. Freedom for them meant freedom of trade, freedom to exploit labour unlimitedly and freedom to control the press so that ultimately once the bourgeoisie had fully got its hands on the levers of state power it could even concede universal suffrage confident in the knowledge that it was no threat to their property interests. The proletariat which did its share of fighting and dying in the struggle against feudalism was now told that freedom had been won and there was no need for any further struggle.

But what was "the end of history" for our bourgeois was only the beginning for the proletariat. Right up to the present day the material reality of capitalist society, however the bourgeoisie attempt to hide it, conflicts however with the capitalist ideology they propound. While we are told of capitalism's wonderful virtues, such as efficiency, justice, harmony with human nature and so forth, the proletariat experiences unemployment, deprivation, injustice and war. This creates the

basis for ideas which begin to challenge the ideas of the bourgeoisie. At first these ideas are only concerned with the self-definition of the proletariat as a class. As Marx put it in the,

*But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more ... the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the conflict breaks out into riots.*³

From Class in Itself to Class for Itself

But this is only workers defining themselves as a social entity, as a class. This is what Marx called the class in itself (in *The Poverty of Philosophy*). It is not yet a class acting as fully conscious of how it can really achieve its own emancipation. He made this clear in *Wages, Price and Profit* written in 1865. Here he first argued that workers had to fight to exist as a class. If they didn't

*they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation.*⁴

At the same time although he later told German trades union leaders that "Trades unions are schools of socialism" he made it clear that they were conservative in nature and that it was in becoming socialists that workers took on their real class viewpoint. He went on to warn that;

the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward

*movement, but not changing its direction, that they are applying palliatives but not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes in the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword "Abolition of the wages system!"*⁵

In other words they have to become a class for itself. This means a class which is not only a social category resisting capitalism but recognises programmatically what it has to do to in order to replace capitalism with a society built in its own image. Here we should pause a minute just to clarify our categories. Obviously "class consciousness" can refer to a whole range of attitudes and ideas. In real life these cannot be simply categorised into straightforward stages through which a class progressively passes in linear fashion. Real life is obviously a lot messier than any scientific attempt to make sense of it. However it is clear that there is world of difference between a strike against an attempt to lower wages and a mass struggle which calls for the overthrow of a ruling caste are two fundamentally different propositions. In this article we have defined the everyday economic struggle as the expression of class instinct. Without it there would be no class consciousness of any kind. The struggle which articulates the proletariat's path to emancipation however we have called class consciousness in its fullest sense, i.e. communist consciousness.

However, as we argued in the first part of this article the acquisition of this level of class consciousness, which goes beyond mere recognition of class identity, is not

something that happens directly or automatically. If that were the case the mystery would be why the revolution had not happened years ago (and of course, the academic defenders of the capitalist order frequently resort to this argument when trying to scoff at the idea of the class struggle, the historic role of the proletariat or historical materialism). This kind of class consciousness was not automatically acquired by the bourgeoisie either. They started out by simply defending the particular form of property they owned against the feudal constraints on their social advance. If, as in Great Britain, the aristocrats let the merchants enjoy a similar social status and inter married with them then the bourgeoisie took over the state via a long process (which was not without its bloodshed – think only of the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I). When, on the other hand, the aristocracy tried to keep or return the bourgeoisie to their former subservient status then the bourgeoisie began to cloth themselves in the rationale of the Enlightenment. "Liberty, fraternity, equality" are fine phrases for mobilising society against the old order but once victory was won the proletariat and the other dominated classes in capitalist society found that these ideas had only limited application. "Equality" meant only equality before the law which means that those who can afford it get more justice than those who cannot. But this contradiction leads in part to the formation of the proletariat's own alternative.

The bourgeoisie therefore did not merely arrive at social and political domination through following their class instincts they also had to articulate their own programme of the world they would like to build in their own image. Nineteenth century liberalism became the bourgeois ideology, the real expression of its full class consciousness. Little wonder that those bourgeois today who hanker to recover that "lost world" have adopted "neo-liberalism" as their decadent version of their old ideology!

For the proletariat though the situation is different and, in one

sense, more difficult. The proletariat is not trying to defend a particular form of property. It is the negation of private property. This not only explains why it is the only class truly capable of emancipating all humanity but also why it arrives at its form of class consciousness in a radically different way. It cannot build up its power base in the old society through first creating economic forms of domination and then fighting for political power, as the bourgeoisie did. The proletariat

*cannot free itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life.*⁶

This means that the proletariat must fight for state power first. As it says in the *Communist Manifesto*

*...the first step in the revolution by the working class must be to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class.*⁷

Its class consciousness has ultimately to take a political dimension. However this political dimension can only arise from the actual experience of the proletarian movement in struggle in which it forges first its identity, then its purpose..

*Not in vain does it go through the stern but steeling school of labour. The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is what the proletariat is, and what, consequent on that being, it will be compelled to do.*⁸

Party and Class Consciousness

In general, under normal conditions of capitalist domination the class struggle takes the form of the "guerrilla struggles" here or there against the effects of capitalism. This often leads workers in one place to become more militant than workers in another and leads them to begin to question the existing order. This means that class consciousness (i.e. the idea that capitalism has to be overthrown and replaced by communism) can only be achieved by a minority. Here we must not get caught up here in the post-Russian

Revolution debate about who belongs to this minority (we will deal with that later) but Marx was clear that it was a political movement.

Just as the economists are the scientific representatives of the bourgeois class, so the Socialists and Communists are the theoreticians of the proletarian class.

These theoreticians though are at first "utopians" who "go in search of a regenerating science". What transforms them into revolutionaries

is the actual revolutionary movement of the working class.

But in the measure that history moves forward, and with it the struggle of the proletariat assumes clearer outlines, they no longer need to seek science in their minds; they only have to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to become its mouthpiece... From this moment, science, which is the product of the historical movement, has associated itself consciously with it, has ceased to

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*be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary.*⁹

In other words socialist or communist ideas can only gain wider acceptance in periods of acute social crisis when capitalism's contradictions erupt in a direct way leading to massive struggles of the working class. A significant minority will only achieve communist consciousness through a whole series of battles and partial defeats in which the issues are ever more clearly posed. The practical struggle and comprehension of that struggle is what can produce a changed consciousness. As Marx wrote,

*The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.*¹⁰

The practical movement of revolution is the only force able to challenge the ideas of the bourgeoisie on a mass scale and produce wider communist, or class, consciousness.

*Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of human beings on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew...*¹¹

In other words before revolution breaks out communist consciousness is only attained by a minority of the class. It is the act of revolution which turns this into the necessary mass consciousness of the class. Necessary because communism cannot be built by a minority. Because it is a totally new system of production, it has to be the work of the mass of the class

since it is their self-activity which distinguishes the communist mode of production from all previous modes of production.

However this still hasn't fully answered the question posed at the beginning, nor does it explain how the scattered experience of the working class can be drawn together to prepare for a time when revolution is on the agenda. Marx did not shirk this one. For him

*The organisation of the proletariat into a class and consequently into a political party...*¹²

is entirely logical. How else would those who had already arrived at an understanding that the whole thrust of the proletariat's struggle led in the direction of communism organise themselves and fight to extend those ideas to other workers? At this point too Marx has no hang-ups about class origins of Communists.

*Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.*¹³

All this is, of course, before the negative experience of the Bolshevik Party in the Russian Revolution has sullied the very idea of a proletarian party. Thus, to return to the quote at the top of this text, when Marx wrote that "...the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves", he wasn't lining up with future councilists against future vanguardists. This quotation itself comes from the rules for the establishment of the First International, the first attempt at an international party of the working class. What he was arguing here was that the proletariat had to form their own political party which was not under the influence of this or that bourgeois faction (he was particularly aiming at English trades unionists who still maintained support for the Liberal Party of Gladstone!). It was the task of this political party to continually make

sense of the workers' own struggles and to cast them back into those struggles in the form of a programme of total emancipation or, as we would say, a communist programme. As Marx had earlier argued, ideas themselves became a material force when they were joined to the actual ongoing struggle of the class. This is why Marx and Engels made several attempts to form political organisations which raised the banner of communism. From the Communist League in 1848 to the First International in 1864 and the German Social Democratic Party in 1875. That they encouraged all three but ultimately found them all unsatisfactory was not a testimony to their fickleness but to the undeveloped nature of the class movement in the nineteenth century. Whilst it was one thing to identify the general philosophical framework in which the changing of ideas and conditions can be brought about the "real movement" had to be tested out in the crucible of working class experience. It is to this we will turn in Part Three of this article.

Jock

Footnotes

1 Taken from Karl Marx *The First International and After* [Pelican Classics, 1974] p. 82

2 Throughout this article we use the version in D. McLellan (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* [OUP, 1977]

3 McLellan op.cit. p.228

4 *Wages, Prices and Profit in Marx/Engels Selected Works in One Volume*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1980 p. 225

5 op.cit. pp.225-6. The emphases are by Marx. The "schools of socialism" quote can be found in the same work p.538. As McLellan rightly notes "its strictures on political parties were to some extent influenced by the situation prevailing in Germany at that time" where many workers were under the influence of Ferdinand Lassalle's reformist dogmas.

6 *The Holy Family* in McLellan op. cit p.135

7 *The Communist Manifesto* in McLellan p.237

8 *The Holy Family* in McLellan op. cit p.135

9 *The Poverty of Philosophy* in McLellan op. cit p.212

10 *Theses on Feuerbach* in McLellan p.156

11 *The German Ideology* in McLellan p.179

12 *The Communist Manifesto* in McLellan p.228

13 loc. cit p.229

Chronicles of the Prehistoric

from Internationalist Notes, Canada

The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence — but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation.

Karl Marx, *A Contribution To The Critique of Political Economy*, 1859

The Political Climate

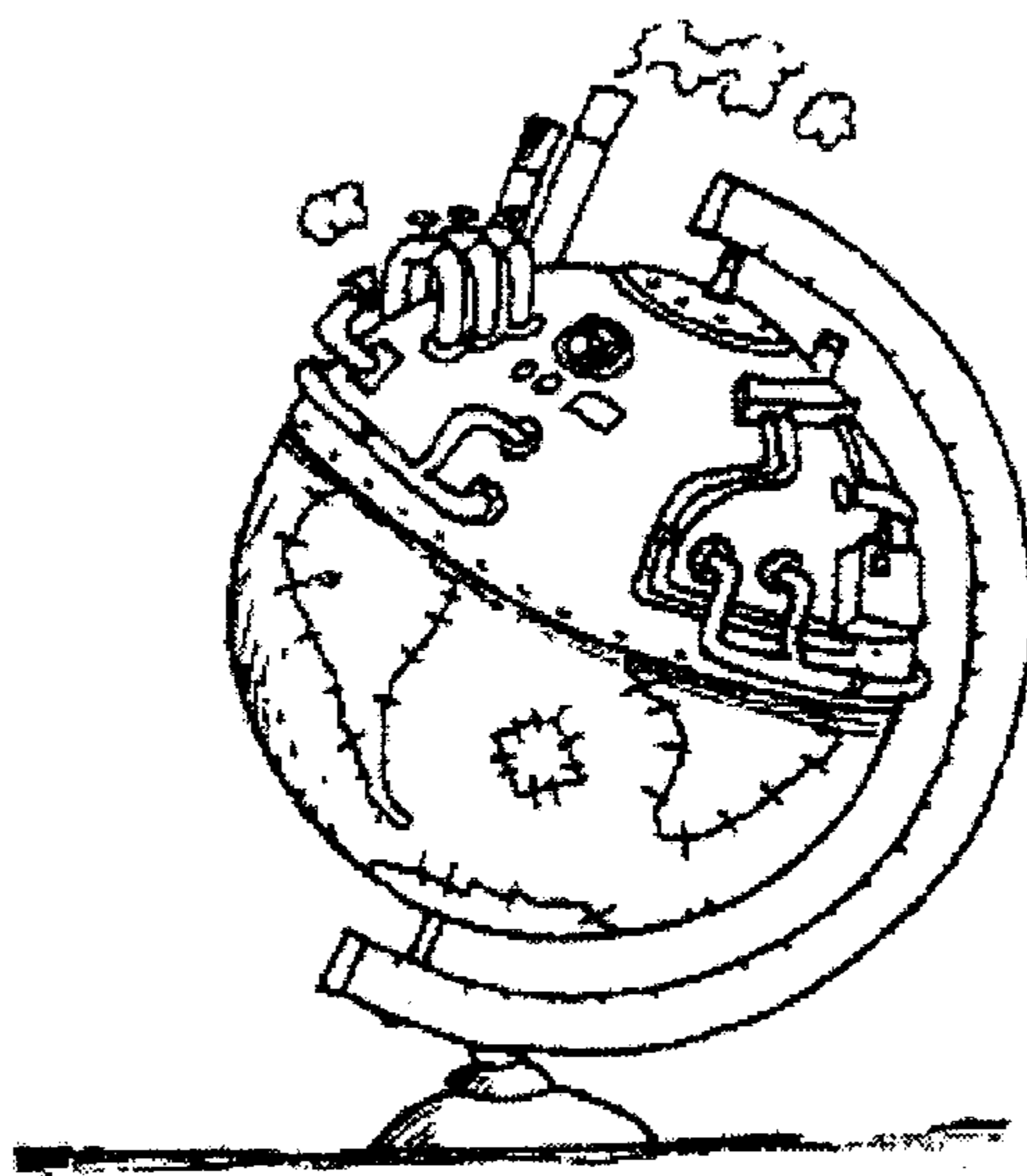
...at every step we are reminded, that in no way do we reign on nature as a conqueror over a foreign nation, as someone on the outside of nature — but that tae, with our flesh, our blood and our brain, belong to nature..

Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (our translation)

The Inuit population of the Canadian Far North has always been used to blizzards and northern lights, but thunder and lightning are quite a worrisome novelty for them. For the scientific community, the arrival of electrical storms in the arctic proves that global warming and enduring climactic changes are no longer a hypothesis, but a fact. According to a study published last November by the **International Institute for Sustainable Development**, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, important changes are happening in this part of the world. We can observe the thawing of the permafrost layer, the thinning of ice fields, mudslides and even the disappearance of a lake, after the collapse of its ice banks.

Unfortunately, all the serious climatological studies confirm that these considerable transformations of our environment are not confined to the Far North. The upheaval provoked by global warming will have a deep impact around the planet. Thus, the conclusions of a UN sponsored study by the Intergovernmental Group on Climactic Change, published in

Geneva under the title *Climactic change 2001: Impacts adaptation, and vulnerability*, paints a sombre portrait. The planet's temperature in all likelihood will rise from 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius. Consequently, the sea level will also rise from between 9 to 88 centimetres. This hike in the temperature level will also have a significant effect on atmospheric pressure. This will cause more and more flooding and drought, an increase in hurricane activity, tornadoes and tidal waves, permanently damaged natural habitats and a proliferation of infectious diseases. It also predicts that: "the impact distribution of climactic warming will accentuate the disparity between the rich and the poor". Numerous 'water wars' are equally expected, for due to the scarcity of the resource, many waterways will be transformed from sources of life to streams of



conflict. This dark future has already started to tragically affect our lives. For example, according to the world's greatest insurer, the German

group Munich Re, the number of 'natural catastrophes' has set a new record in the year 2000, reaching 850 disasters, 100 more than the previous year and 200 more than the yearly average of the 1990s. Finally, the head of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity, Hamdallah Zedan, in a speech he delivered in Montreal at the end of November, declared that the earth is presently undergoing a period of mass extinction and that:

half the living species will disappear in the 21st Century if environmental change continues at the same rate.

However, answers to the threats posed by global warming do exist. They are simple but radical. They are not of a technical but of a political nature. In 1997, when the Kyoto conference promised to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 5% over the next twenty years (a promise that will clearly be broken), the scientific commissions were urgently demanding a 60% cut over the same period. That's the bottom line for human survival. This is an unattainable goal for the capitalist mode of production, for it is based on productivism. This is what Marx illustrated in *Capital* when he wrote:

Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake, these are the watchwords of the political economy announcing the historical mission of the bourgeois period. And it doesn't delude itself for a minute on the pains of giving birth to its wealth... (our translation.)

That's why it does no good to propose a legislative strategy, as the Greens do, to save the planet. The logic of the market and profit will inevitably derail it. All reforms, laws and regulations are in vain. We only need to study the politics and results of the Greens, in government or in opposition, to see that Capitalism, even draped in green, remains the worst threat to our survival. Getting rid of it is an act of survival. Only a true communist revolution, eliminating the productivist logic of capitalism, organizing production for human needs, not profit, offers hope to humanity.

The Political Economy of Blood

This autumn, in the space of a few months, scandals prompting massive recalls of tires, dramatically illustrated the fundamental contradiction existing between public well-being and the market economy. One after the other, Bridgestone/Firestone and Goodyear were forced to recall millions of tires, but the majority of the dangerous products still remain in circulation: In the first case, Bridgestone/Firestone is blamed for a series of accidents having caused over 250 deaths worldwide. The tires that would explode without apparent reason, would often equip sports utility vehicles (SUVs) most often Ford Explorers, an extremely popular model whose design was defective and dangerous because it was top-heavy. More recently, the "E" type of tire produced by Goodyear was the object of a "silent recall". The company is thus trying to avoid a scandal at all costs, which would mean heavy financial consequences. In this case, the dangerous tires also equipped SUVs and mini school buses that were involved in accidents killing scores of people. In the two cases, public security agencies have been politely

accused of "falling asleep at the wheel". Clearly, it seems quite evident that they have attempted to cover the whole thing up.

Ruling class editorialists, though they unanimously deplore the foot-dragging of the control agencies, or even sometimes the callousness of

and as many grave injuries all totalling 49.5 million in liability annually, Ford simply decided to shut up and pocket the 87.5 million difference ... That's what Marx and Engels used to call the "icy waters of egotistical calculation". Of course, the capitalists weren't in the habit of driving Pintos... And

evidently the killers were never condemned.

Is this an exceptional case caused by unscrupulous management? Not if we recall the Datkon Shield intrauterine device produced by A.H. Robbins, the Dow Corning Corporation breast implants, the vile asbestos that the nationalists in power in Quebec City still want to poison the whole planet with, or again the tobacco companies, etc. No, these are not simple defects; it's the whole system that is threatening our very existence. A system we condemn and for which we are preparing an appropriate sentence for which there will be no appeal.



the companies, always conclude by invoking some kind of fatalism linked to the inevitable flaws of technological progress. However, the whole history of capitalism leads us to suggest cold and calculated murder.

Let's take an example linked to the automobile industry, the Grimshaw v Ford trial of 1981. The gas-tank of the Ford Pintos had the unfortunate habit of exploding as the result of minor collisions, at speeds of which could be as low as 21 mph. The Pintos would then transform themselves into balls of fire and the passengers into human torches. The company was completely aware of the defect, and had estimated it would cost 137 million per year to correct.

However, in an exercise of demonic number crunching, of balancing the costs versus the profits, Ford decided to let its clients burn! Calculating that the "problem" would cause, on average, 180 deaths a year

Internationalist Notes #5

June 2001

INTERNATIONALIST NOTES

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In Memoriam

Bertrand Desaulniers

Feb 29, 1960 - Feb 28, 2001

Internationalist Notes is saddened to report the premature death on the 28th Feb of our comrade and friend Bertrand Desaulniers. Bertrand had been suffering from cancer for a few years. Travelling in the Ukraine in 1986, he was in the area of Chernobyl during the infamous nuclear disaster that took place there and had to be evacuated immediately from the region by plane. However, the present state of science does not permit us to conclude that there was a causal relation of his sickness to

this event. He was an active sympathiser of our current.

Having broken with [left] social democracy, activism and the nationalism of his youth, Bertrand participated in the life of our group most notably by contributing to our translation work. He had an ongoing concern with the financing of our activities and practiced what he preached. In the last 2 years, he was the most assiduous reader of our archives, learning from the substantial theoretical arsenal of the different currents that used to constitute the international communist left, all the while prioritizing the publications of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP). During the month of April 2000, he had also actively contributed to the technical aspects of the first North American conference of the IBRP. The news of his death has naturally brought forth a number of letters of sympathy coming from comrades of the Bureau and its supporters in many countries.

Bertrand died courageously, surrounded by his loved ones. As he wished, his remains shall be scattered throughout his beloved native Mauricie. A memorial was held in Grand-Mere on the 17th of March. Approximately 125 people gathered to honour his memory. A member of *Internationalist Notes* delivered a eulogy which emphasized the importance of his political involvement and related to his family and close ones a message of sympathy from the IBRP. We will miss him.

Victor

CWO comment: We would like to add our few words to that of the Internationalist Notes comrades. CWO comrades stayed in Bertrand's flat during the Montreal meeting in which the North American sympathisers of the Bureau first met with their European comrades. Our memories of him are of a warm and caring comrade (who liked to hide any sentimentality). He gave freely of everything (including his own painkillers to assist a comrade who needed emergency hospital treatment to get on a flight back to Europe). He positively revelled in a good debate and we are convinced that had he lived he would have made a trenchant and practical contribution to the creation of the future international. His last e mail from his hospital bed stated that he was reading the CWO pamphlet on Trotskyism. It is a tragedy he can not now deliver his verdict on it. Our condolences go out to his relatives and comrades.

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