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A vote for New Labour is a vote for big business

By Paul Feldman, the editor

The New Labour government is in a race against time to get a general election out of the way before a global slump, driven by events in the United States, breaks over Britain. The boom of the 1990s, much of it fuelled by stock market speculation, has come to a crunching end.

Where once the noise was of champagne bottles opening, it is now of bubbles bursting as dot.com becomes dot.bomb. Over 130 internet companies crashed in the first 11 months of 2000, with about 8,900 job losses. The Nasdaq – the “stockmarket of tomorrow”, according to the ad men – was by December 31 at half the level it was at the beginning of the millennium.

As the most right-wing presidency in history seizes the White House, the idea peddled by half-baked economists that capitalism had found a way to grow endlessly and effortlessly, providing prosperity for all, is now revealed for what it always was – an illusion. Microsoft’s shares halved in value during 2000, with about \$240bn cut from its market capitalisation. Intel, which makes micro-chips, suffered a similar fate.

MARKET SATURATION

The fundamental reason is that capitalism has produced more commodities than the world can presently buy. And as a result of price-cutting, the profit from each item sold is smaller than ever. Nokia, which manufactures mobile phones, is also facing market saturation in a story repeated around the globe.

US consumers have reduced their savings to next to nothing to buy imported goods and indulge in the stock market orgy. As they stop spending it will trigger a collapse of imports and an end to an era in which the ballooning US trade deficit has financed expansion of the world economy, including the UK’s. A sinking US economy will reverse the

strong capital flows from the rest of the world, including Europe, to America. With Japan, the world’s second largest economy, plunging deeper and deeper into slump, the conditions for a world slump are clearly present.

David Walton, UK economist at Goldman Sachs, said: “We now feel the balance of risks has changed. Recent data in the industrial sector of the global economy have been weaker than we had expected, especially in the United States.

The negative shock from abroad is likely to be bigger than we previously expected.” George Soros, who has made and lost billions on the financial market, warned that the American authorities were powerless to prevent the long-running US boom from turning to bust. “I believe that the US landing will be bouncy and hard. It cannot be avoided.”

The UK’s economy will be one of the most damaged by a slump. “The main issue here is UK company dependence on profits made in the US, together with relatively high capital inflows from the US compared to the rest of Europe. We think there are now sufficient signs of distress to suggest that the economy is likely to lurch over the edge during the course of 2001,” said Stephen King, HSBC’s chief global economist.

The message is: the global collapse narrowly avoided in 1998 when the South-east Asian economies collapsed is now unavoidable. In Britain, despite all the rubbish talked by New Labour, signs of distress are clearly visible. British capitalism is running a record trade deficit with the

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rest of the world while its own manufacturing base is disappearing.

More than 100,000 jobs were lost in steel, cars, textiles and footwear in 2000. Vauxhall and Ford have announced plans to end car production at their Luton and Dagenham plants. Rover's future is doubtful and Nissan wants to move production to the Continent.

The emerging economic crisis will shatter the illusions that New Labour has spread since 1997: that globalised capitalism is good for your health; there is no alternative to domination of the world by transnational corporations; globalisation will benefit the world's poor. They even had the cheek to publish a 110-page White Paper in December extolling the virtues of globalised capitalism.

What the harsh economic and political winds blowing across the Atlantic will do is expose the very nature of New Labour and show that it is hardly worthy of the name "government". As commentator Andrew Rawnsley has shown, New Labour is run by a clique around Blair and is riven with internal feuds. It shows contempt for the parliamentary process and has created its own shadowy parallel structures to the state. As Rawnsley says: "Blair was openly contemptuous of the idea that the Cabinet was an appropriate forum in which to make decisions." (*Servants of the People*. Hamish Hamilton £17.99).

Its only objective is to create favourable conditions for the transnationals to operate in Britain and to replace the Tories as the party of big business. Blair is "proud" of £2 million donations New Labour gets from individuals like Lord Sainsbury who just happens to be the Science Minister as well.

There is, of course, no conflict between the Sainsbury who made his money from the supermarket chain, his position in government and the development of genetically-modified food.

As George Monbiot has shown in his book, *Captive State* (Macmillan £12.99), New Labour has allowed business not just right into the heart of government itself, but has through sponsorship, the "private finance initiative" and membership of innumerable "task forces", has imposed commercial interests on a whole range of public service activities. New Labour is not a

"government" but the management team of Britain PLC. It has created a government which insists that "business is the only business".

Just as in America, a discredited political system led to abstention by 50% of the electorate and the return of the right-wing, so in Britain, political disenchantment with Blair is growing. New Labour has tried to take the politics out of government so they can hardly be surprised if people take them at their word and decline to vote.

What is the point of New Labour if oil companies, for example, can make 30% returns on capital from North Sea oil without a challenge? Or if the privatised and incompetent railway industry can bring the system to a halt and still receive billions in public subsidies? What is New Labour for? To promote the image of major corporations at the Dome and then sell off the failed project to a New Labour donor who is then given 25 years to pay for it?

NO CASE FOR VOTING NEW LABOUR

So there is no case for voting New Labour at the election. It has become a capitalist party and we should no more vote for it than we would the Tories.

In 1997, it was important to vote to throw the Tories out and expose what New Labour was really up to by having it in office. Millions who voted for a radical change have made their experiences and are disillusioned.

The gap between the wealthiest and the poor has grown in the last four years. In London there are record numbers of homeless people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Public services like the NHS are a shambles and increasingly merged with private sector interests.

Asylum seekers are forced to endure the humiliating voucher system while Jack Straw's claim to fame is to have increased the prison population by 50% since becoming Home Secretary. If his plans to limit jury trials succeed, the numbers will grow even more.

We cannot accept the argument that we must vote for New Labour to keep the Tories out. That assumes that nothing can ever change and the politics in Britain must revolve permanently around the fraud of the parliamentary system. In any case, the Tories are not in a state to go anywhere in particular.

With Blair increasingly assuming a presidential-style of rule, the choice is no choice at all, just as there was none in the recent US elections. As

ITS ONLY OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR TRANSNATIONALS TO OPERATE IN BRITAIN AND TO REPLACE THE TORIES AS THE PARTY OF BIG BUSINESS

Ralph Nader, who stood for the Greens on an anti-business platform in the US, said: "If you vote for the lesser of two evils, you still end up with evil."

In the unlikely event of the disintegrating Tories getting back, it will be New Labour's inability to mobilise voters that is the cause, just as it was Al Gore's inability to rouse workers that led to Bush's victory.

So at this point we urge readers to refuse to vote for New Labour at the coming general election. Whether we should vote for the Socialist Alliance candidates instead remains to be seen.

The signs are not promising. While they have not published a manifesto, at present the Alliance offers a modest, reform-based programme which answers none of the questions the Movement for a Socialist Future is raising.

We should use the election period to argue for the development of an alternative political and

economic system to the one managed by Blair on behalf of the transnationals. An election system based on sending MPs to a parliament which has no power whatsoever over a government run by a clique in favour of business interests is democratic only in name.

Instead of a phony parliament and a feudal House of Lords, a corrupt and brutal police and prison system, a monarchy which is entirely parasitical, and an uncontrolled state bureaucracy, we should devise a system of popular government built from representation at local community level, to regional and national bodies.

All the resources and assets of society in the forms of banks, the land, major companies and the transport system would be physically owned by the people as a whole. This alternative to New Labour is the way forward in the coming months. ■

Support the Palestinian uprising

The second Intifada by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, supported by "Israeli Arabs" is a just struggle for self-determination.

A new generation of Palestinian youth has taken up a struggle with rocks and stones against the American-supplied tanks and rifles of the Israeli army.

The systematic killing of unarmed teenagers is proof enough of the despicable nature of the Israeli state and its government.

Some have likened it to the former apartheid regime in South Africa. There is some truth in this. Israel was founded in 1948 on the basis of the dispossession of a million Palestinians who fled their land.

Zionist leaders falsely claimed to represent the interests of a Jewish people who were the victims of Nazi genocide and of many pogroms in Eastern Europe before that.

So they founded a state based exclusively on a single ethnic group and then proceeded to identify this with a religion, Judaism.

From the outset, Israel was supported and funded with unlimited dollars by the United States. This was done to disrupt the Arab oil-producing states.

It is acknowledged that without US financial support, the Israeli state would collapse in a matter of weeks.

While Palestinian youth are gunned down, the US turns a blind eye. Similar incidents in Kosova produced Nato attacks on Yugoslavia and an armed invasion of Kosova.

So much for the hypocrisy of the "international community". Only when the interests of the major powers are threatened do they take action.

The Palestinian territories resemble Bantustans, the hated outputs for black people built by the racist apartheid regime in South Africa.

The Jewish people have been cruelly betrayed by a Zionist ruling class whose attitude to the Palestinians is utterly racist.

There is no solution through religious conflict, as the PNA has pointed out. Only a secular state can allow Jews and Palestinians, who hail from the same ethnic group, to live together.

Israel is unsustainable historically because it is based on religious and ethnic exclusivity. Jewish and Palestinian workers have common enemies: the Israeli ruling class and the corrupt Arab national regimes who also oppress their workers.

A unity forged in a struggle against these forces will create the basis for a secular state of Palestine based on co-operation, social ownership and self-determination for all those within its borders. ■

Corporations put the state in its place

ROBERT SILVER EXAMINES THE ARGUMENTS THAT A TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALIST CLASS IS EMERGING TO DRIVE FORWARD GLOBALISATION AND CREATING A CRISIS FOR THE NATION STATE

Powerful new economic and political forces have emerged from the globalisation process to challenge the whole basis of the state in capitalist society. An understanding of what this means is central to any plan for fundamental social change.

Analysis of the new relationship between economics and politics reveals deep contradictions within the globalisation project now dominated by powerful transnational corporations (TNCs).

The use of foreign direct investment in the 1990s has had a paradoxical effect. When states began to open up their economies to foreign companies, they facilitated the creation of TNCs and then a transnational capitalist class in many ways opposed to their own national capitalist classes.

Evidence for this is presented in a compelling way by Leslie Sklair, in his new book.*

Sklair contrasts the structures and outlook of the TNCs and the emerging transnational capitalist class with the preceding period of capitalism, which he calls internationalisation. This was characterised by cross-border practices working through national institutions to achieve clearly articulated objectives of "national interest".

He explains: "The behaviour of international or multinational corporations could thus be largely predicted in terms of the 'national' interests of the governments they served. The most popular version of this argument in the 20th century, particularly on the left, was that US multinationals and the US state went hand in hand overseas to exploit the rest of the world."

What he calls a "global shift" has resulted in transnational practices in which "corporate agencies and actors...strive to maximise private

profits globally for those who own and control the corporations. TNCs seek profits without special reference to the interests (real or imagined) of their countries of citizenship".

This new phenomenon is the necessary product of the expansion of capital. Its interests are in conflict with the capitalist classes whose existence, historically, is bound up with the nation state. When capitalism first emerged in the 17th century, two new classes came into existence. The capitalists who owned these new means of production – the bourgeoisie; and labourers who had been driven from the land, and separated even from their tools to become free, but only to sell their labour to the capitalist.

The interests of the bourgeoisie came to be represented and furthered by the nation state with its legal powers based on the rights of private property and armed forces deployed against those who challenged it. But capitalist production then outgrew the nation state. The self-development of

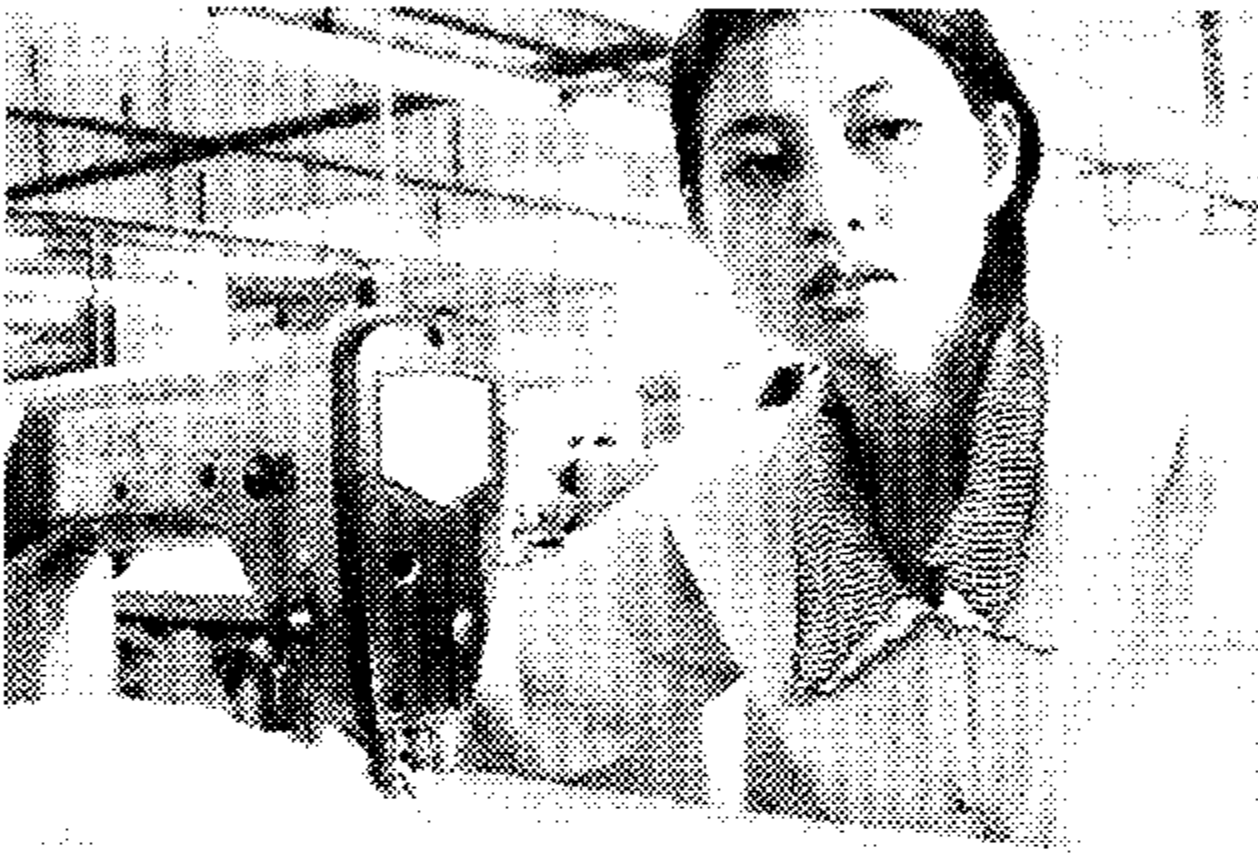


Many Ukrainians are out of work

capitalist production led to the age of imperialism and, at the beginning of the 20th century, to the emergence of the world economy.

This inevitable contradiction was famously analysed, in 1848, by Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto in section I:

“The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.



“The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground upon which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe.”

The First World War was, in essence, an expression of these inner-tensions. According to Leon Trotsky, writing in 1915: “The present war is at bottom a revolt of the forces of production against the political form of nation and state. It means the collapse of the national state as an independent economic unit.” He added: “The real, objective significance of the War is the breakdown of the present national economic centres, and the substitution of a world economy in its stead.”

The development of capitalist production in the final decades of the 20th century was characterised by the emergence of trans-replacing multinational corporations. At the core of the globalisation

process now are 60,000 parent companies with 500,000 foreign affiliates. The value of the output of TNCs (parents and affiliates) amounts to 25% of global output.

The world’s largest 100 non-financial TNCs employ six million people in their foreign affiliates. These TNCs represent a qualitative break with the older, nationally-based companies, which had established units in foreign countries during the age of imperialism.

TNCs such as General Motors, Mitsubishi and Unilever are now owned by shareholders and controlled by boards of directors who can be citizens of any country. The prime responsibility of these boards is to make the company as profitable as possible with no specific privileges extended to their states of origin.

Parts of the processes of research, production and distribution are now, typically, distributed among facilities under contract to the many TNCs, which control operations through communications networks connecting the world. This spiralling revolution in production methods is intertwined with the technological revolution.

Now that the export of finance capital to wherever the best conditions exist for the extraction of profit predominate over the export of goods, the role of governments is to facilitate the work of the TNCs and mobilise their state apparatus against the working class.

As Sklair, who is a senior figure at the prestigious London School of Economics, puts it:

“The truly fundamental change that capitalist globalisation has introduced into the state-class argument is that, for the first time in human history, there is indeed a material and ideological shift towards selling business as such as the only real business of the planet and its inhabitants. So, in the global capitalist system, agents and agencies of the state (among other institutions) fulfil the role of facilitators of the global capitalist project.”

This nicely sums up the role of the New Labour government, of course, whose most eminent advisor Dr Anthony Giddens, happens to be the director of the LSE. Even here there is inner conflict!

As capital has continued its expansion, trade and

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currency barriers, which are an integral part of the system of nation-states, have become increasingly untenable.

The power of the state in each country to influence economic processes is now weaker than at any time since the beginning of capitalism.

The state's post-war role of maintaining a class peace through social spending and other policies is coming to an end. Heading these changes in most countries are former Social Democratic parties (Democrats in America), who have abandoned reform politics in the face of these pressures.

The role of the modern capitalist state is now to facilitate the process of globalisation – a process known as “liberalisation”. There were 145 regulatory changes in 1997 relating to FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) by 60 countries, with 94% creating more favourable conditions. Treaties for the avoidance of double taxation had reached 1,871 in 1997. Since 1991, the number of annual changes had gone up from 82 to well into three figures and the number of countries affected from around 30 each year to more than 60.

The national state has ceded power to international bodies like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to facilitate globalisation and the European Union to protect Europe's interests. The TNCs have taken over bodies like the UN. Corporations now dominate political processes to an unprecedented degree. They are directly represented in government (e.g. Sainsbury) and dominate key ministries through Task Forces etc. As a consequence, the state is more divided and in crisis than ever before. The authority of the police, monarchy, courts system, parliament is at an all time low.

The rules operated by the WTO subordinate the economic interests of nation-states to the stringent demands of the world market. National systems of legislation are subordinated to international law. In the new century, GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services is being used to pry open the remaining protected areas, such as education, social services and health for exploitation.

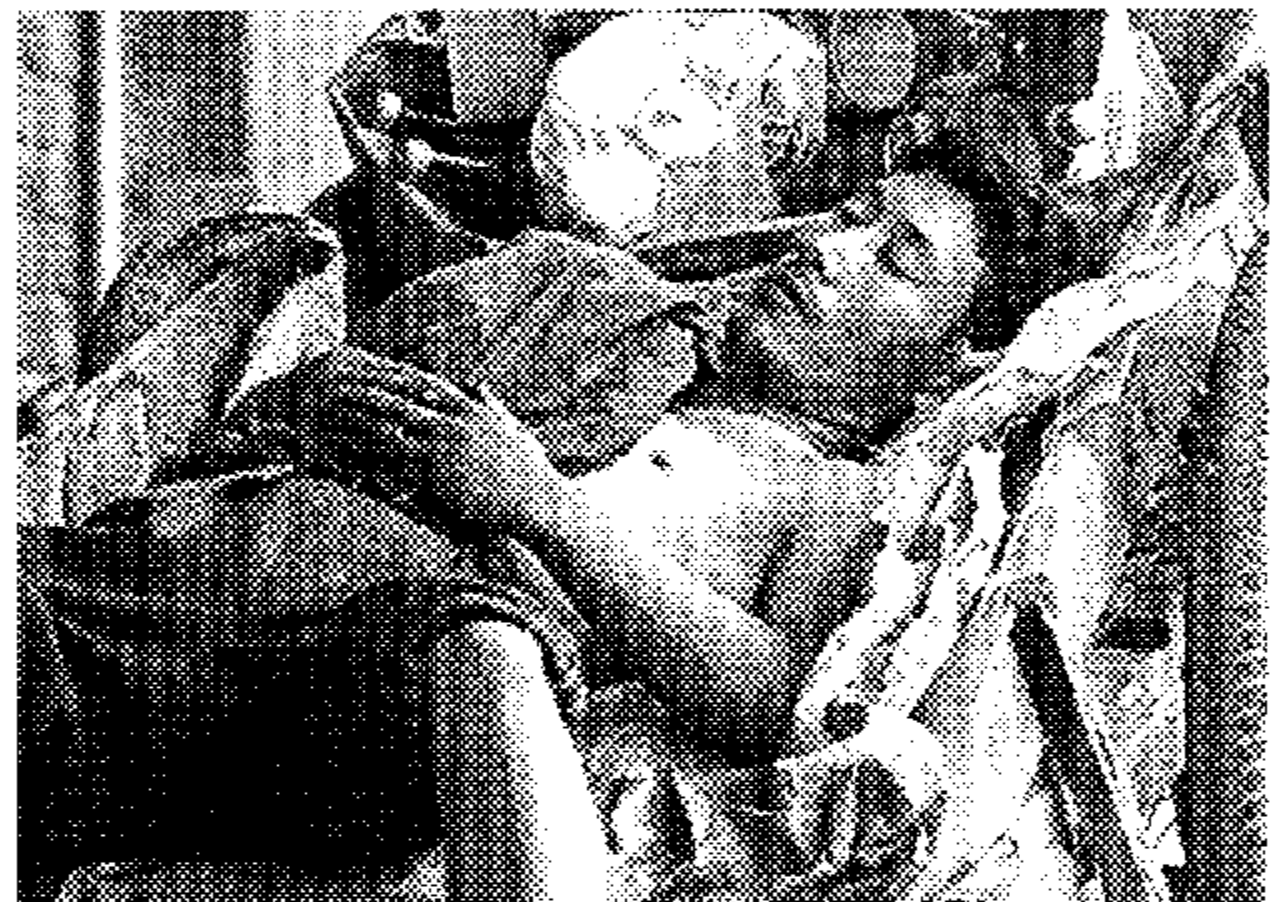
Sklair writes: “Insofar as globalisation is changing the structure and dynamic of the capitalist class, it is necessary to start to explore in addition to capitalist classes in separate countries, the possibility of the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (TCC).

“The members of a TCC will have specific

relations with national actors, agencies and institutions in separate countries as well as actors, agencies, and institutions that cannot sensibly be described as ‘national’.” He adds: “In the global context, the transnational capitalist class plays the central role in the struggle to commodify everything, the goal of the culture-ideology of consumerism.”

Acknowledging that some of these capitalists and their allies find themselves in conflict from time to time, he nevertheless insists: “...What binds the members of the class together globally [is] their common interest in the protection of private property and the rights of private individuals to accumulate it with as little interference as possible.”

Sklair tracks the development of transnational



corporations from multinationals, the growing power of the globalisers and the emergence of the transnational capitalist class using a wide range of sources. Not least is direct evidence provided by interviews with leading representatives of 80 of the major transnational corporations such as British American Tobacco, Ford, General Motors, Mitsubishi, Nestlé, Bank of America, HSBC, BP, Shell, ABB, AT&T, Apple, Intel, Motorola, NEC, Sony – to name but a few.

The impact of globalising bureaucrats on the changing role of international organisations provides equally important evidence. The “Global Sustainable Development Facility – 2B2M: 2 Billion People to the Market by 2020” was an initiative promoted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1998, supposedly to assist the two billion poorest people in the world.

The aim was to establish an agency outside the

UNDP but closely related to it through which the TNCs prepared to contribute a fee of \$50,000 would have access to and benefit from association with the UNDP. By 1999, 16 TNCs including Rio Tinto, ABB, Novartis and Dow Chemical had signed up, and more were considering it. This shift in favour of the TNCs followed when the former public relations director of the World Bank became UNDP administrator.

At the core of the transnational capitalist class is a central inner circle that makes system-wide decisions, and connects in a variety of ways with subsidiary members in communities, cities, countries, and supranational regions. Despite real geographical and sectoral conflicts, the whole of the transnational capitalist class (TCC) shares a fundamental interest in the continued accumulation of private profit.

“What the inner circle of the TCC does is to give a unity to the diverse economic interests, political organisations, and cultural and ideological formations of those who make up the class as a whole.”

A crucial component of the integration of the TCC is that most of the senior members of its inner circle occupy a variety of interlocking positions. The core of this is the network of corporate directorships. Those in the core frequently have extensive connections outside the direct ambit of

the corporate sector, to the extent that the civil society services the state-like structures of the corporations.

Leading capitalists and corporate executives serve on the boards of think-tanks, charities, scientific, sports, arts and culture bodies, universities, medical foundations, and similar institutions, just as leaders of these institutions often occupy places on corporate boards.

In seeking global solutions to the drive for profit-maximisation, the TNCs have accelerated environmental and ecological degradation. Yet even on this front they have managed to incorporate most of their opponents. The emerging transnational capitalist class acts in a co-ordinated way to resist the pressures to treat the crisis as a global ecological crisis.

Instead, as Sklair demonstrates, they have brought much of the environmental movement round to the view of “sustainable development” and “sustainable growth”.

In this way, the TNCs select a few high profile problems which can be addressed piecemeal, ignoring the global crisis itself. This is the TNCs’ answer to those who insisted there were limits on resources and thus continued expansion.

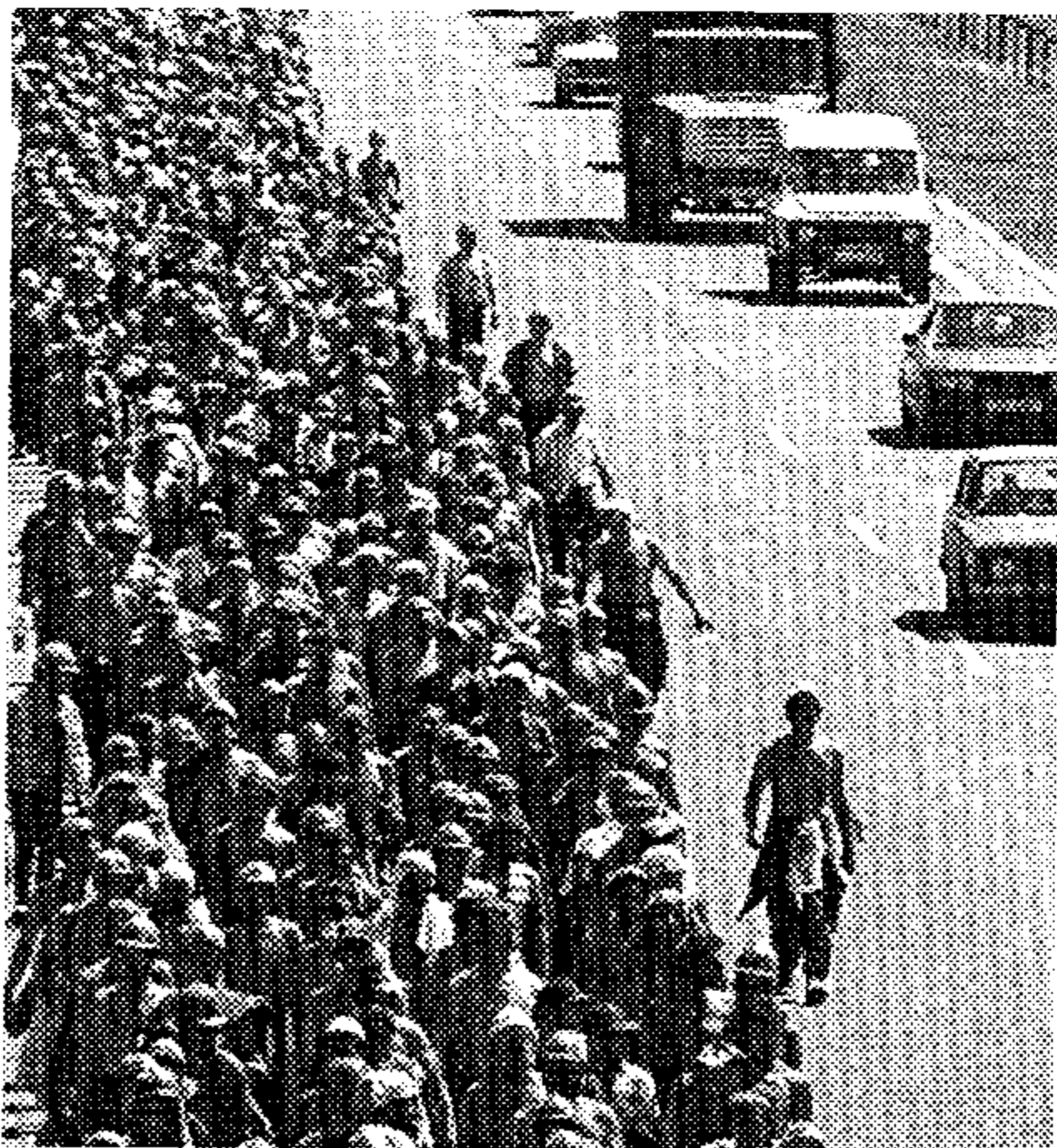
So business suddenly supports recycled products, green products and other “pro-environment” activities. Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth get top status at international conferences where the corporations block all serious attempts to tackle global warming. Lord

Melchett leaves Friends of the Earth to work for the supermarket chain Iceland because the company favours “green” ways of working.

Detailed examples from Proctor and Gamble, Mitsubishi, Monsanto, Intel, Dow, Rio Tinto and others provide evidence to show how the TNCs consciously hide major environmental damage and destruction, rape, torture and murder of opponents from indigenous communities behind ideological clouds of ‘green’ publicity.

The Local Agenda 21 agreement at the Rio Earth Summit, and targets on global climate change from Tokyo have been hijacked by big business as part

THEY HAVE BROUGHT MUCH OF THE WORLD'S ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT ROUND TO THE VIEW OF "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" AND "SUSTAINABLE GROWTH"



Striking miners march on Kiev

of the cause of 'sustainable growth' and 'sustainable development'. Analysis of the evidence shows clearly that the ecological crisis cannot be resolved within the global capitalist system.

The emergence of the transnational capitalist class, in conflict with national governments and the world system of nation states, has profound revolutionary implications.

All those who come up sharply against the activities of the corporations, whether in factories, office, on the land, in shops, in public services, in the field of culture – in fact, just about in any social situation – are forced to think about their experiences differently.

It is increasingly self-evident that the global TNCs dominate the planet and that they have governments like New Labour in their pockets. With traditional political activity like general (and presidential) elections rendered ineffective, the turn away from traditional politics grows and independent, mass activity becomes the only means of expression.

Globalisation has created an international working class of unprecedented proportions, drawing in hundreds of millions of former peasants in many regions of the developing world. They are fighting back against super-exploitation, forcing the TNCs on the defensive.

New movements spring up in country after country, taking action on different issues. In Seattle in 1999 they came together briefly in a powerful challenge to the WTO. The capitalist state has returned to use of force, surveillance and intimidation to try to thwart the anti-capitalist movement.

The use of the Internet to organise global protests against the effects of capitalist globalisation

reveals the creative power that is developing. But even the most radical of protest movements remains just that – an attempt to influence, reform or improve the WTO and world leaders.

Similarly, campaigns in support of "healthy" or "green" products – which the TNCs will support – leaves the basic questions of social structure untouched. It also penalises the poor, who cannot afford the organic of the "green" products because they are higher priced.

BUILDING OF NEW MOVEMENTS

On the other hand, the undermining of the capitalist nation state by the development of capitalism itself opens the way for the building of new movements internationally that bring all the issues together and set a single goal: the social ownership and mass control of the TNCs. This coincides with the task of replacing the nation-state and its institutions by first seizing political power.

The technology and productive capacity is there to solve the needs of humanity in a thoughtful way, free from the manic drive for profit that determines just about every social activity. But immediately danger lies ahead. The crisis of overproduction is in turn driving the world economy and financial systems into slump and disarray. The danger here is not that transnational corporations will overthrow the nation state and set up a global fascist super-state. Clearly they cannot.

The issue is that unless workers and professional people organise to overthrow the existing political and social structures and take control of production on an international scale, we face a combination of wars and global environmental destruction. ■

**The Transnational Capital Class*
by Leslie Sklair. Blackwell. £15.99



Life beyond the logo

STUART RADCLIFFE GOES ALONG WITH NAOMI KLEIN'S ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC POWER OF THE BRAND, BUT ASKS HOW PEOPLE CAN EFFECTIVELY RESIST THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE CONDUCTED IN THE HIGH STREETS OF THE WORLD?

Naomi Klein's book* is fast becoming the gospel of the agitated "Generation X, Y and Z". It reiterates what has been said thousands of times before – capitalism is not fair.

At first this internationally-acclaimed journalist/activist nostalgically treats you to her own love affair with the branded world. Married to that story is her realisation that life-fulfilling moments could not be purchased in the shopping mall.

The book then charts the world's own unfulfilled love affair with the same seductive beacons of lifestyle, such as Nike, McDonalds, Shell et al – the superbrands and conglomerates that arguably now rule the world.

Her argument about "the demise of public space" starts with a real sucker punch. Introducing the concept of the brand, Klein describes a moment in 1993 known as "Marlboro Friday", when the business world thought the brand was finished. For years, Marlboro had bucked all economic trends without a dent in its image. Inexplicably, Marlboro was suddenly forced to start cutting prices to beat the competition.

The knock-on effects led to advertising budgets being reduced and promotional costs increased. Other companies followed suit and the brand was presumed dead. But the belief that consumers had finally sussed the empty promises of the ads that were so prolific in the 1980s and opted for price was soon quashed. Ad agencies financed by the big

spending corporations set about revolutionising the ambivalence that was beginning to spread amongst market leaders. Not surprisingly, companies like Nike, Apple, the Body Shop, Calvin Klein, Disney, Levi's and Starbucks who came out of this running because branding was becoming a larger and larger part of their business. These success stories said to the world that the act of making a product was deemed a very low priority.

The book details many reasons why the corporations (in the US in particular) have been allowed into our lives beyond the point of sale. Taking over from public spending on cultural sponsorship of urban, artistic, educational and commercial space seems key. Basketball courts in New York ghettos are paid for by Nike; but for that one-off expenditure, they get to emblazon their logo on the court forever. Pizza Hut or McDonalds provide food in schools and colleges, with agreements that do not allow the school catering facilities to make foodstuffs in competition. Pretty soon, you have not got school catering facilities worth providing.

Prime retail locations in major cities like New

PIZZA HUT OR MCDONALDS PROVIDE FOOD IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, WITH AGREEMENTS THAT DO NOT ALLOW THE SCHOOL CATERING FACILITIES TO MAKE FOODSTUFFS IN COMPETITION



York or London are being increasingly taken at a trading loss per unit. The price they pay offers association with the prestige outlets, which only serves to strengthen their own brand image. It is tactics like these that have allowed ad campaigns to move off the billboard and into our lives without interruption.

Knowing that a product is only a product, and not the promise of life-affirming experiences, is not enough – do you really choose to buy anything? Klein shows how Wal-Mart trailblazed across America with everything under one roof that you need and at low, low prices. They created clusters of cut price shopping. This kills off the local suppliers, but what the heck, it's cheap. It did not take long for Americans to realise that something was wrong with this development in commerce, but their protests went unheard and the growth of the brand continued.

The invasion and looming presence is the more obvious by-product. Underneath the jobs for locals,

bright and breezy, wow everything's under one roof for next to nothing, was the sinister element of corporate censorship. Starbucks' strategy was much more stealth-like, but identical. They clustered areas of towns and cities, and operated at a loss to keep a stranglehold on local business, unsettling and ending local trade too. When these are the only outlets for miles, where does the mid-Westerner go for real choice?

Hand in hand with big business comes the employment potential. Anyone willing to work in any conglomerate at a service level will no doubt say "what jobs?" The temp, contract worker and part-time staff all get a fair crack of the whip. The type of work on offer is a go-between for the newly-graduated or the summer job for the student or young parent not able to commit to full time. There is no room in this for people unable to fit the prescribed demographic. Companies like Starbucks have a computerised system of rotating the shifts. It is a world where no one works longer

than a three-hour shift and unionising the workforce is forbidden – much easier to abuse a bunch of individuals than negotiate with a body of them. These are the lucky ones. Klein's examination of the production side of the superbrand is unforgiving in its detail. While manufacturing and factories themselves became a unwanted capital item to the conglomerates, the produce still needs making. Emerging nations eager to please the globalised economy set up 'free trade zones'. Areas of land are set aside for big companies to forget about the workforce that puts the finishing touches on their brand.

Essentially, this is a young, female workforce, driven away from poverty-stricken rural areas, but more importantly from their family, forced to endure physical and sexual abuse in some instances, mandatory pregnancy tests, unpaid overtime and very long days. The theory that perpetuates this practice of production is that the Nike or Reebok wages create wealth and free the nation up to build their own economy. What is consistently ignored is that there is no evidence of this happening. The minute the demands of the nation/state, or the workforce become too great the companies threaten to take their operation elsewhere. It is not a threat to the Nikes and Reeboks because the manufacturing is someone else's going concern – they just want trainers for \$4, they can sell for \$180.

News of this reveals a rare look into branded America. Impoverished production conditions make Nike, Disney and Wal-Mart into powerful metaphors for a brutal way of doing business. Knowing this much does not seem to have done much to tarnish the brands.

Individuals and pressure groups have started to make themselves visible. The inescapable truth of discontent shown at the World Trade Organisation is only going to increase. That is a culmination of nearly half a decade's agitation. Drawing on the tactics of the situationists and mirroring the invasion of the brands some people started to fight back. Klein calls this "culture jamming" (originally a phrase used by San Francisco band Negativland in 1984) – the practice of parodying advertisements and hijacking billboards.

These tales of resistance produce local heroes not intent on apathetically allowing the cigarette or alcohol advertisement into their ghetto. These matured into an artform and an industry of their own. "Adbusters" is probably the biggest known

name. Their acceptable rise to the surface was met negatively by the hardcore elements of resistance to the brands – how can you subvert what is accepted. Ad agencies never slow to spot a trend started using this ironic approach to brands with their campaign. Look at Sprite's "Obey your thirst" campaign where the protagonist says he knows the drink will not make him successful, attract women, run faster etc. It will only quench his thirst.

The corporation wins again, because capitalism will not be beaten: it just changes. The protests outside the WTO, Reclaim the Streets and other direct action that has dominated

news headlines in recent years are analysed, but with a steady unease. Yes, they show that some people have had enough of what is on offer and what is being done to others to get it to us. No, it is not a unified thought that will halt progress in the branded world.

The governments in first, second and third world countries are all complicit in the process. They support unrestricted trade agreements that push globalisation further forward, because at the moment there is no viable alternative that they can see to keep the world turning. Klein tells what happened to states in America that wanted to act against corporations that trade with Burma. The WTO soon began to whine about fair play and made sure that local intervention was not possible. Again, governments supported the corporations, proving if it needed proving, that capitalism will not behave, no matter how much you embarrass it.

Overall, this book reports on the sorry state of the world today. But it feels disheartening that there is no other viable alternative suggested beyond embarrassing corporations and mass rioting. New global politics are needed to take on the greedy global economy. They say we have to think locally and act globally. Maybe that is the key – face to face dealings alongside like-minded virtual networks, for the good of the world, not the profit of it. The ultimate brand, life! ■

* *No Logo* by Naomi Klein. £8.99. Flamingo.

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Facing up to our alienation from nature

A NEW STUDY OF MARX'S ECOLOGY EXPLAINS HOW SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IS LINKED WITH CREATING A NEW HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE.

KATE MCCABE REPORTS

Establishing human kind's true relationship to nature is absolutely necessary if we are to map out a way of resolving the ecological crisis that threatens the future of life on the planet.

After all, it is the abuse of this relationship in the drive to produce that lies behind global warming, the running down of natural resources and environmental degradation.

Yet many environmentalists are usually too enmeshed in arguments about "sustainable growth" and existing economic and political social relations to attempt to answer this question.

John Bellamy Foster argues in this important book* that, despite common prejudice in the universities and among ecologists, Marx based his whole outlook on resolving the alienated relationship between humanity and nature. His ecology was both scientific and socialist.

Marx and Engels were part of the 19th century movement which overthrew official natural and social science in a revolutionary sweep. They were inspired by the work of Charles Darwin, who showed how nature evolves as a result of the process of natural selection, producing new species over time.

This confirmed Marx and Engels' materialist view that nature exists independently of human beings, and their dialectical (that is, containing self-movement) concept that nature wholly has within itself the necessity to change itself. It challenged the religious idea that humanity and nature are fixed opposites, created by God, with

nature provided for people to dominate and exploit. The book brings home the risks Darwin and his supporters took in publishing their views, and describes vividly the ideological and political debate that raged when they did.

Engels himself produced original work on evolution in his essay "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man", where he made labour the primary driving force in the evolution of human beings.

The descent of apes from the trees freed the hand to begin working with tools. This created a new relationship between humans and nature, a technological relationship, which led to changes in consciousness – in particular the ability to develop abstract knowledge.

The human brain, in Engels' view, evolved through a complex interactive set of relations now referred to by evolutionary biologists as "gene-culture co-evolution". The leading expert in this area, Stephen Jay Gould, was the first to recognise the contribution made by Engels in this field saying that his was "the best 19th century case for gene-culture co-evolution."

Up until the late 20th century, the scientific consensus opposed this explanation, Bellamy Foster points out, and sought the development of the brain in "missing links" between primates and hominids, which when discovered would have an intermediate brain. This expectation collapsed in the 1960s with the discovery of Australopithecus, a hominid species, walking erect and exhibiting

evolved hands and feet, and using tools, but with a brain only slightly larger than an ape.

This and subsequent discoveries led to the restatement of Engels' thesis by a number of scientists, notably Sherwood Washburn and Ruth Moore in their work containing the statement "Tools Makyth Man". Modern anthropology has come round precisely to the view expressed by Engels.

As Bellamy Foster writes: "It was labour that constituted the secret, from the very first, not only to the development of human society but also to the transition of ape to man. It was labour, moreover that defined the distinctive ecological niche occupied by humanity. Marx and Engels thus saw the human relation to the earth in co-evolutionary terms – a perspective that is crucial to an ecological understanding, since it allows us to recognise that human beings transform their environment not entirely in accordance with their choosing but based on conditions provided by natural history."

Changing nature to gain the things they need is the life activity of human beings, and this essential relationship (unity) never changes. But the framework within which we carry out this activity (conflict) changes as technology (tools) advances, bringing about revolutions in human society.

Capitalist society is dominated by private property and the exchange of commodities for profit. This produces a double alienation – firstly, the alienation of human beings from the land, town from country; and secondly, the alienation of the worker from the product of his/her labour in industrial production.

This alienation even applies to animals, as Marx showed in his book *The German Ideology*: "The essence of the fish is its being, water. The essence of the freshwater fish is the water of a river. But the latter ceases to be the essence of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steamboats, or as soon as its water is diverted into canals where simple drainage can deprive the fish of its medium of existence." Therefore the fish's essence – its nature – is alienated away from it as a result of the private ownership of the river.

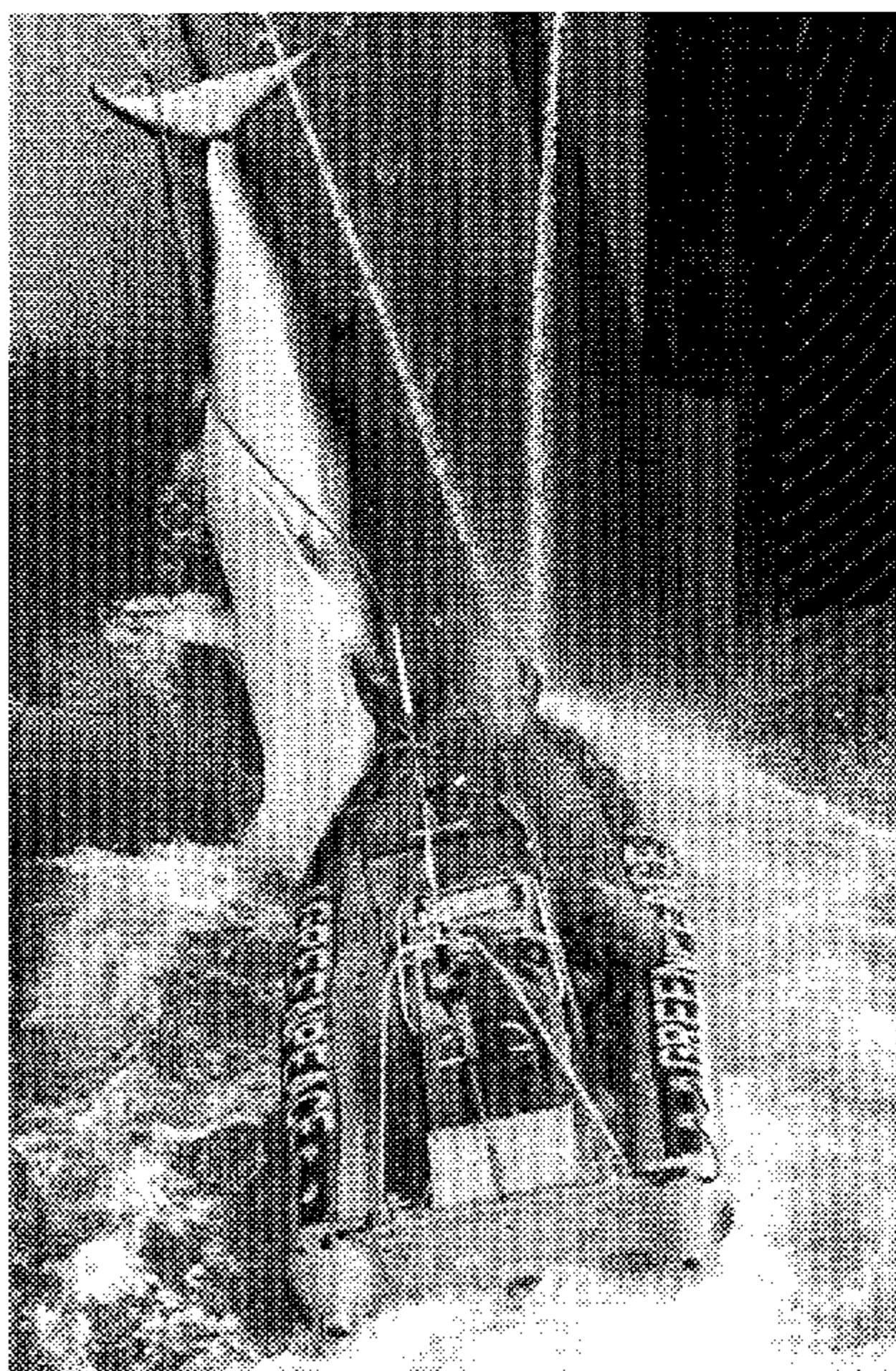
It is this alienation that Marx set out to analyse in *Capital*. As he wrote in *Grundrisse*, a preparatory work on political economy:

"It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their

metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation, or is the result of a historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital."

This contains the essence of Marx's entire critique of the alienating character of bourgeois society. A linked idea put forward by Marx which the book researches is that under capitalism there is a "metabolic rift" between man and nature.

Marx was influenced by studies on agricultural production and soil fertility, and particularly the work of the Scottish political economist James Anderson who in his book *A Calm Investigation of the Circumstances that have led to the present scarcity of grain in Britain* (1801) stated that the judicious application of manure would sustain soil "for ever after", but that huge amounts of useful waste were being "daily carried to the Thames in its passage through which it subjects the people in



Greenpeace activists attempt to prevent the transfer of an illegally-hunted whale onto the deck of the Nisshin-maru.

the lower part of the city to the most offensive effluvia”.

The chief outcome of the separation of country and town, and the alienation of human beings from the land, has been the progressive degradation of soil. It was this, rather than over-population, that was the cause of the grain shortage, Anderson said.

The crisis of soil fertility caused what has been called the second agricultural revolution. The first had been the process of enclosure of common land to establish private ownership of the majority of land in Britain. The second was the application of industrial methods, with the development of soil science and the manufacture of artificial phosphates.

Nitrogen proved harder to synthesise, leading to the rush for guano – a sort of bird dropping Klondike, where South America was denuded in a few years of nitrogen that took centuries to build up. The United States illegally annexed hundreds of islands to get at the good stuff. Anyone interested to see the result of capitalism’s ability to make anything into a commodity for profit should visit the beautiful hot house garden at Avery Hill, near Woolwich in South East London, part of the

estate built by a guano millionaire with his profits.

Marx sums up his critique of capitalist agriculture in Volume 1 of *Capital*: “Capitalist production collects the population together in great centres and causes the urban population to achieve an ever-growing preponderance. This has two results. On the one hand it concentrates the historical motive force of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil...But by destroying the circumstances surrounding that metabolism... it compels its systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production and in a form adequate to the full development of the human race...”

“All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker but of robbing the soil: all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress toward ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility...Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the technique and the degree of



Chinese farmers who have abandoned slash-and-burn methods of cultivation to preserve the soil

combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker.”

This concept of metabolic rift is the opposite of the failed notion of sustainability, which takes certain outcomes of capitalist production and turns them into causes. For Marx, capitalist forms of production are in essence opposed to agriculture: “The way that the cultivation of particular crops depends on fluctuations in market prices and the constant changes in cultivation with these price fluctuations – the entire spirit of capitalist production which is oriented towards the most immediate monetary profits stands in contradiction to agriculture, which has to concern itself with the whole gamut of permanent conditions of life required by the chain of human generations.” (*Capital* Vol. 3)

On the issue of population growth, Marx and Engels rejected those who looked at this issue separately from the conditions in which it takes place. They would have recognised today’s entirely class-based perspective on population, where a growth in population in poorer countries is seen as a problem, but a decline in population in richer countries is equally problematic. The logical answer might be to import populations from the poorer to the richer countries, but this is a solution unlikely to find favour with New Labour.

What happened to Marx’s ecology after Marx? Bellamy Foster concludes his book with an overview of this, particularly highlighting some of the work that was done in the early years of the Russian revolution.

In his view, Soviet ecology in the 1920s was arguably the most advanced in the world. V.I. Vernadsky founded the science of geochemistry and is acknowledged as the “first person to come to grips with real implications of the fact that Earth is a self-contained sphere”. His colleague N.I. Vavilov was a brilliant plant geneticist. They persuaded Lenin to establish the first nature reserve anywhere exclusively aimed at the scientific study of nature.

But as Bellamy Foster, points out, one of the many tragedies of the eventual triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union was that these lines of research were ended and instead the official science became the crudest mechanical materialism, which in its application led to famine and environmental destruction.

By the 1970s, the Soviet bureaucracy knew there was an environmental crisis and drew up broad measures to try to pull back from the brink, but like all the plans made during that period, they were

never allowed to interfere in practice with the ruthless exploitation of Russia’s natural resources. The final outcomes were Chernobyl, and the devastation of forests and lakes, the destruction of species due to pollution and over trapping, the spoiling of wild areas like Siberia by the oil and other raw materials industries.

Marx’s future society of associated producers would look back on the capitalist form of production as at a nightmare. He wrote in *Capital*: “From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together are not owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias* (good heads of the household).”

The “metabolic rift” at the heart of Marx’s ecological thought has now become globalised, leading to an environmental crisis which puts in question the survival of human beings. Bellamy Foster has done a great service in researching this aspect of Marxist thought, and suggesting lines for future study. It is most significant that these ideas are being reclaimed for humanity by those working at the forefront of natural science and ecology, for this is where Marx and Engels themselves operated. It heralds future big advances in understanding the human predicament, with a view to transforming it.

Marx’s ecology is particularly important because, as the author says, “the goal is to understand and develop a revolutionary ecological view of great importance to us today; one that links social transformation with the transformation of the human relation with nature in ways that we now consider ecological”. ■

Marx’s Ecology by John Bellamy Foster. Monthly Review Press. \$18.00

MARX'S FUTURE SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS WOULD LOOK BACK ON THE CAPITALIST FORM OF PRODUCTION AS AT A NIGHTMARE

Calculating the price of “left” unity

PHIL SHARPE ASKS IF THE SOCIALIST ALLIANCES ARE JUST AN ELECTORAL BLOC BASED UPON A MINIMAL ANTI-BLAIR PLATFORM, OR SOMETHING MORE DURABLE AND PRINCIPLED

A number of 'left' groups formed a Socialist Alliance in order to contest last year's London Assembly elections. The Alliance got between 1.5% and 3% of the votes. This modest success encouraged the formation of Socialist Alliances in a number of areas.

The Socialist Alliance is dominated by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Smaller groups include the Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook, Workers Power, Alliance for Workers Liberty, and the Communist Party of Great Britain. A liaison committee has been established in order to supervise a general election campaign.

Obviously the Alliance is motivated by the desire to unite the 'left'. But it is necessary to strive to realise unity on the basis of revolutionary politics and perspectives. In this context the central question is: will the Socialist Alliance be nothing more than an electoral bloc based upon a minimal anti-Blair platform, or will it become something that is more durable and principled than populist anti-Blairism?

The adoption of the Socialist Alliance manifesto in March should provide us with a definitive answer to this question. It can presently be suggested that it is more than likely that the opportunist politics of the SWP will dominate the forthcoming manifesto. Consequently, it is necessary to understand why the politics of the SWP are pseudo-radical rather than a genuine expression of a revolutionary approach.

In the December issue of *Socialist Review* (The SWP monthly journal) Ian Birchall outlines a perspective for the overthrow of capitalism in the 21st century: “Over the first 15 years of the 21st

century more and more people become dissatisfied with New Labour's failure to tackle the real problems of society. The Tories remain incapable of offering a credible alternative. Many people stop voting altogether, but a significant minority turn to the Greens and the Socialist Alliance.

“There is a wave of strikes and angry demonstrations. A group of left Labour MPs split to form an independent party. The government calls a general election. In the new parliament the Greens, Socialist Alliance and Independent Labour have a majority. They form a coalition committed to implementing an action programme of improvements to health, education and welfare, higher pensions, and a radical expansion of public transport to counter gridlock and global warming. How are these policies to be paid for?

THE OLD SLOGAN 'TAX THE RICH'

“The old slogan 'Tax the rich' comes into its own. All income above £40,000 a year (or rather the equivalent at 2017 prices) is taxed at 90 pence in the pound. This is a popular measure, and the only people opposed are those earning £40,000 a year or those hoping to do so soon – a small minority, though including a large number of journalists and television experts who assure us that 'public opinion' will not tolerate it.”

Essentially Birchall is justifying a Red-Green coalition in order to “improve” capitalism and redevelop the welfare state. But the conditions of the growing economic crisis of world capitalism do not allow for the reintroduction of welfare state capitalism. Also any possible movement towards

the introduction of measures to oppose capitalism (which to Birchall is the next stage after the introduction of measures to redevelop "welfare state capitalism") will lead to tensions, and possible splits, in the Red-Green coalition. Both the Greens and Independent Labour "lefts" will be reluctant to go any further than a "new" and "improved" capitalism.

The question that will then be posed concerns whether the Socialist Alliance has the integrity and principles to split from the Greens and Independent Labour "lefts", and then go onto advocate the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism? Significantly Birchall provides us with no answer to this question, indeed, he does not even ask this vital strategic question!

History seems to suggest that Birchall's rosy scenario of a Red-Green coalition improving capitalism, and then moving towards socialism, is entirely utopian. In actuality the Labour Party "left" is increasing right-wing and accepts the dictates of Blair's government. The supposed radicalism of the Labour left has been shown to be completely illusory by the accommodation to Blair.

Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner were not even prepared to support Ken Livingstone for London major, because Livingstone was standing against the official Labour Party candidate Frank Dobson.

The possibility of a mass Labour left defection from the official Labour party is remote, and will probably never happen. In other words the proposed Red-Green coalition is basically a product of the SWP's hopes and aspirations that have little relationship to objective reality.

Thus Birchall's scenario of socialist transition is an expression of wishful thinking that disconnects the past and present (the whole opportunist history of the Labour "left" and the pro-capitalism of official Green politics) from the future, and so the result is a speculative and unlikely version of future "class" politics. Consequently, Birchall only formally acknowledges the necessary revolutionary role of the working class.

The central aspect of Birchall's perspective is "Tax the rich". This slogan is a typical example of radical sounding words, which actually have a reactionary political content. Tax the rich seems to be a principled idea, but it also represents the SWP's accommodation to capitalism. The SWP are essentially advocating a form of "left" state

capitalism, which means tax the rich becomes a formula to fund a new version of the capitalist welfare state.

Hence the relationship between the introduction of tax the rich and the overthrow of capitalism is left vague and ambiguous. Thus Birchall is proposing a measure of redistribution that does not tackle the continuing problem of the economic power of the transnational corporations, who can quickly relocate in order to overcome the problem of the introduction of a punitive tax system.

The question that is then posed will be that of economic power: are the working class or capitalists economically dominant? It is at this objective historical moment that Birchall's schema is fragmented. For the Labour lefts and official Greens are likely to accommodate to the capitalists, rather than advance the necessary alternative of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the working class.

Birchall's blueprint for the future is not only unrealistic and opportunist, it is also elitist. The level at which taxation of the rich starts does not occur on the basis of consultation and working class democracy. Instead it is assumed that the new tax policy will be acceptable to the working class, and so it will be possible to get support for this tax measure. But such an important question as tax structure should be decided on the basis of workers' democracy.

Only the success of international revolution can establish real economic equality in relation to taxation and wage levels. So-called "socialism in one country" will only result in economic inequality because the alternative will be discontent from experts and specialists about the level of "egalitarian" economic wage equality. (The only alternative to this discontent will be its official suppression by the imposition of Stalinist type isolation and a rigid command economy).

Birchall does not discuss these types of objective problems in relation to the complex problems of the transition to socialism because he has already

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accepted the opportunist stance of a parliamentary road to socialism and socialism in one country. Birchall could reply that his answer to these objections to his approach is outlined in his call for the formation of workers committees outside Parliament in order to support a left programme, and which has an implicit logic towards the overthrow of capitalism: "Parliament is now irrelevant. The Socialist Alliance MPs have abandoned Westminster and gone back to their localities to assist the workers committees. A national assembly of committee representatives is held which decides to dissolve parliament altogether."

Why is this comment not compatible with a revolutionary approach? The answer is that Birchall has not been able to show that the hypothetical election of a 'left' Red-Green government is the beginning of a revolutionary process. Instead Birchall's formal commitment to revolution represents wishful thinking that is imposed onto objective reality. In other words the subjective aspirations of the SWP for 'left unity' becomes the theoretical basis for justifying an evolutionary road to socialism. This represents the opportunist approach that united 'left-wing'

parliamentary struggle will inevitably lead to revolutionary struggle, and these subjective perspectives define reality and its processes rather than objective reality (and its acute class antagonisms) being the basis of analysis.

However, despite the fact that the Socialist Alliances are dominated by an opportunist SWP is it still possible that they may develop into a genuine broad and mass workers' party? Any such party would be dominated by the SWP on the basis of a minimal "left" reformist type programme. In that sense, such an organisation would constitute an opposition to a genuine revolutionary organisation that we have to build.

But it would also be necessary for genuine revolutionaries to agitate for the freedom of political minorities to propagate their views. On this basis it might become politically possible and principled to join such a new "workers party".

At present it is still not possible to make a general call of electoral support for Socialist Alliance candidates because we do not yet know the programme that they will be standing on in the next general election. Obviously unity is a good thing, but we want a unity that will be principled and durable. ■



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Time for the unions to break from Labour – old and new!

IN THE YEAR OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CRUCIAL TAFF VALE JUDGEMENT – WHICH SPURRED THE TRADE UNIONS TO BREAK WITH THE LIBERALS AND FOUND THE LABOUR PARTY – JOHN EDEN ARGUES THAT IT IS TIME FOR A SIMILAR MOMENTOUS POLITICAL BREAK

This year marks the centenary of the notorious anti-trade union “Taff Vale Judgement”. The House of Lords’ decision of July 1901 meant that union officials could be sued for damages in industrial disputes, making effective action illegal.

The judgement arose out of a strike by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) in August 1900 in South Wales against the Taff Vale Railway Company, for higher wages and union recognition.

The strike ended within a fortnight when the company brought in strike-breakers and the workers gained none of their demands. The subsequent legal judgement was the spur for the trade unions to elect to parliament MPs with a view to changing the law. At that time there were two union-backed MPs, including the general secretary of the ASRS, Richard Bell. In 1906, some 60 union-sponsored MPs were elected and the Labour Party formally came into existence.



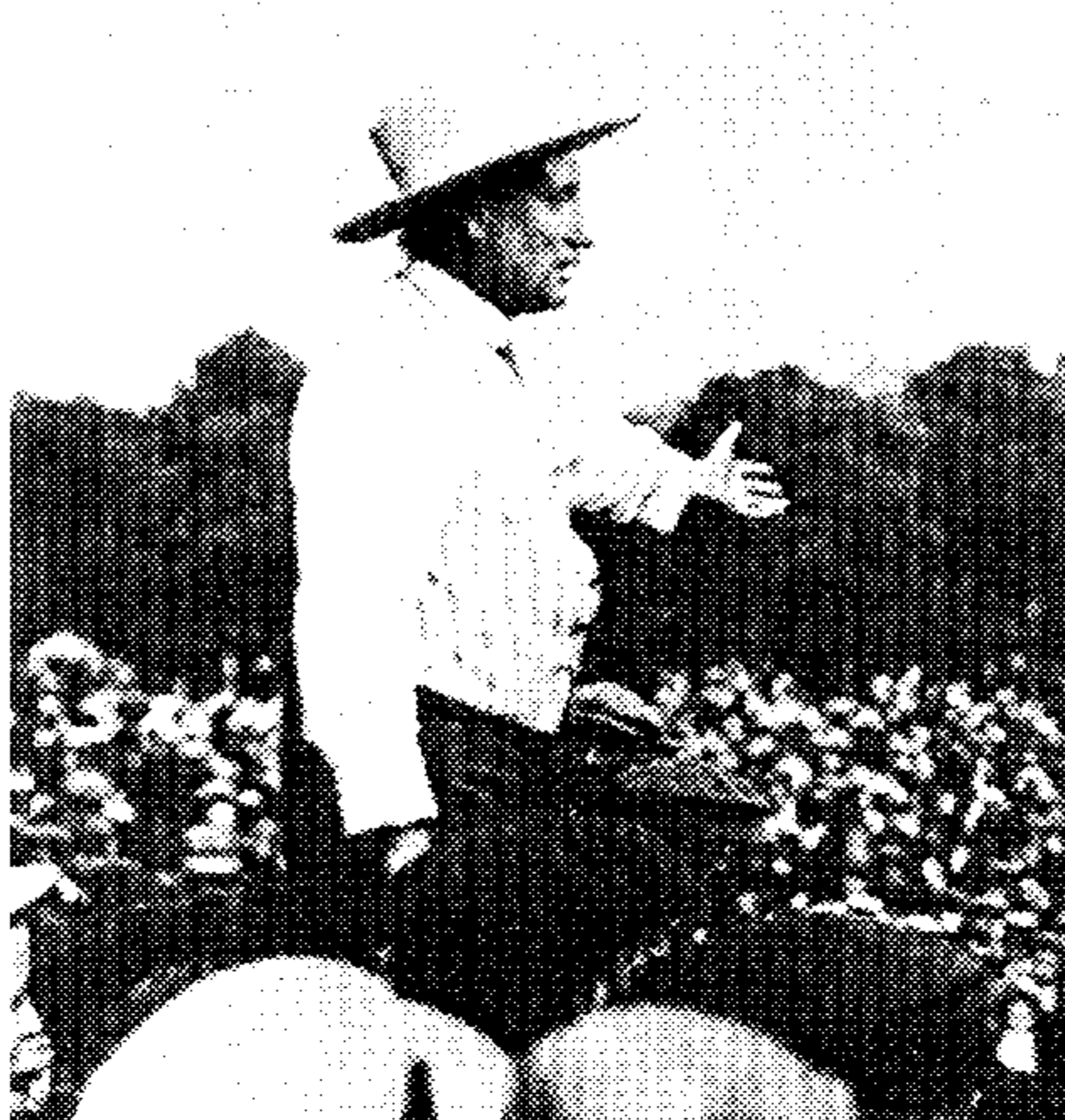
Victor Grayson, 1st Socialist MP

The Tories lost the election to the Liberals, who under pressure from the Labour MPs, repealed the Taff Vale judgement. The Trades Disputes Act of 1906 gave unions immunity from civil damages. This meant that the working class, through the unions, could now fight for a better life against the capitalist class without the threat of legal action.

The 1901 judgement should be seen in the wider context of the international struggle between the working and capitalist class, and between the opposing national capitalists.

This was the period of the emergence of imperialism. The rapid growth in the last quarter of the 19th century of other capitalist powers to rival

THE 1901 TAFF VALE JUDGEMENT SHOULD BE SEEN IN THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE WORKING AND CAPITALIST CLASS



Ben Tillet, leader of the great Dock Strike of 1889



Eleanor Marx

Britain, such as France, Germany, USA and Japan had led to the intensification of the class struggle within these and other nations.

Increased competition between the imperialist powers over world raw materials and profits, meant that any demands for better wages and living conditions by the working class reduced the profits of the capitalists, already under threat from world competition. Trade unionism would have to be destroyed. But trade unionism in Britain and other parts of the world had grown rapidly from the late 1880s in what was to become known as "New Unionism".

This movement, which involved the less conservative unskilled working class, was greatly influenced by Marxists, and the struggles took on a greater political dimension. Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor was among many socialists who took part in the struggle of "New Unionism". A part of the political character of the struggle was the demand for an independent party to represent labour.

The railway union, the ASRS, was instrumental in setting up the Labour Representation

Committee, which eventually became known as the Labour Party. At the TUC of 1899, under the influence of the Scottish TUC, a resolution proposed by Tom Steels of the Doncaster branch of the ASRS was passed to set up the LRC, which held its first conference in February 1900.

New Labour is not part of that tradition. Blair is proud of the fact that his government retained most of the anti-union laws passed by the Thatcher government. Unions are still liable to be fined for "unlawful" strikes.

The present rail capitalists know whatever happens on safety and whatever losses they make, neither they nor their shareholders will lose. New Labour will pump in the subsidies and allow fares to rise, going for cheaper options on safety despite the evidence from Paddington and other disasters.

Struggles are coming up on the railways again on the centenary of Taff Vale. The time has come to build again a new, independent but – this time – revolutionary party. That is the task the Movement for a Socialist Future has set itself! It is time for the unions to break from Labour – Old and New! ■

Ray Harrington May 21, 1948 - January 15, 2001

Socialist Future editorial board is sad to report the death of Ray Harrington. By profession a technical writer, Ray experienced early the effects of globalisation, working in Holland and Germany. During the 1970s and 1980s he was a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Hertfordshire. Ray joined the Socialist Future Group in 1994. He wrote articles on ecology and technology for Socialist Future, as well as participating in workshops, camps and a trip to Russia for political and philosophical discussions.

A theory for revolutionary change

PHIL WALDEN CHALLENGES THE PREJUDICES OF POST-MODERNISM

To change the world we need to understand it. For that we require a way of analysing reality that brings us closer to the movement of economic, political and social life in the 21st century.

This brings us immediately up against the popular prejudice that “reality is what you make of it” and that to argue for any other approach is to “impose” on people. The beauty of this “post-modern” outlook, of course, is that it leaves the status quo unchallenged.

Although Karl Marx developed his approach in the 19th century, the method he outlined, which others like Frederick Engels developed, remains as crucial for today as it was then.

Commentators in papers like the *Financial Times*, in fact, often refer to Marx’s concepts when trying to get to grips with the manic logic of global capitalism. Michael Prowse, for example, in his article headlined “Consumption, consumption, consumption”, wrote:

“This new Britain is rich in everything that can be readily priced and sold on the market, and poor in everything that cannot be easily commodified. Market forces have turned the urban landscape into a parody of shop-until-you-drop America (which I know well, having spent six years in Washington DC). The London traffic is now relentless seven days a week. Even Sunday has its rush hour as the shoppers flood into the malls to pay their respects to Mammon. When I ventured out this week, I began to understand what Karl Marx meant when he wrote of ‘commodity fetishism’. The metropolis

seemed to be utterly in thrall to capitalists and their commodities.” (September 16, 2000).

Marx developed the approach of historical materialism, which showed that class struggle (the conflict between the productive forces and the existing relations of production) was the main cause of historical transformation. He showed that the main political force for revolutionary change was the working class. So the possibility of overcoming the exploitation of capitalism was located within modern and changing reality.

Marx demonstrated that only social ownership could establish the possibility for co-operative, democratic and planned productive activity. Furthermore, Marx argued that it was not possible to reconcile the different perspectives of reform and revolution. Principled socialism wasn’t about accommodation to the state, but its overthrow.

The 19th century saw rapid advances in both natural and social sciences. Marx and Engels championed the discoveries of people like Charles Darwin and his book *On the Origin of the Species*. Engels established a distinctive Marxist standpoint about these new advances in knowledge.

He developed a dynamic conception of the objective, material world of matter in motion,

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which showed that the world consisted of change and becoming, and this was expressed by dialectical laws of contradiction and the negation of the negation.

Lenin defended this materialist outlook against the view that 20th century science was showing that matter had disappeared, or that reality could be reduced to the role of the thinking subject, or observer.

He argued that whilst science may continually modify or change our particular conceptions of reality it is still possible to show that the materialist standpoint concerning an independent material reality remains valid. As Gerry Healy later showed, if materialist theory is repudiated we can end up justifying egotistical and self-created images of the world.

THE IDEOLOGICAL CLIMATE

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created the ideological climate for many people to associate Marxism with Stalinist bureaucratic elitism and repression. Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin 1992) announced that capitalism had won the class struggle and was now the definitive historical future.

Furthermore, post-modern philosophy maintained that Marxism was now "antiquated" because it allegedly defended monolithic and absolute universal truths about the necessity of revolutionary change.

But the domination of the world by giant corporations is increasingly rejected by people who want to understand how to change things. Engels and Lenin's emphasis on contradiction helps us to understand that reality is presently based upon social antagonism and class conflict. Despite the optimism of the apologists for capitalism the exploitative and oppressive nature of capitalism remains.

We live in a global world economy that is still based upon the exploitation of wage labour by capital. Hence the perspective of world revolution is still necessary, even if it has to be continually modified in accordance with the constant changes within social reality.

The changes in the nature of global capitalism, and other questions about social reality, do not do

away with the necessity for Marxist theory as the basis for principled political practice. Rather it is necessary to continually enrich our theory.

One important argument against the above analysis could be: if Marxism is still an intelligible doctrine why don't more people support it? The answer to this question is contained in the Marxist view that social being is the primary basis for understanding social consciousness.

In other words, the existing forms of human activity under capitalist social relations of production continually generate illusions and artificial images that make it difficult for people to understand capitalism and the need to transcend it. Post-modern philosophy is just one form of the adaptation to these idealist images of reality, that is to say it accepts the accomplished fact of capitalism.

Post-modernism equates immediate sensations with reality. By contrast Marxism has the explanatory power to comprehend the objective reality behind these images and to show the full extent of the continuing exploitative character of capitalism. We could add that Marxism is not just against capitalism but continues to show why an alternative system is required in order to realise the human aspiration of a classless society.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The ecology movement basically support the view that small is beautiful and a small-scale economy will realise economic needs in terms that are compatible with the requirements of nature. This sentiment is ethical and noble but it does not tackle the problem that the world economy is dominated by transnational corporations.

It is true that the technological development that occurs under capitalism does create the potential for the material well-being of the people of the world. Marx showed, however, that social improvement is not an automatic or mechanical process but requires the conscious intervention of human beings.

In this context only a democratic plan of production can achieve the aims of humanity. The only social force that can challenge the bastions of global capital remains the international working class. ■

Out from the shadow of a martyr



IN THE SHADOW OF A SAINT

BY KEN WIWA. DOUBLEDAY. £16.99.

REVIEWED BY CORINNA LOTZ

It is difficult to do justice to Ken Wiwa's sparkling book, which is a highly personal story and a political history all at once. His story is a personal odyssey, the story of a boy growing up, and "a portrait of the artist as a young man" – to use James Joyce's words.

Wiwa's story is about the need to rebel and break in some way with one's parents to become an independent individual with the confidence to create a future. It is also the account of the life and death of a people's hero and political campaigner, who was murdered by the willing executioners of a global corporation.

Wiwa's restless movement is fired by the search for his own identity and this eventually becomes the story of Everyman. He constructs his book as a spiral through time, shifting effortlessly from Britain to post-colonial Africa, to Britain, Australia and even Burma. Sharply conflicting strands of existence are so tightly interwoven that it is hard to unravel them.

The "Saint" of the book's title is Ken Wiwa's father, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, one of Nigeria's best-loved writers. He was a tireless campaigner on behalf of his people, the Ogoni who live in the Niger Delta. On November 10, 1995 he and eight other Ogoni were executed by the Nigerian military.

Shell oil and its puppet regime headed by General Abacha in Nigeria thereby sought to decapitate MOSOP, the movement founded by Wiwa to lead a struggle against the genocide of his people, the Ogoni.

Throughout the 1980s, Saro-Wiwa denounced the oil companies and the ethnic majority oppressors in Nigeria. But by 1992 he reached the conclusion, his son writes, "that in a country with 60 per cent illiteracy, where books were a luxury item, writers and writing could not change or move society".

He decided to mobilise the Ogoni against the oil industry and the military dictators running his country. Thus he set himself on a collision course with powerful and ruthless opponents. "Although", his son writes, "the oil industry in Nigeria was nationalised in 1977

– and Shell operates in a joint venture with the government – Shell wears the trousers in the relationship.... Shell Nigeria's holding company, Shell International Petroleum Company (SIPC) is one of the biggest companies in the world; its annual turnover of \$100 billion dwarfs Nigeria's annual budget of some \$14 billion."

These figures sum up how companies like Shell can dictate the politics of the densely-populated Niger River delta, wreak havoc with its eco-system and destroy those who oppose the genocide of their people. More than these stark facts, the book shows how a generation, shaped by the newly-won

WIWA'S RESTLESS MOVEMENT IS FIRED BY THE SEARCH FOR HIS OWN IDENTITY AND THIS EVENTUALLY BECOMES THE STORY OF EVERYMAN

independence era of the 1960s, later saw the movement for national independence become transformed into a struggle directly against the global companies.

It is they who dictate the policies of national leaders in Africa today, from Nigeria to South Africa. Ken Wiwa writes: "Oil was discovered in Ogoni in 1958, but after 30 years of exploration, after an estimated 900 million barrels had been extracted from the land, the region had very little to show for it. There was little electricity or pipe-borne water in the community; schools and hospitals were chronically underfunded, poorly staffed and badly maintained. A community of subsistence farmers was threatened by the effects of the oil industry."

THE DECISIVE ROLE

Sketching out his father's role in the Ogoni movement, Wiwa shows the decisive role of leadership. "My father had a love-hate relationship with Ogoni. Although he was proud of his roots, he despised the slavish mentality and our poor reputation. When he formed MOSOP [in 1990], he was determined to change all that, but even he was surprised at how quickly the organisation altered our people's psyche.

"In many respects, my father was MOSOP. He set up the organisation, and he wrote, published and persuaded the Ogoni people to sign the Ogoni bill of rights ...he bullied, cajoled, persuaded and organised MOSOP into an effective movement. He read extensively about grass-roots organisations... organising MOSOP into an umbrella group within democratic sub-units that reflected different social classes within the community. There were MOSOP sub-units for traditional rulers, chiefs, students, youths, church groups, professionals and women. The goal was to involve everyone in the decision-making process. MOSOP was designed as a bottom-up organisation."

Three years after the foundation of MOSOP, a mass movement of Ogoni emerged. Almost two-thirds of the population marched peacefully on January 4, 1993. Within four months a savage reign of terror against the Ogoni was unleashed. In April, Saro-Wiwa was arrested and released twice.

By June, Nigeria had elections, which ended up in a military coup by Defence Minister General Abacha in November. After Abacha's seizure of power, the repression directed against MOSOP culminated in the final frame-up, arrest and

detention of Ken Saro-Wiwa on May 21, 1994.

These events were certainly already inscribed on the hearts of the Ogoni before the writing of this book. But *In the Shadow of a Saint* goes further than outlining this terrible story. Ken Junior describes his quest for his father after he lost him, and at the same time for his own identity, which for a long time he felt his father had robbed him of. This book tells how eventually, and after travelling thousands of miles, he came to terms with not only his father but with himself, and by doing so discovers – and creates – his own identity.

By the age of 14 "I was already living a double life," he writes, "negotiating between two identities: at school I saw myself as English, but at home I was African. My English friends rarely met or knew my African alter ego, and my parents barely knew about my other life as an English schoolboy."

After his public school education in Britain and free from direct political responsibilities, Ken Junior was not enthusiastic about returning to Nigeria in 1992. His relationship with his father was full of tension, as he tried to resist being absorbed, as Ken Junior saw it, into the elder Saro-Wiwa's larger-than-life personality.

PAINFULLY HONEST

He is painfully honest about how he often hated his father and how he resented being the son of a political leader. He does not shirk from grasping the nettle of this difficult relationship. And it is his frankness which makes the book real and often heart-rending.

"Guilt stalks the relatives of martyrs," he writes. And more: "... the troubled heart of the matter is this: to make the world safe for their children, martyrs must sacrifice their children. And unless you are an unquestioning and devoted supporter, the sacrifice may seem harsh, even cruel."

He describes how his father was battling to meet the intolerable demands on him, months before his final arrest, and his own unsympathetic reaction: "I just couldn't see how he could be leading a struggle that he said was for the future, for us, his children, while he neglected those children's immediate needs and well-being.... So I turned my back on him."

After his father's arrest, however, Ken Junior fought tenaciously to defend him and prevent his execution. He travelled to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Auckland,

just after Saro-Wiwa was sentenced to death. Ken tried in vain to get an audience with Nelson Mandela, to ask him to intercede with General Abacha. "I was left with no doubt that the president's men did not want me anywhere near him.... His insistence on 'quiet diplomacy' and 'constructive engagement' mystified human rights campaigners and infuriated Nigerian pro-democracy activists."

Mandela was by now in the same position as the conservatives in the Ogoni movement, whom Saro-Wiwa had called "gerontocrats". These pro-bourgeois elements in the national movement are always, in Saro-Wiwa's own words, "quite content to take the crumbs of today in preference for the riches of tomorrow. They collaborate with our enemies in return for personal advantages."

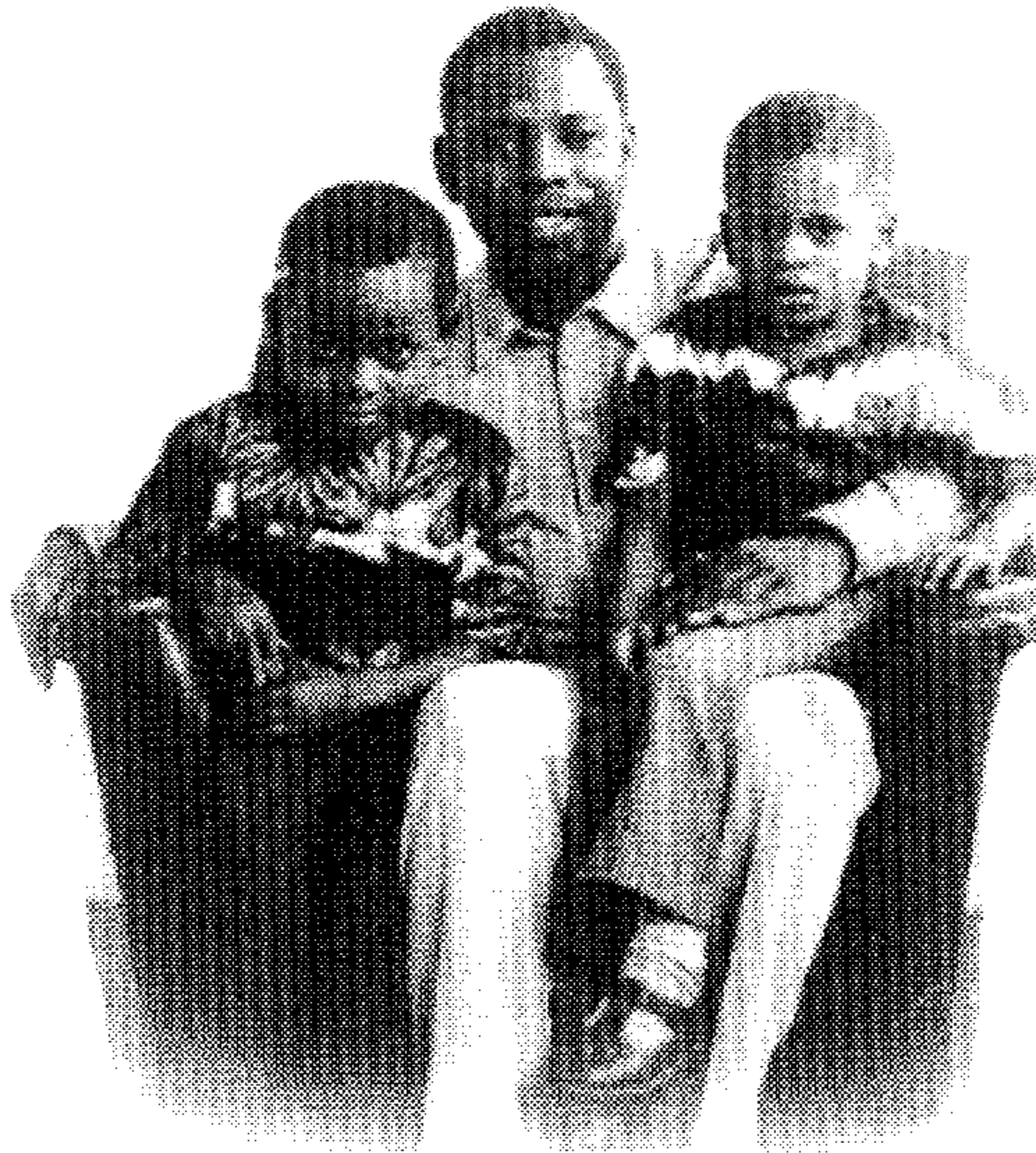
Ken was bitterly disappointed by Mandela's refusal to try to save his father and the other Ogoni martyrs, but suggests that South Africa's president was "badly advised". This surprising, but misplaced generosity, reveals a weakness in Wiwa's own political understanding. By 1995, five years after Mandela's release from prison, the ANC leader's priority was to maintain the status quo

between the rule of the global companies in Africa and the black masses. This is why he was not prepared to tip the scales in Auckland on behalf of the jailed Ogoni leaders.

The final poignant chapter is set a year ago this April. It is the time of the funeral which was to inter the remains of the nine Ogoni executed in 1995. When Ken arrives at Port Harcourt airport, his father's final statement to the tribunal is read out before a crowd of a thousand Ogoni.

"My lord, we all stand before history. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial... I predict that the scene here will be played and replayed by generations yet unborn. Some have already cast themselves in the role of villains, some are tragic victims, some still have a chance to redeem themselves. The choice is for individuals...."

In the Shadow of a Saint is a morality tale for the 21st century, a time in history when no country, people or individual can avoid the all-pervasive impact of global capitalism. In the end Ken Wiwa attains fulfilment doing what at first had appeared as an intolerable burden – an enlightening example of Hegel's maxim that freedom is the recognition of necessity. ■



Ken Saro-Wiwa with his children

How the US spied on refugees from Hitler

COMMUNAZIS – FBI SURVEILLANCE OF GERMAN ÉMIGRÉ WRITERS BY ALEXANDER STEPHAN, YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS £20

The persecution of Hollywood scriptwriters by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI was immortalised by Woody Allen and Zero Mostel in a 1970s film *The Front*.

But now, for the first time, the full story of how the FBI and other US intelligence agencies shadowed every major – and many minor – German writer who sought refuge from Hitler can be told.

US academic, Alexander Stephan has obtained 14,000 pages of documents released by the US intelligence services which reflect the lives of émigré writers in amazing detail.

The Freedom of Information Act passed by Congress in the 1960s and the Privacy Act following the Watergate affair, now allows individuals and researchers unique access to documents denied to citizens of most other states.

This legislation makes the United States the exception to the rule that intelligence agency files can only be obtained during revolution, war or invasion by another state.

Stephan shows almost entirely through the US state's own documents how Hoover's FBI, and other agencies spied on refugee writers, not only in New York and Los Angeles but even outside the United States, in countries like Mexico.

He shows how the world of US secret surveillance between the 1930s and 1950s was "marked by xenophobia, political narrowness, and blinkered ideology".

Fantasy was no match for reality in J. Edgar Hoover's distorted mirror world, peopled by those who the FBI director termed "Red Fascists".

Stephan's book, first published in German in 1995, provides a thumbnail guide to Hoover's shadowy empire which mushroomed during Franklin D. Roosevelt's three terms of office.

The FBI became a giant vacuum cleaner which

processed vast amounts of information and orchestrated the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS), the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – later to become the CIA – , and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

Special Agents in Charge (SAC) like R.B. Hood, and his crew of G-men in Los Angeles, bugged and burgled their way across the United States to tail every writer in exile from Nazi Germany.

Not only direct gumshoe surveillance, wire tapping, mail interception, but translating and reading hundreds of letters, articles, plays and books were all part of the G-men's remit.

LIBERAL OPPONENT

The resources devoted to monitoring Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann and his family were phenomenal, even though the author was a liberal rather than left-wing opponent of the Hitler regime.

Mann had met with President Roosevelt in 1935. The author of *Buddenbrooks*, *Death in Venice* and *The Magic Mountain* was, in Stephan's words, "the uncrowned king of the German exile colony in America".

Documents show how the State Department and the OSS manipulated Mann to thwart a plan by German anti-Fascists to make Mann the head of a German government in exile.

Mann's brother Heinrich was relatively unknown in the United States. His wife and daughter had been in Nazi concentration camps and he was very short of funds, verging on poverty. Nonetheless, the FBI pursued him continuously, even beyond his death.

The case of Thomas Mann's daughter Erika Mann is unusual. From 1940 to the early 1950s, she voluntarily and repeatedly supplied information on various topics, including her fellow exiles.

In a peculiar incident, in 1951, the FBI hoped to get information from her about the disappearance of Guy Burgess and Kim Philby, who had belonged to the same circle as her former husband, the poet W.H.Auden. She produced no new leads, but instead provided evidence of her antipathy to the Communist International and the Communist Party.

Erika Mann was under close surveillance by the Bureau "while she fed it and HUAC with information" and as she became aware of this, she felt increasingly intimidated.

As Stephan shows, the US secret state only rarely threatened its targets physically, but there was psychological pressure on her, as much as on those who were less inclined to co-operate with the G-men.

Mann withdrew her application for US citizenship at the start of the 1950s and during a stay in Switzerland suffered severe depression. According to her father's biographers she believed that "the American bloodhounds were waiting for her to come back to intern and dehumanise her".

The FBI files on playwright Bertolt Brecht run to over 400 pages. The niceties of legality did not hamper intensive surveillance. "Hoover's agents", Stephan writes, "read, recorded, translated, indexed and analysed hundreds of letters to and from Brecht over the years."

ENDLESS INTERROGATION

Brecht's dossier, large as it is, is minute in comparison to that of author Lion Feuchtwanger, whose state files run to nearly 1,000 pages. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service officials between 1942 and 1958 subjected him and his wife Marta to endless interrogations. By 1957 Feuchtwanger was suffering from terminal cancer.

Deprived of his German nationality by the Third Reich as well as the post war Federal Republic, Feuchtwanger's application for US naturalisation was denied. He died a stateless exile a few months later.

While Fascism ruled in Germany and the Civil War raged in Spain, Mexican President Cardenas' generous immigration policy gave many European exiles a relatively safe home. It provided a chance to found organisations, magazines and a publishing house without interference and occasionally even with support from Mexico itself.

Astoundingly, although Mexico was a sovereign state, exiles there became a major target for

Hoover's G-men, organised in the Special Intelligence Service (SIS). SIS got blanket permission from the Mexican government to monitor mail and cable traffic to and from the country.

The US Office of Censorship spent thousands of hours intercepting and translating letters, manuscripts including entire issues of the emigre magazine *Freies Deutschland*, while their bosses in Washington studied the political positions of the "Communazis".

The FBI and military services kept almost 2,000 pages on Anna Seghers, author of the best-seller *The Seventh Cross*, and writers like Ludwig Renn, Egon Erwin Kisch and Bodo Uhse. FBI headquarters in Washington, and the New York and Mexico field offices collected material on Seghers with help from other cities across the US.

Seghers had been refused entry into the US at Ellis Island and was forced to move on to Mexico in 1941. FBI censors intercepted the manuscript of her novella masterpiece *The Excursion of the Dead Girls* and made the first translation, "a rarity in the history of literature", as Stephan comments dryly.

In a memorandum sent to the State Department before the war ended in Europe, Hoover asks for "a review of official records in Europe", plus "separate requests of a specific nature... for any information available concerning particular individuals".

Stephan believes Hoover wanted State Department operatives to ransack the files "of the Gestapo, the SS, Nazi counter-intelligence, the Reich Ministry of the Interior, the Foreign Affairs Office in Germany and of the political police and the Vichy government in France, for what he calls 'authentic information' about left wing people who are the mutual opponents of the United States, the Nazis and Vichy".

Stephan concludes: "One thing we certainly know from the FBI files on Seghers: those in our time who think differently from the majority and who make their views public will not escape monitoring by modern states, not in Mainz or Mexico, not in New York or Berlin". ■

**IN ADDITION TO
MAIL AND
TELEPHONE
MONITORING AND
SURVEILLANCE, THE
FBI USED SPIES AND
INFORMANTS WHO
ARE STILL
PROTECTED TODAY**



Picturing the peoples' game

A MARVELLOUS SELECTION OF IMAGES SHOWS HOW FOOTBALL PHOTOGRAPHS NEED NOT JUST BE FOR DEDICATED FANS, BUT CAN EQUALLY BE APPRECIATED AS A WORKS OF ART, SAYS CORINNA LOTZ

The game in all its glory features in True Football, 100 photos from the Hulton Getty and All Sports Photo Library. Classic images include Pele in action, Maradona's "Hand of God", Gascoigne's tears, The White Horse Cup Final, a roll call of legendary players including Dixie Dean, Stanley Matthews, Pele, Diego Maradona, Kevin Keegan

and current stars Ronaldo, Michael Owen and David Beckham.

The game's majesty is revealed in sweeping views of massive crowds at Hampden Park and Wembley, its horror at Heysel and Hillsborough. Football's uniquely balletic grace of gesture and movement is shown in more and more detail as the technique advances over one and a half centuries since the first football photograph of 1855.

This imaginative display is just around the corner from Charing Cross station at the Proud Gallery, which despite its modest size is one of London's most dynamic and popular spaces: "We tried to choose pictures which really showed the art of the game and the art of the photography of the game. It shows that photography is the way beautiful moments can be picked up," gallery owner





Alex Proud says. "Also just as importantly. We wanted to get across how football until recently was a game for the masses. It is a tribute to an era of football, which is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

"It shows how much football has changed over the last ten years, maybe not all for the bad. But it's important, especially for a new generation of people for whom buying a Man United replica shirt

is their first experience of football. They deserve to be shown the proper legacy of the game – its social mass nature, its working class heritage. I think that's really important," Proud says.

One reason things have changed is the way ticket prices have gone up. The cheapest seat at Arsenal is now £400 a year, for example.

"I think safe terraces should be brought back into the game," Proud believes. "If it was done in the right way, that would allow a lot more people back into the game, and also create a great atmosphere.

"New Labour's Sports minister Kate Hooey suggested this but got her ass banged for a bit of free thinking. That's not allowed under Blair."

"The problem a lot of the clubs are going to have soon is that if they continue putting their prices up and getting more and more people like me – upper middle class people – the atmosphere will die. The game will be left with empty stadiums.

"I've already noticed that the atmosphere at the stadium at Arsenal has dropped in the past few years, as less and less working class people watch the game."

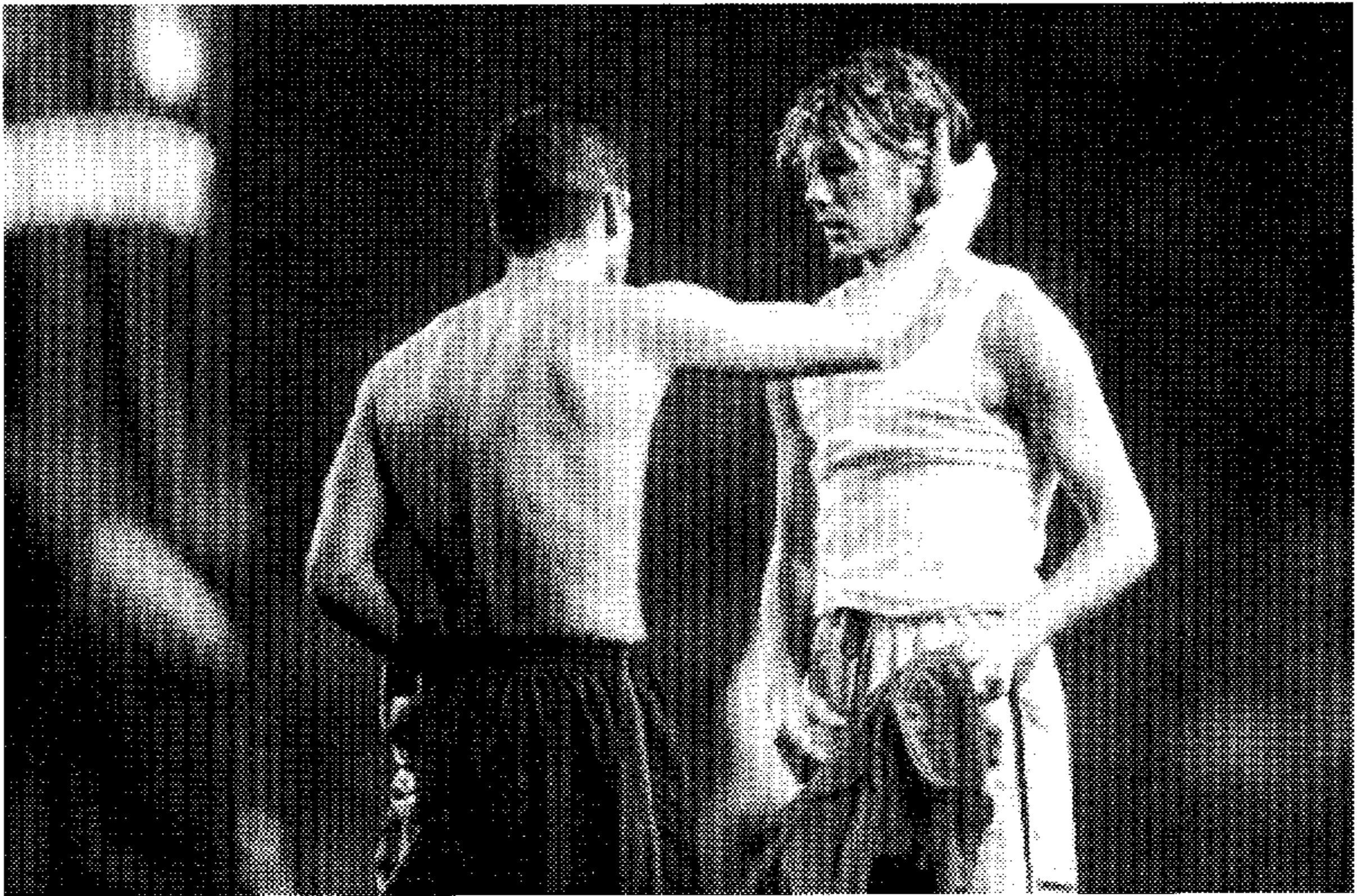
Proud blames the clubs for profiteering out of the huge sums of money, which pour in from the global sponsors. "The clubs do have the choice," he insists.

Does he think that clubs could be collectively owned by the fans, players and managers?

"In the ideal world we would have the Barcelona mode where the fans own the club. It's too big business now. Man United turned over £100s of millions last year.

"It's in football's interest for the fans to run things in the long run. It would be great to have fans on the boards, since it is they and their fathers who made the club over the years.

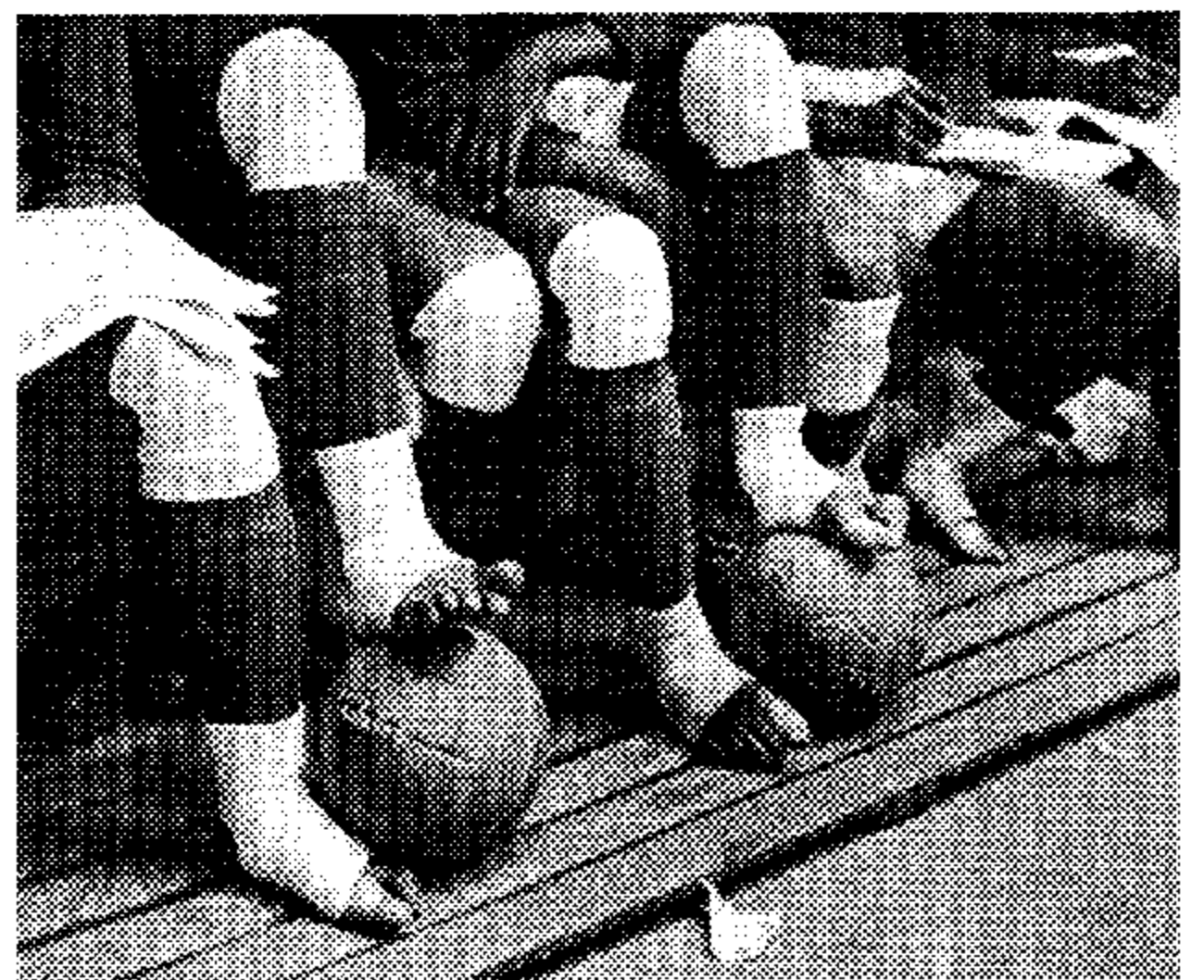




Proud likes courting controversy. He is a strong believer in cocking a snook at politicians, whether it is New Labour's thought police or the Tories. In May his gallery will commemorate five years since the downfall of the Conservatives with a special show called *The Tory Story*.

Drawing in crowds does not mean pandering to middle class ideas about "popularity". The attendance figures at the gallery have shown that politically exciting shows have drawn substantial interest.

"The most popular exhibition we had last year,"





True Football is on until March 4 at Proud Galleries, 5 Buckingham Street WC2. 10am-7pm every day. Entry £2/£1. Embankment/Charing Cross Tube. Telephone 020 7839 4942. Email alex@proud.demon.co.uk

he says, "was *Underexposed*, a history of censorship. People came from a wide social spectrum: there were a huge amount of Radio 4 listeners. The show was much more about political censorship than a blood and gore show.

"We hope to do that with the football show. It is about putting on things that allow people to place themselves in a social context, historically or politically. That's what I want to do. You don't have to dumb down to appeal to the masses. I think that's nonsense. Middle class people often sneer at those who read *The Sun*, for example. Actually most workers who read *The Sun* know it's nonsense. The idea of dumbing down is based on the middle class perception of the working class.

"We appeal just as much to people who read the tabloids as well as the broadsheets. I like the fact that we've got adverts for the show in football programmes and on beer mats. We put music and TV on and nobody is looking down on you in our gallery. It's a place where people can relax and feel at home."

The gallery has a 50% first time visitor rate. "We get a lot of working class people from the phone calls who are obviously people who have never been to a gallery before," Proud says. "One of our top three objectives is to bring new people into the gallery and let them going away feeling – that was great, I want to go again!"

He agrees that there is almost certainly a mafia in the art world – "the same names appearing on certain boards, giving out awards, the same artists in the galleries. There is definitely a Mafia. But it's a tricky thing.

"On the one hand there are a lot of people out there who have done good things. Unfortunately sometimes the very same people who have brought

lots of people into the galleries are controlling the show. It's got a grubby feel, a bit like party political funding. It's all too interconnected. Once you are an artist on that roster of certain people and certain awards your career is pretty well made.

"There are some great spaces out there – like the Barbican gallery, the Hayward gallery, the National Portrait Gallery have a wide appeal – they aren't involved in the Saatchi circle. The Saatchis have a great space but what is he doing buying up an artist's entire collection, what is he doing by monopolising the market?

"Photography is an art form which is very much of its time. The market for it is growing. It's happening quickly. It's an art form which is growing. You don't have to have that much art education to be able to enjoy it. Most people were brought up with cameras and photography. This makes photos so accessible."

Unusually, the Proud gallery is not financed mainly by sales, but by sponsorship from corporations which give large amounts of money. Budweiser is underwriting the current exhibition. People pay £2 or £1 to get in and can, if they wish, buy books selected from photo shows such as those from the Hulton Getty collection and Nikon Press Awards at a relatively modest £10 each.

About 50,000 people visit the gallery each year, making it the most popular non-public funded gallery in Europe. "We don't get a penny from anyone except corporate sponsors," Proud says. He feels that socialists can hit back at the right wing by taking advantage of corporate sponsorship.

Perhaps ironically this gives him a financial freedom, which may be the envy of directors of state-funded galleries. ■

Picasso as political icon

PICASSO – THE COMMUNIST YEARS

GERTJE UTLEY, YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS £35

Pablo Picasso, arguably the greatest artist of the 20th century, in his art stood for everything that Communist Parties were accustomed to denouncing.

Stalin and his henchman Zhdanov, imposed the doctrine of Socialist Realism in the early 1930s as the only acceptable style in the visual arts.

Picasso's great adventure with George Braque in the years before World War I, however, produced an anti-naturalist style – Cubism. Together they sparked off an artistic movement which revolutionised the visual arts for the coming centuries.

A virtuoso in all styles of drawing, painting and sculpture, a master of Surrealism and other styles, Picasso developed Cubist principles of space and form throughout his artistic career.

His political masterpiece, *Guernica*, painted to support the Spanish revolution is a heroic fusion of the Cubist dislocation of space with Surrealist imagery.

The French Communist Party (PCF) from the 1930s adhered to Zhdanov's dogma of Socialist Realism. It was clearly in opposition to the new styles developed by Picasso and others in the decades running up to World War II.

Therefore, when Picasso joined the French Communist Party in October 1944, many people were surprised.

Why did he join? And was his friend the poet Jean Cocteau right when he remarked that joining the PCF was the "first ever anti-revolutionary gesture by Picasso"? And, equally important, why did Picasso remain a loyal member until the end of his life, despite the sharp differences between him and the party that often surfaced? Gertje Utley's book goes a long way to answering these questions.

Picasso's commitment to communism is ignored in most of the innumerable writings about him. But in reality, his political beliefs were central to his very being. He took a strong stand against Fascism, militarism and war.

Before World War II, Picasso's sympathies, backed up with generous donations, lay with the revolutionary left (FAI and POUM) rather than the Republican government when it came under Stalinist control, even though he created *Guernica* at the request of the Spanish Republic.

It was the decision to remain in Paris during the years of the German Occupation which drew Picasso closer into the circle of writers and artists which included Resistance fighters, Communist Party members and sympathisers.

Utley draws together a wealth of information and personal recollections showing how Picasso's studio became a haven for anti-fascists, "where even members of the underground felt safe".

At the same time, staying in Paris separated Picasso from anti-Stalinist intellectuals, such as Surrealist leader André Breton, who could have provided a sympathetic communist alternative.

Picasso's close friend, the poet Paul Eluard, re-joined the PCF in 1943 and many other French intellectuals followed. Picasso found in the PCF "a fatherland" where he could be among brothers and friends.

Eluard and a large group of artists and writers including Louis Aragon provided Picasso with a rationale which seemed to reconcile the anti-creative dogmas of Stalinism with his own modernist revolution in art.

Utley shows how, even as Eluard and Aragon wrote eulogies to Stalin, and paid lip service to "Socialist Realism" they sought at the same time to make Picasso's art acceptable to the party.

Picasso was reduced to tears in 1948 while attending the Stalinist Congrès Mondial des Intellectuals pour la Paix in Wroclaw, Poland where he was criticised for the "decadent and bourgeois manner of his art". Nonetheless he remained a party member, donating innumerable works, large sums of money and appearing at many PCF and international events.

When Stalin died in 1953 a notorious scandal

erupted over Picasso's drawing of Stalin, which Aragon commissioned for the front page of PCF cultural journal *Les Lettres Francaises*. Denunciations of the portrait poured in.

But an elaborate network of cynical operators, from PCF Secretary General Maurice Thorez downwards, kept Picasso on board, apologising for the dogmas and crimes of Stalinism to make them less obnoxious to the artist.

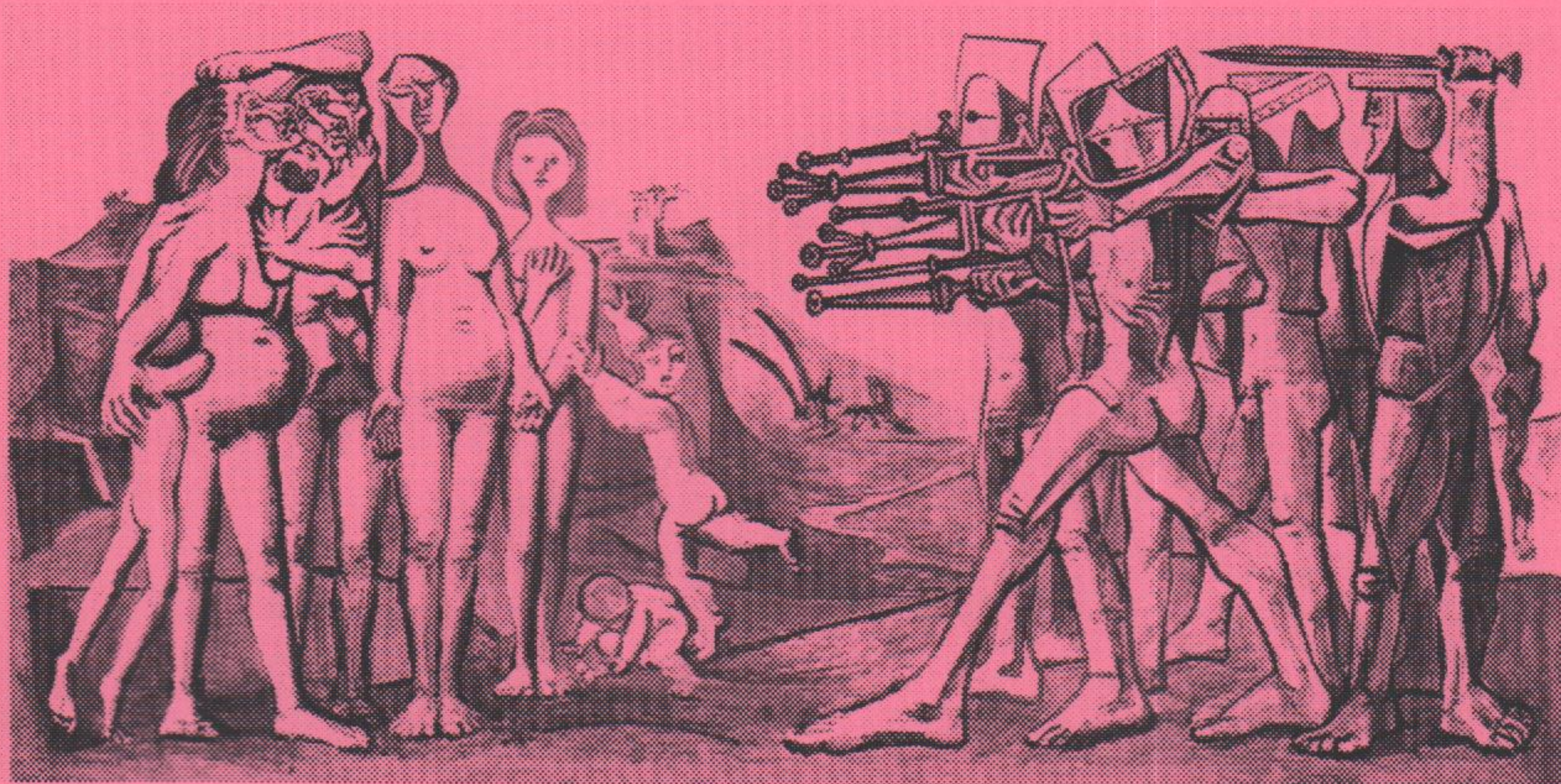
Only a year later, the PCF was forced to acknowledge at least some of Stalin's crimes and apologise for its attack on Picasso. He showed he had their measure when he said "Don't you think that soon they will find that my portrait is too nice?"

Picasso refused to condemn the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but his painting *Massacre in Korea*

was used by people in the streets of Warsaw to show their support for the victims of the tanks. This infuriated the PCF but secretly pleased Picasso. In private he deplored the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, but in public he remained silent.

Picasso needed the party as an intellectual home and as a way of reaching the masses. The PCF needed him as a popular figurehead and status symbol more than he needed them. This gave him a measure of independence denied to others.

Cocteau was right when he warned that there was a reactionary aspect to Picasso's relationship to the PCF. His attempts to make his work acceptable to them tended to dull his creative edge and he could not repeat the powerful fusion of the symbolic and political which characterised *Guernica*. ■



Picasso's Massacre in Korea

Towards Lightness

Stephen Lacey Gallery presents young Japanese sculptor Noriaki Maeda, who uses wood, steel, bronze and acrylic to articulate the space around itself and combine movement with rest, light with colour. *Until February 17 at 1 Crawford Passage, Ray Street, London EC1. Tel: 020 7837 5507. Open Tues-Fri 11am-6pm Sat 12-4. Admission free. Followed by A Master Class: British Painting by Basil Beattie, John Edwards, John Hoyland, John Walker. March 1-April 12.*

Oleg Kudryashov: Message from Moscow

Kudryashov's themes are urban landscapes and state oppression observed with a dry humour. A powerful argument against British complacency, according to gallerist, Francis Graham-Dixon. *At Hoxton House, 34 Hoxton Street, London N1.1-24 February. Admission free. Tel: 020 7722 9922. www.francisgrahamdixon.com*

Futurism and Photography

First exhibition in English-speaking world of 150 rare vintage prints by Italian futurists. *January 24 to April 22 at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square, London, N1. Admission £3.50/£2.50, includes exhibition and permanent collection; café, shop, garden. Tel: 020 7704 9522.*

Brassai: The Soul of Paris & Goya's Drawings

Iconic scenes of nocturnal Paris with its prostitutes and thugs, night cafes, dance halls and theatres. Plus nude studies and photographs made together with surrealist artists. *Hayward Gallery, Southbank, February 22 - May 13. Admission (also includes Goya: Drawings from his Private Albums) £8/£3.50. Open daily 10am-6pm, until 8pm on Tues and Weds. www.hayward-gallery.org.uk Tel: 020 7960 5226*

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