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on New Labour'**

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A manifesto to shape the future

By Paul Feldman, the editor

The Movement for a Socialist Future's election manifesto, Shape the Future, is a significant step forward in the campaign to build an alternative both to New Labour and the discredited parliamentary system of government.

Our manifesto is AGAINST a vote for New Labour and FOR the building of new, democratic political institutions throughout society. These demands will strike a chord with growing numbers of workers and professional people who voted against the Tories in the hope that New Labour would represent their interests.

Their political unhappiness will undoubtedly take the form of large-scale abstention at the general election. But this apparently negative attitude is, given the presentation of a dynamic alternative, the basis for a genuine movement for socialist change.

Many will agree with the manifesto when it points out that "New Labour has carried out policies the Tories only dreamt of" and that under Blair "inequality has grown between the rich and the rest of society". It is also evident to many that Blair's government is but an extension of the power of global corporations.

What is now obvious is that New Labour is desperate to hold an election before the effects of the global slump hit home, bringing a sharp rise in unemployment, cuts in public spending and social upheaval. Redundancies in hi-tech firms like Motorola are one example of what is on the way.

Those who support our campaign and choose not to vote New Labour will have a chance to take part in building a popular movement for fundamental social change. This movement will not rely on parliament for its success but have an independence of its own.

The manifesto points out that surveys show that a majority of people favour decent public services financed directly out of taxation. They also oppose

privatisation. But New Labour favours "competition" over everything else and a reduction in the role of the state in providing services.

As a result, public spending on services is actually lower than under the Tories. And many services are in a worse state than when Blair took office in 1997:

- The railways are dangerous, unreliable and run by companies only interested in profit. They are the most expensive trains to travel on in Europe. Yet New Labour has handed Railtrack - a private company - £15 billion in subsidies and rules out renationalisation. Now they plan to privatise air traffic control.
- The overwhelming majority support a properly-funded National Health Service. Hospitals are at breaking point while new ones are built by the private sector and then leased to the state at vast extra cost to the taxpayer. Meanwhile, the big drugs companies are allowed to rip the NHS off.
- Schools cannot attract teachers because pay is too low and many classes are overcrowded. Teachers are blamed for the failure of the education system. Now Labour plans to destroy comprehensive schools and create a two-tier system. Tuition fees for university students means only the privileged can afford higher education.
- Voters want an efficient, safe and cheap Underground system in London. What has happened? The London Tube is starved of public

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investment because New Labour wants to privatise it.

- Everyone wants safer food to eat. Foot-and-mouth has swept the country, made worse by New Labour's policy of shutting local abattoirs, cutting the numbers of vets and giving the supermarkets the green light to pressure farmers into intensive farming.
- Everyone needs somewhere decent and affordable to live. Yet the number of homes built for rent is at an all-time low. This has led to a rapid rise in homelessness, especially in London where soaring prices have made it impossible for the majority to buy a home.

New Labour attacks the Tories as racists. But Blair's government has set the tone for racist propaganda with its attacks on asylum seekers. Home Secretary Jack Straw was the first to describe them as "bogus". Those fleeing persecution and

who want to start a new life in Britain are denied benefits and forced to use vouchers in shops.

Growing numbers of voters have also seen through the fraud of a political system which is democratic in name only. That is why we ask you to join a campaign for an alternative, truly democratic political system. One which will give the mass of the people direct control over their lives, workplaces and services.

The manifesto says: "In today's set-up, voters are treated with contempt. Every four or five years, our 'democracy' invites us to determine who

should rule. With the casting of a ballot, this process then comes to an abrupt end - until another election is announced. Wouldn't it be better if people had a chance to take control of their lives by having a real say all the time?"

The manifesto adds: "We now need to extend the right to vote so that it carries weight in new bodies that exercise real power, not the phantom authority of the House of Commons or Downing Street. Just as workers once founded the Labour Party as an answer to their social problems, we have to found a new movement to go beyond Blair and parliament."

The institutions of the state - parliament, the police, civil service, judiciary and the monarchy - do not serve the people. They stand above us and

exist to make sure that the status quo is upheld. Behind a veneer of democracy, the ruling classes exercise the real power.

The manifesto points out: "The existing civil service administers the state in secret and draws up rules and regulations to implement reactionary policies, like vouchers for asylum seekers or cuts in disability benefit. The monarchy is purely parasitical, serving no useful social function whatsoever.

"Behind the government lie the secret spy agencies MI5, MI6 and the Special Branch who spend their time infiltrating farmers' and environmental groups, trade unions and other 'enemies of the state'. They are responsible to no one."

As for the police, judiciary and prison system, many people can testify how arbitrary and brutal their rule is. The prisons are full of innocent people who could not afford the services of a top class lawyer. While the state rules at the top and at local level, there is not even a glimmer of democracy when it comes to the workplace or the local community.

"We believe that all these state structures need replacing by new executive bodies which are directly controlled and accountable to the vast majority who today have no power or voice." The manifesto outlines a blueprint for new, democratic structures which will run society.

There are many groups on the left who, despite a mountain of historical evidence to the contrary, believe that progress through existing parliamentary institutions is not only possible, but is the only "practical" way forward.

A number of groups have entered into a political coalition called the Socialist Alliance. They are standing candidates at the election, and urge people to vote New Labour where they are not.

The basic platform of the Alliance is for the defence of the welfare state, increased taxes on the rich, renationalisation of the railways, increased funding for the NHS and education and a higher minimum wage. Unfortunately, the Alliance's perspective leads us to believe that they are not in fact a real alternative to New Labour and do not merit supporting at the election.

Because the Alliance does not spell out an alternative other than parliament for implementing their policies, we must conclude that they believe the current political system will somehow deliver the goods. The Alliance's programme is extremely limited in its ambition. Their policies do not add up to a challenge to the power of the corporations.

Paul Foot, a leading spokesperson for the

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WHAT WE THINK

Alliance, admitted in a recent pamphlet that Alliance candidates were standing "because they are horrified by what has happened to the labour movement and are determined to set it back on track". Foot says the agenda is about free health and childcare, among other things, and that "as a start, just a start, you should vote socialist".

In fact, the Alliance's policies imply a continued expansion of the global economy, when all the signs are pointing the opposite way. The Alliance harks back to an imaginary golden age when Old Labour had a radical programme which it promptly abandoned in office. So does Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party. At the SLP's manifesto launch, Scargill said: "When someone says we never want to go back to the 1970s, we say: we do, the quicker the better."

Our manifesto says: "Just at a point when many people are ready to think about an alternative to New Labour and parliamentary games played at their expense, the Alliance is urging voters to direct their energies towards these discredited bodies. So a vote for the Alliance is in effect a vote for the status quo, for leaving things much as they are while registering a feeble protest against Blair."

The manifesto concludes that the "long and often painful history of the Labour Party shows conclusively that it is not possible to reform capitalism or to achieve lasting change simply through the House of Commons and the parliamentary system". In any case, Blair's New Labour completely abandons the old ideas of reforming capitalism and directly expresses the economic forces unleashed by globalisation.

All over the world, resistance is growing to the destructive rule of the global corporations and their political puppets. We should harness this energy and direct it into a popular mass movement to achieve the changes we need in every country.

As the manifesto says: "All this may sound difficult to achieve. But invention is born out of necessity! And it certainly is necessary to take a leap forward in history before the present system dooms us to slump, environmental catastrophe and war. We have to think beyond our immediate experiences, raise our horizons and move forward. There is undoubtedly a crisis of leadership in society. By joining our campaign for an alternative to New Labour you can make an important contribution to overcoming it." ■

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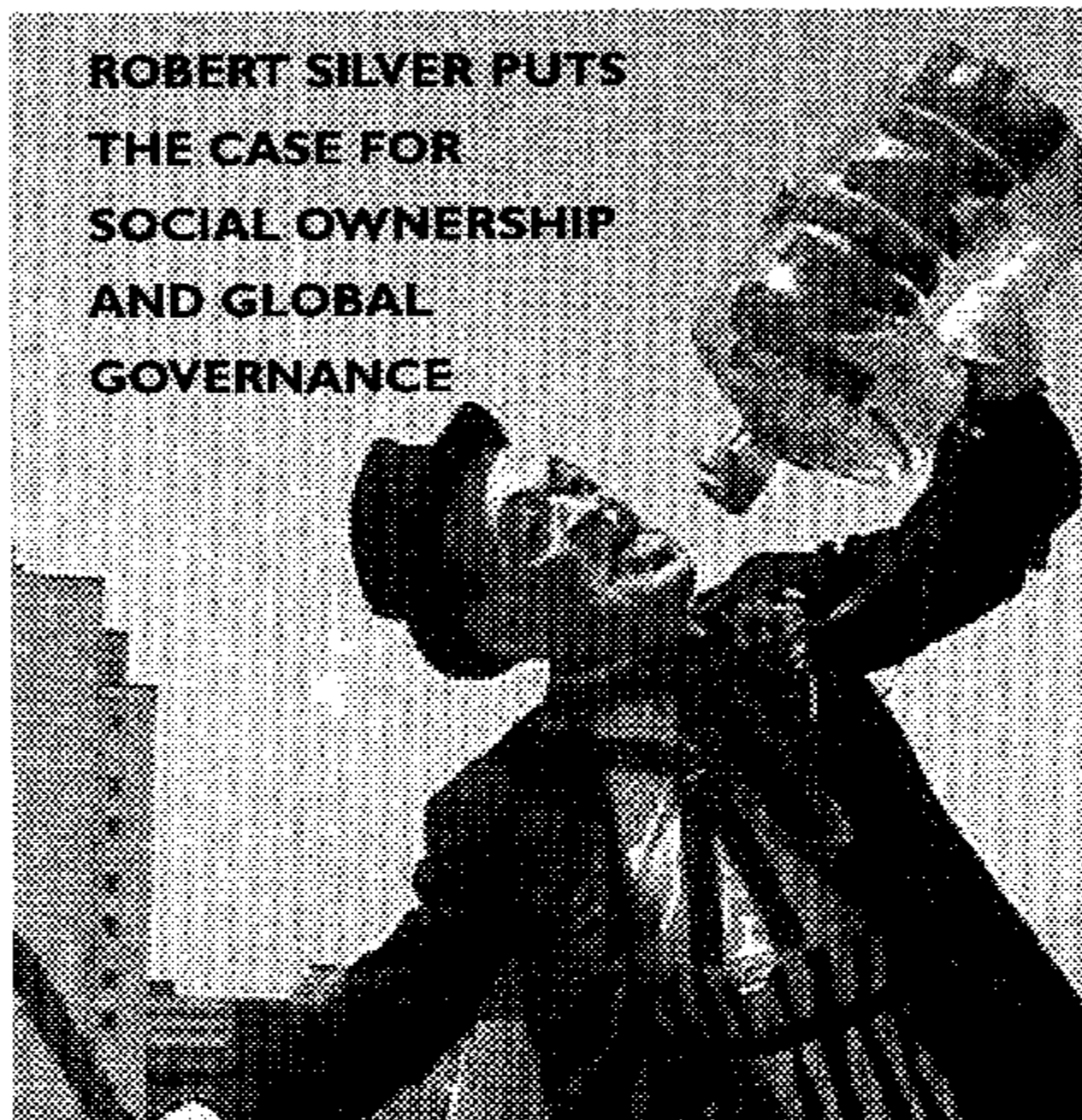
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Taking power from the global corporations



**ROBERT SILVER PUTS
THE CASE FOR
SOCIAL OWNERSHIP
AND GLOBAL
GOVERNANCE**

THE THEFT of the White House by George W. Bush is a defining moment in the globalisation of the world economy. A corporate coup followed the Bush campaign's electoral fraud, placing the White House effectively under the control of giant business interests.

While the Clinton administration certainly had close links with companies like Monsanto, which financed the president's re-election campaign, the Bush regime's actual merger with global corporations is direct and transparent.

Robert Reich was a labour secretary under Clinton, until he got fed up with business interests foiling his proposals. Now he says: "There is no longer any countervailing power in Washington. Business is in complete control of the machinery of government. It's payback time, and every industry and trade association is busily cashing in."

Long-planned legal actions against tobacco companies have been abandoned, and a series of measures about safety at work scrapped at the

behest of big business. Inside government itself the treasury secretary is from the aluminium giant Alcoa. The head of the White House office of management is a former vice-president of a drugs company.

The most obvious sign of these rapid developments was Bush's decision to abandon the Kyoto treaty which pledged signatories to cut carbon dioxide emissions in order to halt the process of global warming. Bush withdrew from the agreement under orders from the corporations.

The US economy is dependent on imported oil and is the biggest market by far for the transnational oil companies. It is also the world's biggest polluter. Refusal by the US to adopt measures to counter global warming reflects the political power of the oil producing and consuming companies.

General Motors, the world's largest corporation, whose products devour oil is now bigger than Denmark in wealth; DaimlerChrysler is bigger than Poland; Royal Dutch/Shell is bigger than Venezuela. The Bush presidency operates for them and them alone.

Four of the top five and one quarter of the top 50 corporations are directly associated with oil and motor cars. By 1999 the sales of each of the top five (General Motors, Wal-Mart, Exxon Mobil, Ford Motor, and DaimlerChrysler) were bigger than the GDPs of 182 countries.

Among the US-registered corporations, seven actually paid less than zero in federal income taxes in 1998. These include: Texaco, Chevron, PepsiCo, Enron, Worldcom, McKesson and the world's biggest corporation – General Motors.

Though many of these companies originated in the US, all are now transnationals pursuing the insane logic of their own interests even to the destruction of life on the planet. The impact of the deepening world economic slump on their profits weighs far more heavily than worldwide campaigns of protest.



Resistance to the power of the global corporations is growing all over the world, as pictures from the recent protests in Quebec City show.

More information on what took place in Canada is available at www.straightgoods.com

The corporate take-over of the White House is the most vivid expression of the crisis of the nation state and national governments throughout the world in the face of tremendous economic and financial forces.

Those who have clung to the illusion that you can reform capitalism through the existing electoral process – either by way of the White House and Congress or Downing Street and Parliament – are undermined by the fact that capitalism has taken control of the political process itself.

What we are seeing, therefore, is the close of the chapter of the evolution of capitalist democracy and the opening up of a direct struggle between the mass of the people and global corporations and their supra-state institutions like the World Trade Organisation and the North American Free Trade Agreement, which drew protests of more than 50,000 at the recent Quebec summit.

PLUNDERING THE PLANET

THE PROCESS of capitalist development and decline has produced a crisis of historic proportions, deeper and more threatening than that of the 1930s. Immense wealth is transferred from undeveloped to developed capitalist nations to feed the already bloated consumer markets in a hopeless attempt to satisfy the global corporations' insatiable hunger for profit.

Over-production of commodities exhausts the world's supplies of raw materials and spews out waste that poisons the environment, threatening to

obliterate life on the planet. These trends are unsustainable.

Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, at more than twice the rate of human population growth. More than one billion people, one sixth of the total, already lack access to fresh water. By 2025 the demand for fresh water is expected to be 56% more than is currently available.

Water is traded like any other commodity, with its use determined by market principles. The US Global Water Corporation has already signed an agreement with Sitka, Alaska to export 18 billion gallons per year of glacier water to China. The company will tow the water across the ocean in huge sealed bags and have it bottled by cheap labour in China.

Transnational corporations such as Nike, Sony, and Gap spend billions promoting their brands but subcontract production to zones of super-exploitation in South America and Asia where workers labour in barbaric conditions.

In other parts of the world such as Sierra Leone, weapons and armies are channelled to actual or would-be dictators whose loyalty is bought by transnational corporations in exchange for access to sources of oil, diamonds and raw materials.

Much of Africa has been condemned to disease and starvation as the growing breed of non-governmental charitable and missionary organisations come and go. Uncounted millions are left to die as AIDS sweeps the continent whilst the drug companies study their balance sheets.

The military government in Pakistan is giving away the control over food to transnational corporations (TNCs) engaged in agribusiness. Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy, contributing 25 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and 60 per cent of total export earning. More than 70 per cent of Pakistan's labour force is engaged in farming and related activities.

With corporate farming based on maximising profits rather than on producing food for survival, millions of small farmers will be driven off the land, and production will focus on cash crops and seed for export. To boost the government's foreign exchange earnings, food will become scarce in a country where already nearly one fifth of the 135 million population is underfed.

BEHIND THE FRENZY – A CRISIS OVER PROFITS

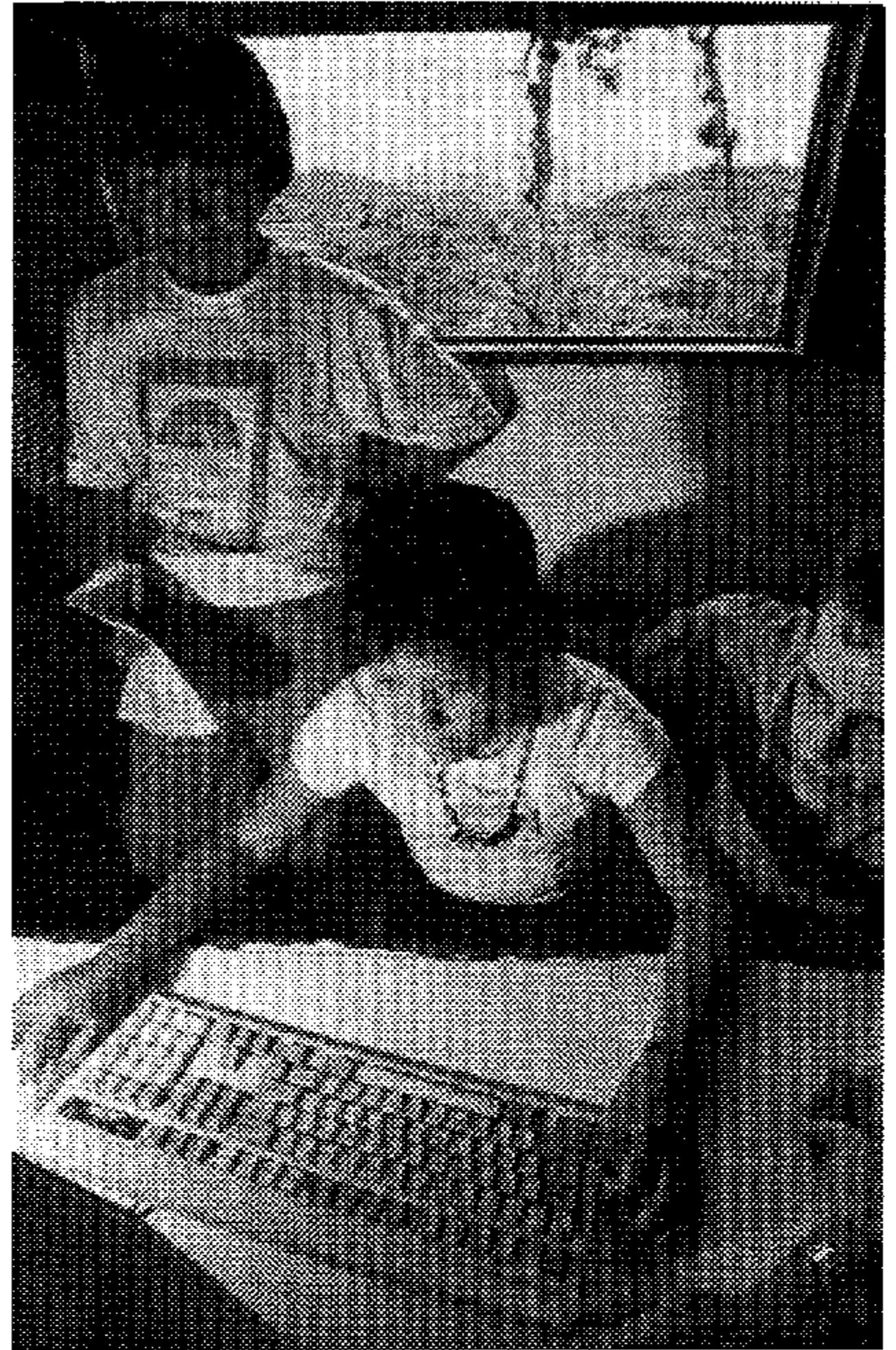
WHAT LIES behind this frenzy of over-production, marketing, advertising, commercialisation of life-forms and human relations, environmental degradation, social disintegration and the drive to war?

Financiers, investment bankers and shareholders supply funds to enterprises which exist to draw profit from the production and sale of commodities in the marketplace. A profitable industry attracts competition from other producers, obliging them all to continuously reduce the costs of production. This can be reduced to a simple formula – fewer workers producing more commodities more cheaply. Driving up productivity is the watchword in every industry at all stages in the history of capitalism.

There are two ways to increase productivity: investment in fixed capital, and forcing employees to work longer hours for less money. The two are intertwined. Capital investment involves the purchase of land and buildings to house the production process and machinery to automate it.

But human labour is the source of all value, and profit is but a part of it. To extract profit, companies employ workers and exploit their ability to create more value than the wages they need to survive. This is known as "surplus value".

The competitive drive for productivity pushes the ratio of labour-to-capital towards capital, and fewer workers are employed in relation to the amount invested in computers, networks and buildings. Thus the potential for generating surplus value, and hence extracting profit, declines.



In the United States, investment in computer and telecommunications technologies to automate production and distribution has forced up productivity. Profits continued to flow as wages were forced down. Hourly pay rates were reduced by half – from \$26 an hour in 1973 to \$13 in 1999. Millions of low and ultra-low wage jobs were created in the US and elsewhere in the world.

As well as reducing pay, the corporations are obliged to use the new technologies to develop new commodities and new markets because the continued and astonishing rise in productivity means that over-production is the norm.

As a result, the profit made from each sale becomes smaller and smaller. The quantity of each commodity produced, meanwhile, easily overwhelms and swamps its market. Sackings by Motorola, Ericsson and other hi-tech companies are the end result of this process.

Speculative dot.com hysteria was the herding instinct of the investor desperately seeking new sources of profit which were "immune" from the laws of making profit.

The various new business models tried by dot.com companies such as 'free' services, search engines funded by advertising, business-to-consumer and business-to-business, are all fruitless attempts to overcome the rapidly declining rate of profit experienced in other sectors. They reduce costs by streamlining ordering and distribution. They promise to all-but eliminate the retailers who stand between producer and consumer. But they can't stop the profit rot. The deeper the corporations commit to e-commerce, the more they become entangled in the crisis.

To manage their increasingly far-flung enterprises, globalising companies soon discovered the need for global communications networks and sophisticated computer-based tools. They seized upon the Internet.

Once the new global entrepreneurs noticed its potential, the "new economy" of computing and communications technologies began to develop at breakneck speed. Ever more sophisticated networks developed to meet the needs of companies operating in many countries simultaneously. These are used to design products, manage contracts with subsidiaries, control production, and to collect, consolidate and analyse data on sales in every country.

This accelerating cyber-revolution produces a vastly expanding output of ever cheaper and more powerful electronic products – hardware, software, information and entertainment.

Production of silicon chips and fibre-optic cable requires huge capital investment. But the pressure of competition accelerates scientific advance and revolutionises the techniques of mass production. The information products themselves – news stories and articles, share prices and insurance policies, music tracks, scientific knowledge – are now reproduced for vanishingly small cost.

So the value-added of human labour is limited to the process of producing the "master" copy and profits can be made from that alone. The only way to make money is by enforcing copyright and charging far more than the cost of production for the right to access a copy.

The struggle to overcome the tendency for profit to decline is the self-propelling motor of growth in the capitalist economy. It makes profitable enterprises bankrupt leaving their workers without jobs. New communications technologies have not solved but intensified this process.

The period of growth in the richer parts of the global economy was fuelled by an expansion of credit. New stock markets, such as Nasdaq in the



US, and Techmark in the UK, were created to funnel the investment needed to finance the information revolution.

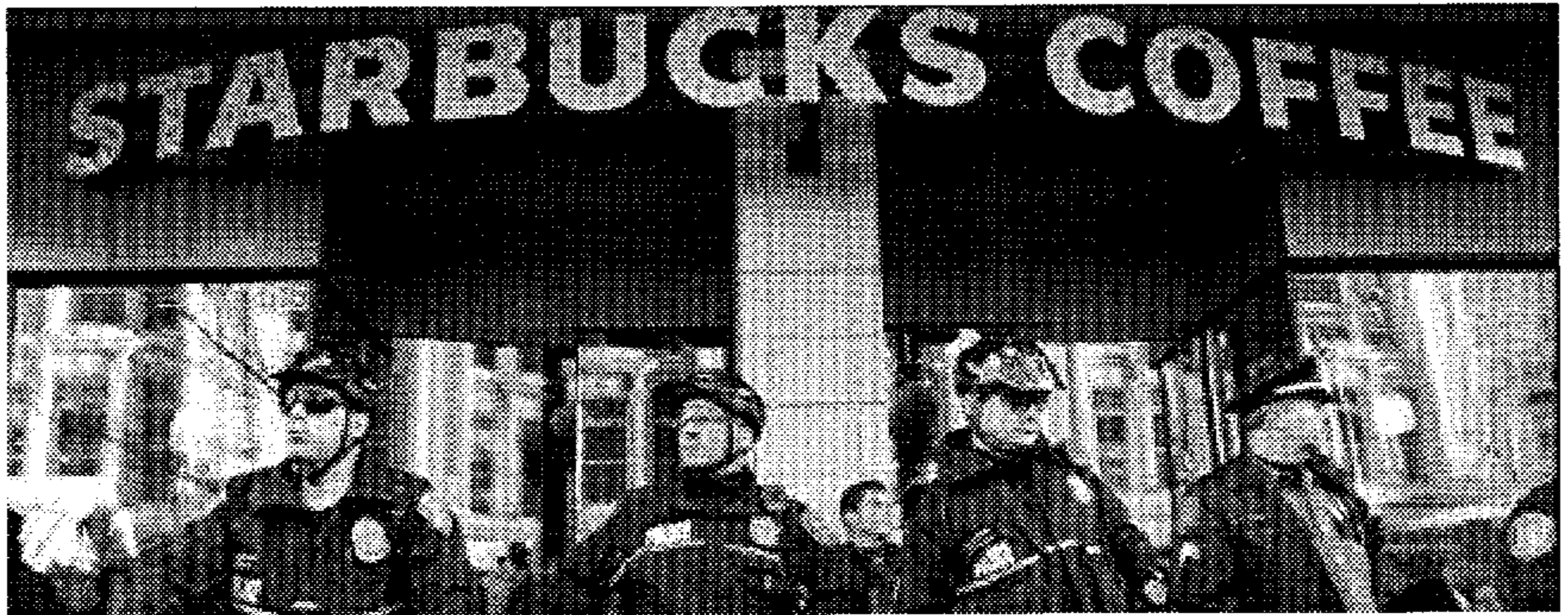
The bubble of overvalued technology companies was dwarfed by the volume of trade on the financial markets. But when over-production leads to bankruptcy, the extent of the fiction of overvalued stock is revealed, markets crash, banks close their networks and their doors.

THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL CORPORATIONS

THE EARLY 1990s brought rapid acceleration in the development of multi- and then transnational corporations (TNCs) seeking new sources of cheap labour. This new drive towards a global economy is quite unlike the imperialism of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The British Empire, for example, was built on trade, with raw materials plundered at the points of many guns. Armies were stationed to rule continents and countries for a century. Imperialism produced a world economy based on unfair terms of trade. Competition for access to markets among imperial powers – acting in the interests of "their" capitalist companies – resulted in two world wars.

Globalisation, the new form of imperialism, operates through the creation of multinational corporations through investment in foreign countries. Rather than reinvest the surplus value where profit is declining, financial capital is exported for investment in low-wage countries.



By the 1990s, the export of finance capital began to replace trade as the dominant form of the world economy. Through "foreign direct investment", capital moved from one country to another – both by purchase of stock in foreign companies, and by the setting up of new companies abroad from scratch. In 1998, sales by foreign affiliates of TNCs stood at \$11 trillion, surpassing the \$7 trillion traded value of world exports.

In the mid-90s the major capitalist powers created the World Trade Organisation to eliminate national import barriers. It polices the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) which encourages the export of commodities produced cheaply in one country to others where prices are high.

GATS THREAT TO SERVICES

Through other agreements the WTO regulates the use of intellectual products (TRIPs), and now, through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has begun to insist that public services such as health, education and social services are opened to commercial exploitation. A complex system of cross-border ownership has developed for water, power and other utilities.

Global companies manufacture parts in one country, they export them to another for assembly, and to yet others for distribution. They balance wage costs against closeness to markets.

Manufacture is moved out of the home country to contractors and subcontractors, preferably in underdeveloped countries where labour is cheap, unions and labour laws are non-existent and long tax holidays are available.

The corporations have discovered that there is now little profit to be made from production itself and many companies now bypass production completely. Instead, they concentrate on developing, promoting and defending "brands". Phil Knight, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Nike sums up their rationale: "There is no value in making things any more. The value is added by careful research, by innovation and marketing."

SOARING COST OF ADVERTISING

As a consequence, advertising expenditure has risen dramatically. US spending in 1998 at \$196.5bn was nearly four times that of 1979. Global spending reached \$435bn in 1996, up sevenfold since 1950, growing a third faster than the world economy. If all forms of marketing are included, the figure for global spending approaches a staggering \$1 trillion. Little wonder that brands are expensive. Philip Morris paid \$12.6bn for the multinational Kraft in 1988, six times its paper value, because of the brand name.

Marketing, advertising, and buying up brands, however, produces little value – a point Mr Knight cannot grasp. They are paid for out of the "value added" by the factory workers who actually produce the products. That is why companies can no longer accept a traditional mark-up of 100% between the cost of factory production and the retail price.

They scour the world for factories where costs are so low that the mark-up is closer to 400% or greater, with the wages of the factory workers constituting an ever-shrinking slice of corporate



budgets. Branding is hogging all the “value added” together with the obscene salaries of the corporate executives, the spiralling costs of their marketing personnel and the profits distributed to shareholders.

A great part of production for most multinational corporations is handled by contractors in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in Asia and South America. There are around 1,000 EPZs in the world employing some 27 million workers. The largest zone economy is China with some 18m people working in 124 EPZs. These zones impose barbaric conditions on the workers, most of them young women.

At the same time that the corporations are producing in underdeveloped countries, they are also reorganising their operations and cutting down their costs in their major markets in the richer countries. To do this they employ a fluid reserve of part-timers, temps and freelancers or contract out the work to job agencies to keep their overheads down and respond quickly to upturns and

downturns in the market. Wal-Mart, Starbucks, McDonalds, KMart and Gap are among those which have been lowering workplace standards to fuel their marketing budgets and expansion.

THE CASE FOR SOCIAL OWNERSHIP

THE POTENTIAL exists to harness the technological revolution and global productive forces to satisfy the needs of every person on the planet in a sustainable way. But this is impossible while society is organised solely to extract profit.

The mapping of the human genome offers unprecedented possibilities to predict, prevent and cure disease. This is a collective endeavour involving scientists in many laboratories around the world vastly accelerated by the use of arrays of computers. But rights to use and to profit from this new knowledge are falling into the hands of the new breed of biotechnology corporations. Because private ownership stands in the way of free access to knowledge, the NHS will have to pay the corporations royalties whenever hospitals use the new predictive tests for diseases such as breast cancer.

International patent laws are stretched beyond their limits. Private ownership now extends to a mushrooming catalogue of naturally occurring living matter – from the plants of the rain forest to strains of rice and human tissue. Farmers are losing the right to collect and use the seed from the crops they grow and individuals have no rights over their body parts.

In the arts, internet-based technologies such as those used by Napster and Gnutella provide a direct means of exchange between producers and consumers, bypassing the commercial information service providers. But a small group of entertainment conglomerates invest heavily in technologies which prevent access, and spend millions on court cases to outlaw sharing.

More and more people are asking:

- What is the purpose of all these scientific advances and their technological applications if only a few benefit?
- If transnational corporations admit that they only exist to buy products cheaply and make huge profits by creating and promoting brand images, what purpose do they serve?

- If the things that we need can be produced cheaply and in vast quantities but don't generate profit, why not just produce what we need and exchange on the basis of fair trade, eliminating the transnationals altogether?
- If employers exist only to force down the costs of production on behalf of the multinational corporations to whom they subcontract, why shouldn't the employees own and control the companies they work in?
- If all that stands in the way of satisfying the needs of the whole of the world's population is the system of private ownership and production for profit, why not move to a system of social ownership and production for need?

HOW TO SET SOCIAL OWNERSHIP IN MOTION

ELECTED COMMITTEES of producers and consumers can take control of production. These would operate at whatever level is appropriate – local, regional, national, continental or global.

They will set priorities for investment, develop and implement plans for production and organise distribution. Their vision will be the satisfaction of human need, sharing knowledge and deploying technologies to reduce the working week. The employer-employee division will disappear, as workers become owners.

Sustainable, planned production for need will predominate over the anarchy of the competitive market. Social ownership will end the wasteful surplus of products that are obsolete even before they reach the market.

The competitive need to build brands, distinguishing products on the basis of a logo-based image will disappear. Wasteful expenditure on advertising will end, so the cost of production will fall sharply.

Banks, building societies, pension funds and other financial institutions can become socially-owned fund managers, working on a not-for-profit basis, providing low-interest loans financed from individual savings. People who save with them will also own them.

The economic and technical changes driven by globalisation have had dramatic effects on the structure of power based on the nation state, making it unstable, crisis ridden and ripe for overthrow.



The role of national governments has qualitatively changed. Formerly they were defenders of national capital. Their function now is to create social, political and economic conditions attractive to the global corporations, or they move their centres of production and distribution elsewhere.

As global companies move operations from country to country in search of favourable conditions and manipulate balance sheets, so governments suffer loss of tax revenues and therefore loss of power. National governments like Blair's New Labour are reduced to paid promoters of global capital.

They strive to end the role of the state in social welfare, forcing people to make private provision for pensions and health, reducing public services to the point where people have to go private, or handing over utilities and transport systems to

global companies to run them for profit regardless of safety.

In Europe, the national legislative process and the judiciary are subordinated to the European Commission and the European courts. Internationally, the World Trade Organisation makes judgements which transcend the decisions of national governments.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ROAD TO GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

THE GAP BETWEEN rich and poor countries has become a vast abyss. The ratio between the incomes of the richest and poorest country was about 3 to 1 in 1820, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992.

Inequality among households has risen sharply. Gaps between rich and poor are widening rapidly in many countries – most notably in the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. The gap is very high in much of Latin America.

Liberal critics of capitalism argue that new global institutions could minimise the system's instability, curb the worst excesses of the TNCs so that they operate in a more "social" way. This is a utopian pipe dream based on the assumption that capitalism is a system capable of rational behaviour.

The vast economic and financial forces that have sprung up over two centuries have a life of their own which are not capable of regulation and control while they remain in private hands and run solely for profit. Capitalism gave birth to the very political institutions it now undermines through globalisation. They no longer serve a useful purpose for global capitalism and that is why they are undermined.

For workers whose living standards are under attack, for the unemployed, for independent farmers whose livelihood is stolen by biotechnology corporations and for landless peasants the need is for local, regional and world-level organisations representing their interests in a society which produces for to meet people's needs.

The democratic ideal of multi-party elections with universal adult suffrage became the dominant political form of the nation-state in 20th century. In 1900 no country had achieved this. A century later most have. In the last 25 years of the century 113

countries introduced multi-party elections.

But the universal advance of parliamentary democracy has become a universal fraud. Declining turnout in elections demonstrates the extent of the rejection of the current political system by all sections of society.

Opposition to the effects of global capital is growing as the mass of the people come face to face with those who dominate the planet.

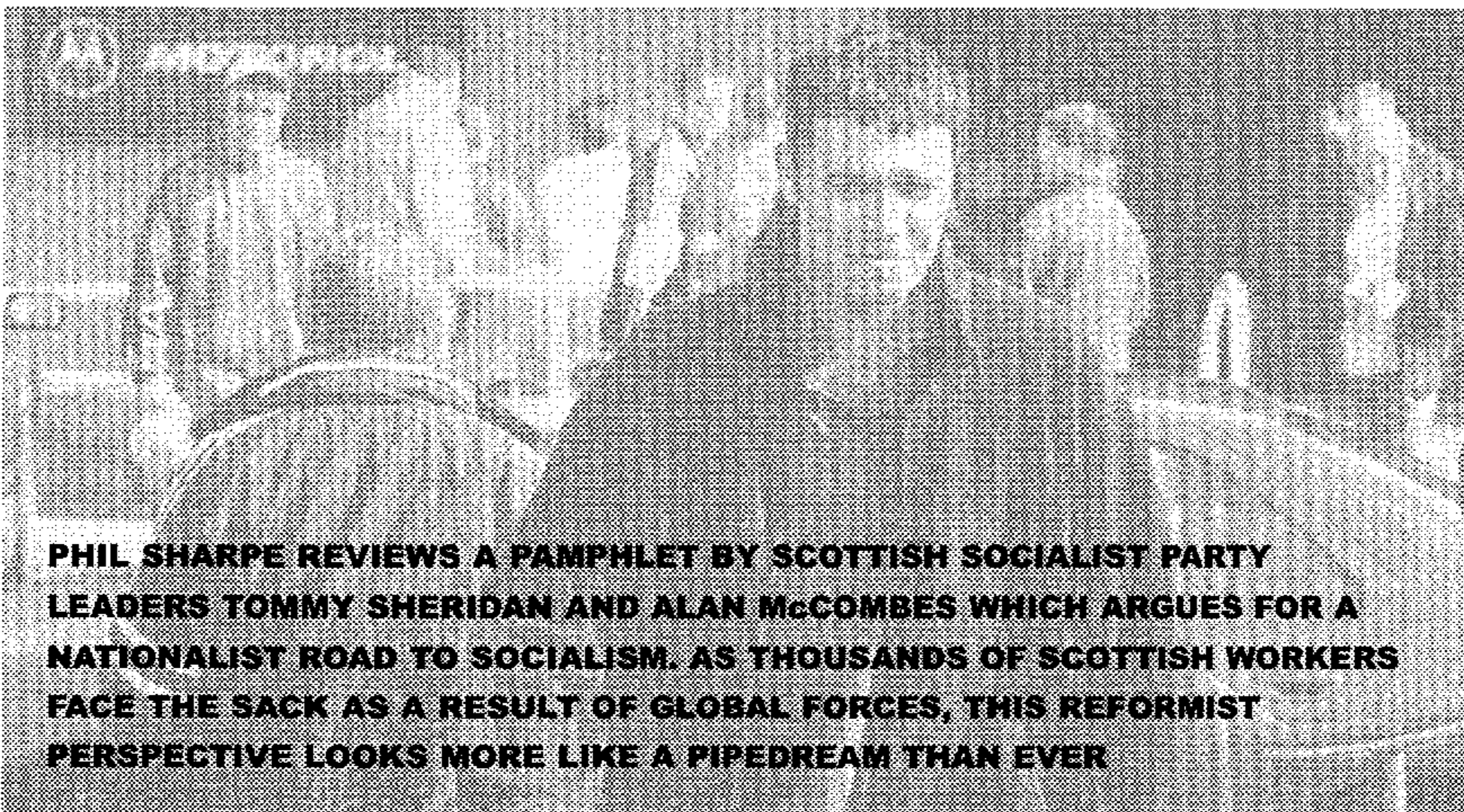
The conditions are emerging for the overthrow of the discredited and crisis-ridden state in each country and the seizure of power by the majority organised with revolutionary leadership. This is the way to get control of the corporations and introduce production and consumption for need.

Making the transition requires that:

- Ownership, control and management of enterprises and infrastructure is transferred to those who work in and operate them
- Elected groups of producers and consumers in every region consult and negotiate to make plans for production and distribution, using the latest technology to measure and satisfy need and demand throughout the world
- Workers and consumers together plan what goods are produced, and control production using safe and sustainable methods
- Banks, building societies, pension funds and other financial institutions are placed under social control and management
- Cheap forms of credit are made available to those who need them, to finance both micro- and macro- levels of development
- Financial speculation, private ownership and private profit are abolished
- A global system of democratic representation is created. ■

AS GLOBAL COMPANIES MOVE FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS, SO GOVERNMENTS SUFFER LOSS OF POWER AND ARE REDUCED TO PAID PROMOTERS OF GLOBAL CAPITAL

No nationalist road to socialism in Scotland



PHIL SHARPE REVIEWS A PAMPHLET BY SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERS TOMMY SHERIDAN AND ALAN McCOMBES WHICH ARGUES FOR A NATIONALIST ROAD TO SOCIALISM. AS THOUSANDS OF SCOTTISH WORKERS FACE THE SACK AS A RESULT OF GLOBAL FORCES, THIS REFORMIST PERSPECTIVE LOOKS MORE LIKE A PIPEDREAM THAN EVER

WHILE SHERIDAN AND McCOMBES are able to present a good description of the economic inequality generated by modern capitalism, they do so in moralistic terms of the differences between rich and poor. The capitalist class is presented as the “undeserving rich” who have no beneficial economic role.

This is a popular misconception which replaces the Marxist standpoint on capital-labour relations and the class antagonisms they generate. It describes the effects of the economic system without explaining the actual structural role of the capitalist class. This is, of course, to facilitate the accumulation of capital on the basis of the extraction of surplus value from the working class, which is the basis for the development of the vast wealth of the capitalist class.

The authors explain class differences and antagonism by the differences in levels of

consumption. So it is not surprising that they maintain that under-consumption is the basis of capitalist crisis: “On a global scale, more goods are made than the population of the world can afford. Every so often, vast surpluses pile up which cannot be sold for profit. As a result, the stock market plummets, profits turn into losses, businesses fail, factories close, workers are sacked, unemployment grows, and, for a period of time, there is a general contraction of industry and trade.”

But this fails to explain why there is not a permanent crisis of capitalism, because effective demand generally lags behind the level of production. Actually, it is the over-production of capital that is materially represented in over-production and a glut of unsaleable products. This prevents capital from continually realising high levels of capital accumulation,

The authors cannot differentiate between appearance and its actual content. Consequently,

they leave open the prospect that the process of capital accumulation can be modified and reformed. If the problem of under-consumption is tackled then the needs of consumers can be more generally realised within the economic system.

They argue that the development of new technology is preparing the possibility for a new and viable democratic socialism. They point out that capitalism tries to limit the advances of technology to the requirements of capital accumulation and that the general motivation for development is the co-operative aspiration to help other human beings.

But they have an evolutionist approach, or virtual reality socialism, which abstracts technology from the existing relations of production. Technology becomes an almost automatic and mechanical means to realise socialism. But the reality is that technology is located within the existing capitalist relations of production and so serves the process of capital accumulation. The only way to emancipate technology and liberate the productive forces is through revolutionary class struggle.

By emphasising technological determinism as the road to socialism Sheridan and McCombes effectively minimise the importance of class struggle for liberating the productive forces from the fetters of the relations of production.

They correctly maintain that technology will be crucial in bringing about democratic forms of socialism. But what is not included in their analysis is the need for revolutionary political structures, such as workers' councils, or soviets, for realising participatory democracy and overcoming bureaucratic elitism.

Thus they indicate the economic basis for mass democracy - modern technology - but they do not suggest the necessity of transforming political change, which is realised through class struggle. Thus they justify a reformist approach on the basis of economic determinism.

The authors outline the way in which ecological problems undermine historical and human progress, and say that the only answer is public ownership of the main means of production. But they believe ecological needs can be realised within an independent socialist Scotland.

A surplus of £310 billion to £315 billion "would allow for the greatest expansion of public services that this country has ever seen. And it would also generate the resources to allow an independent socialist Scotland to face up to one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, the building of a brand-new energy industry based on alternative,

renewable sources of power".

The resources of North Sea oil would provide the material basis for what effectively is a return to the perspective of socialism in one country. This was the doomed "theory" put into practice by the Stalinists in the Soviet Union, with disastrous historical consequences.

The modern process of globalisation has intensified the interconnected character of the world economy, and this means that the possibility building of socialism in one country is even more utopian today than during the 1920s in isolated and backward Russia.

An "independent Socialist Scotland" would generally have a lower level of productivity than the most advanced transnational corporations, and would still be subject to the dictates of the IMF and World Bank. Consequently, if it were to "defy" the requirements of global capital it would have to construct a command economy that manufactured products at a higher level of socially necessary labour time than the commodities produced by the transnationals. Labour would have little leisure time and would remain alienated and without economic control of the process of production.

Formally, the starting point for Sheridan and McCombes is that globalisation is the material basis for world socialism. They say that "...in the age of the Internet, high-speed air travel, instantaneous global communications, satellite TV, and global capitalism, the idea of global socialism can no longer be dismissed as a flight of poetic fantasy."

But the possibility of global socialism is not established in terms of outlining the potential to overthrow world capitalism. Instead what is made most important is the prospect of democratic forms of socialism in one country.

The authors argue for the implementation of a national plan to overthrow the power of capital. They contend that it will be possible to regulate and control capital in order to stop any flight of capital from Scotland. A central bank can be established in order to facilitate the planning of production, and information technology will also

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facilitate planning in a co-operative manner. This approach is another indication of formalism and technological determinism.

It is true that the continued development of the productive forces has enhanced the possibility of realising democratic socialism. But the objective context for successful planning has to be international if the anarchic power of capital is to be challenged and transcended.

Furthermore, capital is an international relation and so is not limited to the national sphere. Hence the introduction of measures to stop the outflow of capital investment may have limited administrative success, but the power of capital is still internationally dominant as an expression of an economic system that subsumes the part into its whole.

Sheridan and McCombes argue that the perspective of an independent socialist Scotland is an expression of the political heritage of John Maclean. But Maclean's perspective of a Scottish Workers Republic was not based upon an approach of isolationism and accommodation to reformism. Instead Maclean maintained that a Scottish Workers Republic could be the starting point for rejuvenating international class struggle after the defeats of the 1918-1919 period.

But Maclean tried to conceive of revolution in the internationalist terms of the requirements of the development of world revolution. Sheridan and McCombes have a starting point that conceives of the inherently unique and socialist identity of the people of Scotland: "Many people rightly support independence because they believe that an independent Scotland would be more egalitarian, more left-wing, more socialist in outlook than 'Cruel Britannia'.

The idealism of this approach means that it can only effectively conceive of Scotland in separate terms, and so cannot connect the specificity of class antagonisms in Scotland to a perspective of world revolution. They believe an independent bourgeois democratic Scotland, that is based upon political equality with England will facilitate the development of a mass movement for socialism.

This shows that Sheridan and McCombes are not defending Maclean's perspective. Maclean knew that the bourgeois democratic revolution had already taken place in the formation of the United Kingdom and that what was now necessary was a revolutionary class struggle for the formation of a Scottish Workers Republic as a prelude to world revolution.

The authors are essentially calling for an opportunist adaptation to the Scottish National Party and support for national independence on the basis of the formation of a new bourgeois state. Hence they actually reject the approach of Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and John Maclean, about the need to put the requirements of the working class first in the struggle to resolve any outstanding national and democratic questions. In this context the call for the Scottish Workers Republic challenges spontaneous adherence to bourgeois nationalism.

But the very national definition of a "socialist Scotland" is an idealist conception of the global transition to socialism. For what is being defended is the atomistic conception that socialist transition is based upon the aggregate collection of the sum total of separate revolutions and nationally located socialist societies.

The global domination of capital means that a nationally-located socialism is an illusion, and so the only way to overcome this problem of the national negation of socialism is for the working class to express the objective necessity (not the vague aspiration of the authors) for international expansion through world revolution.

In the last analysis their talk of "revolutionary class struggle" is reduced and limited to the struggle to win parliamentary elections within Scotland.

This shows that the basic idealism of their socialism in one country standpoint is connected to adherence to reformism and the conscious rejection of a revolutionary perspective. ■

Imagine by Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes. Rebel Inc. Edinburgh. 99p

Philosophy and revolution go hand in hand

**CHE GUEVARA,
PAOLO FREIRE
AND THE PEDAGOGY
OF REVOLUTION
BY PETER McLAREN
ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
£15.95
REVIEWED
BY PHIL WALDEN**



THE AUTHOR of this book, a Professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, is deeply committed to the two humanist Marxists of the title, now both dead with Freire's passing in 1997.

There is much one can agree with. On the question of the meaning of globalisation, McLaren comments: "Che recognised that globalisation – the global expansion of capitalism – was not an impersonal, natural phenomenon but is controlled by political power and imperialism." This answers those who insist that the world economic system is some sort of abstract juggernaut which cannot be halted or re-routed.

You can also agree with the author when he opines: "Capitalism in advanced Western countries must be dismantled if extra-economic inequalities – such as racism and sexism – are to be challenged successfully."

Again, one can only give assent to the insightful comment that recent decades have seen "the creation of new structures of consumer subjectivity and the demand for new meanings. The circulation of signs has become a strong factor in new modes of class domination, helping to replace older, more authoritarian measures of colonial rule."

When it comes to emphasising the positive contribution of his chosen subjects, McLaren can become powerfully lyrical: "Freire understood that while we often abandon hope, we are never abandoned by hope. This is because hope is forever engraved in the human heart and inspires us to reach beyond the carnal limits of our species being."

Whatever we may think of the spiritual, it is difficult to deny that as a passionate Marxist humanist McLaren has a keen sense of the necessity of basic human solidarity: "To celebrate

life always demands sacrificing our ontological security because, as Che and Freire both knew, it is impossible to celebrate life under conditions that do not obtain for all, that did not allow all others to enjoy the fruits of their struggle and labour." In this view Marxist-inspired struggle, even if unsuccessful, cannot be viewed as a waste if only because of the exemplary effect of sacrifice on contemporaries and future generations.

The main criticism of the book concerns its minimalist conception of the role of philosophy in revolution. Though there are a few references to Marxist humanist philosophy, McLaren basically regards historical materialism as the sum total of Marxist philosophy. This narrow view cuts out philosophical reflection on both practice and

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received theory and serves efficiently to insulate leaderships against criticism. There is a glaring error in McLaren's understanding of proletarian internationalism, which stems from an erroneous fidelity to the strategy for world revolution of Che Guevara. He tried to build world revolution the wrong way around, from the oppressed periphery outward rather than conceiving of the process needing to start from the major imperialist countries.

McLaren does not recognise this lop-sided view but at one point he cites someone who does Elvia Alvarado who proclaims in *Don't Be Afraid Gringo*: "It's hard to think of

change taking place in Central America without there first being changes in the United States. As we say in Honduras, 'Sin el perro, no hay rabia' – without the dog, there wouldn't be rabies."

Amidst his rose-tinted picture of his Argentine-born subject, the author claims: "Che's Marxism was grounded in historical materialism, in the idea of a self-reflexive agent of struggle". The idea of self-reflexivity is seen by McLaren as inoculating Guevara against Stalinism. This is plausible, but, without philosophy, self-reflexivity remained insufficient to enable Guevara to set about positively undermining the authoritarian Stalinist rule of the Cuban Communist Party.

McLaren's adaptation to philosophical and political pragmatism creeps in when he

unselfconsciously writes that: "In the case of both Freire and Che, it could be said that their own subjectivities were fashioned – were dialectically constituted – out of the everyday theories that they employed to make sense out of their own experiences and those of others in a world of human suffering."

This accurate statement unwittingly highlights the main problem with the outlook of Freire and Guevara. They theorised directly from their experience, but their experience was an insufficient source of inspiration to provide the intellectual means to resolve world-historical problems. In contrast, Bolshevism and Trotskyism has at its best comprehended that the complexity of world capitalism require the use of theoretically sophisticated and intellectually hard-won theories to provide guidance in difficult and complicated class-struggle questions.

The author's sometimes sentimental approach to theoretical problems can be irritating. According to McLaren the main cause of reformism in those who pursue Marxist humanist politics is "allowing the oppressor 'within' to overtake the subject in the back alley of history". This is surely a moralistic conception of the problem, which has at its roots the non-reflective approach of Marxist humanism.

Near the conclusion of the book McLaren makes a revealing assertion: "One of the most important contributions of Che and Freire was the emphasis they placed on praxis. For both Che and Freire, the dialectic must be disencumbered by metaphysics and grounded in the concrete materiality of human struggle." Thus the author openly admits that his heroes had a praxis ontology – the view that reality is largely composed of human practice. That reality is, in fact, mainly composed of what the dialectical critical realist Roy Bhaskar has called the "intransitive dimension" – mechanisms and tendencies outside immediate human control.

My final political point relates to the author's view of Nikolai Bukharin, who McLaren wrongly lumps in with the vulgar economic Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals. That Bukharin was in fact a highly dialectical thinker is evident from a study of his work. Those interested should read Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* and his *Economics of the Transformation Period*.

Now we come to the author's analysis of "critical pedagogy" which purportedly becomes "revolutionary pedagogy" in the career of McLaren's second subject, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

It is claimed that Freire put forward a pedagogy which allows people to educate themselves through their revolutionary practice. McLaren asserts: "Freire's primary achievement remains that of his work as the 'Pilgrim of the Obvious', a term he often used to describe his pedagogical role." In his literacy campaigns, Freire apparently builds in an element of social critique which cannot help but be anti-capitalist, and it is this that is intended by "Obvious".

What is the connection between critical pedagogical theory and revolutionary politics? McLaren puts forward the case that: "Freire warrants his reputation as a pre-eminent critical educationalist in the way that he was able to foreground the means by which the pedagogical (the localised pedagogical encounter between teacher and student) is implicated in the political (the social relations of production within the global capitalist economy).

"Whereas mainstream educators often decapitate the social context from the self and then cauterise the dialectical movement between them, Freire stresses the dialectical motion between the subject and object, the self and the social, and human agency and social structure."

A serious problem with Freire's methodology arises from his emphasis on emotions, summarised by McLaren in the following way: "For Freire, pedagogy has as much to do with the teachable heart as the teachable mind, and as much to do with efforts to change the world as it does with rethinking the categories that we use to analyse our current condition within history."

This sentence exhibits McLaren's commendable rejection of teaching that is not fired by anger against the capitalist system. But would it not be more accurate to say that anti-capitalist values issue from an explanatory analysis of the world, and that you cannot have the former without the latter? Analysis needs to be driven by the necessity to understand the world, not an attempt to make the world fit one's own emotional reaction to events. There is an element of the latter in Guevara's, Freire's, and McLaren's proudly utopian approach to changing the world. The author states: "The linchpin of revolutionary pedagogy, from the perspectives of both Freire and Che, is Marx's theory of consciousness/praxis, which maps the movement of their pedagogical problematic onto the terrain of a Marxist humanism."

McLaren does not envisage that "praxis" might be a denial of the reflective philosophical Subject,

a Subject that philosophically reflects on her/his own practice. This is linked to his rejection of the idea of a revolutionary party which he regards as a "deus ex machina" concept. That is to misunderstand the root of authoritarianism in (fake) Marxism. It is, in fact, praxis "Marxism" that relies heavily on personal injunctions and supposed moral imperatives to govern action. That easily leads to authoritarianism.

It is dialectical materialism (and now dialectical critical realism) which demands self-critical reflection on previous practice and a thorough analysis of the political, economic and ideological conditions. Such philosophical reflection is the best guard humanity has against authoritarianism, and represents a rejection of the moralism and uninformed utopianism of praxis "Marxism".

In a dialectical materialist/dialectical critical realist approach, action flows logically from the results of philosophical reflection and is not the premature end-point of a forced process of personalist and moralist assumptions. Here we see some common ground between Marxist humanism and anarchism. Its praxis can only be accidentally revolutionary and on the contrary usually represents reformism or, in the case of Guevara, an ultimately doomed and voluntarist utopianism.

McLaren cites Cornel West, the black American philosopher and academic, who is so enthusiastic about Freire's work that he can write that Freire "dares to tread where even Marx refused to walk – on the terrain where the revolutionary love of struggling human beings sustains their faith in each other and keeps hope alive within themselves and in history". One is tempted to ask: what greater contribution could Marx have made to struggling humanity than to have written explanatory theory about the way the capitalist system works?

McLaren approvingly quotes E. San Juan who argues that "from a historical-materialist perspective, the dynamic process of social reality cannot be grasped without comprehending the connections and the concrete internal relations that constitute the totality of its objective

WHAT GREATER CONTRIBUTION COULD MARX HAVE MADE TO STRUGGLING HUMANITY THAN TO HAVE WRITTEN EXPLANATORY THEORY ABOUT THE WAY THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM WORKS?

determinations... Truth in this tradition comes from human practice, the intermediary between consciousness and its object...". This conception of truth elevates practice to a central role for the determination of objectivity (truth) at the expense of reflection and discussion. In this manner ideas become valued for their usefulness for a projected end, and ideas with superior explanatory power are passed over and not aired.

McLaren's critique of postmodernism focuses on the importance of historical materialism, and on humanist morality. Postmodernism is thought (correctly) to evade class questions and questions of oppression. But McLaren's anti-philosophy historical materialist humanism is not equipped to do battle with postmodernism, which has to be faced up to at the level of philosophy.

The defence and development of dialectics is crucial to combating the influence of postmodernism.

This is why dialectical materialism should see dialectical critical realism as an ally rather than a rival. Both are capable of defending a dialectical philosophical subject, a subject which systematically takes account of the real complexity of the political, economic and ideological world. Such a view has tragically not developed because of the hostility or indifference to philosophy within the organised left. It is to that urgent task we must turn. ■

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Campaign launched against Court of Appeal

THE COURT OF APPEAL IS BECOMING A REPLACEMENT FOR THE JURY SYSTEM, A RECENT CONFERENCE IN LIVERPOOL WAS TOLD

THE CONFERENCE took as its starting point the recent decision by the Court of Appeal to reject significant fresh evidence in the case of Eddie Gilfoyle, who was jailed for the alleged murder of his wife.

The main speaker was Campbell Malone, who is Eddie Gilfoyle's solicitor. He said that the Court of Appeal had rejected evidence suggesting Eddie's wife was in an increasingly suicidal mood, and that her death occurred after Eddie had gone to work.

Even the Police Complaints Commission accepted that it was an unsafe conviction, he said. But the Court of Appeal is effectively rejecting the legal case for a new trial, despite new evidence. This is increasingly the way the court is reacting to appeals.

Malone said that this means the Court of Appeal is deciding whether the jury is right or wrong. For example, in the Sally Clarke case the Court of Appeal accepted that there were important legal problems in the original trial but still upheld the verdict. The Court of Appeal is acting as judge and jury, upholding convictions in a dogmatic manner. There ought to be a campaign for retrial by jury, Malone argued.

During discussion it was pointed out that the judges seem to be rejecting the validity of the Human Rights Act and European Convention on Human Rights in relation to the appeals process.

It was also said that the New Labour government's aim of achieving more prosecutions and convictions is creating the climate for problems with the appeal process.

The question was asked "how can judges be made accountable". Malone's answer was that we cannot wait for the government to introduce legislation, but rather it is necessary to develop pressure to change the situation. A legal system is needed that could admit to mistakes. However, while the discussion suggested useful forms of pressure on the legal system, the main question of the increasingly unaccountable nature of the state and judiciary was not analysed.

The next session was about the way forward and campaigning work. Paul Caddick suggested that possible forms of activity involved the need to support lawyers who questioned the role of the Court of Appeal, and to raise this issue in the specific defence campaign newsletters.

In the discussion that followed, points were made about whether we should call for the election of judges, whether an appeal to MPs is the way forward, the need for mass protest, the necessity for a precise focus in relation to our main demands, the importance of media interest.

There was a call for a simple statement of aims or a charter. The call for a coordination meeting in June was proposed and accepted. This meeting will probably discuss the feasibility of a demonstration outside the Court of Appeal, and will also aim to put together a charter of aims.

A discussion also took place about whether we need a more centralised steering committee in order to increase co-ordination between the different campaign groups, but it was eventually agreed that coordination work can be carried out without this additional committee. ■

THE OTHER STORY OF BRITISH ABSTRACT ART

BY CORINNA LOTZ

Denis Bowen has played a unique – but little known – role in the history of contemporary art in Britain and internationally since the mid-1950s.

The Belgrave Gallery in Hampstead is helping to change that by celebrating Bowen's 80th birthday with a retrospective and a new book*.

As a young artist and teacher in the Industrial Design Department at the Central School of Art and Design, Bowen reacted enthusiastically to post-war trends in Europe. Two vanguard dealers – the Hanover Gallery and Gimpel Fils – offered him a direct experience of the exciting progress in contemporary continental art.

INFORMAL PAINTING

“Bowen quickly developed an artistic pantheon,” Peter Davies writes. He was impressed by “gestural, informal painting [which] exploited chance and accident as part of an imaginative manipulation of paint”.

Practitioners of Informal art included painters like Soulages, Hartung, Dubuffet, Wols, Michaux and Mathieu. They were frowned upon by the French Establishment. Informal painting shares much with the “Matter” tendency pioneered by Alberto Burri and Antoni Tàpies in focusing on the physical materials used and the process by which they are applied. The content of the work tends to emerge only as the artist applies his or her pigments or other substances.

This approach in turn became connected with the idea of “action painting” for which Jackson

Pollock is famous. It is something like improvised jazz, whereby no set pattern or preconception is planned out before the creation of the work itself.

In the hands of Bowen and his near contemporary, Tàpies, simple materials, including cheap paper, sackcloth and crumpled paper, acquire mental and emotional properties – a kind of metaphysical quality – as the artist exploits random effects and juxtapositions.

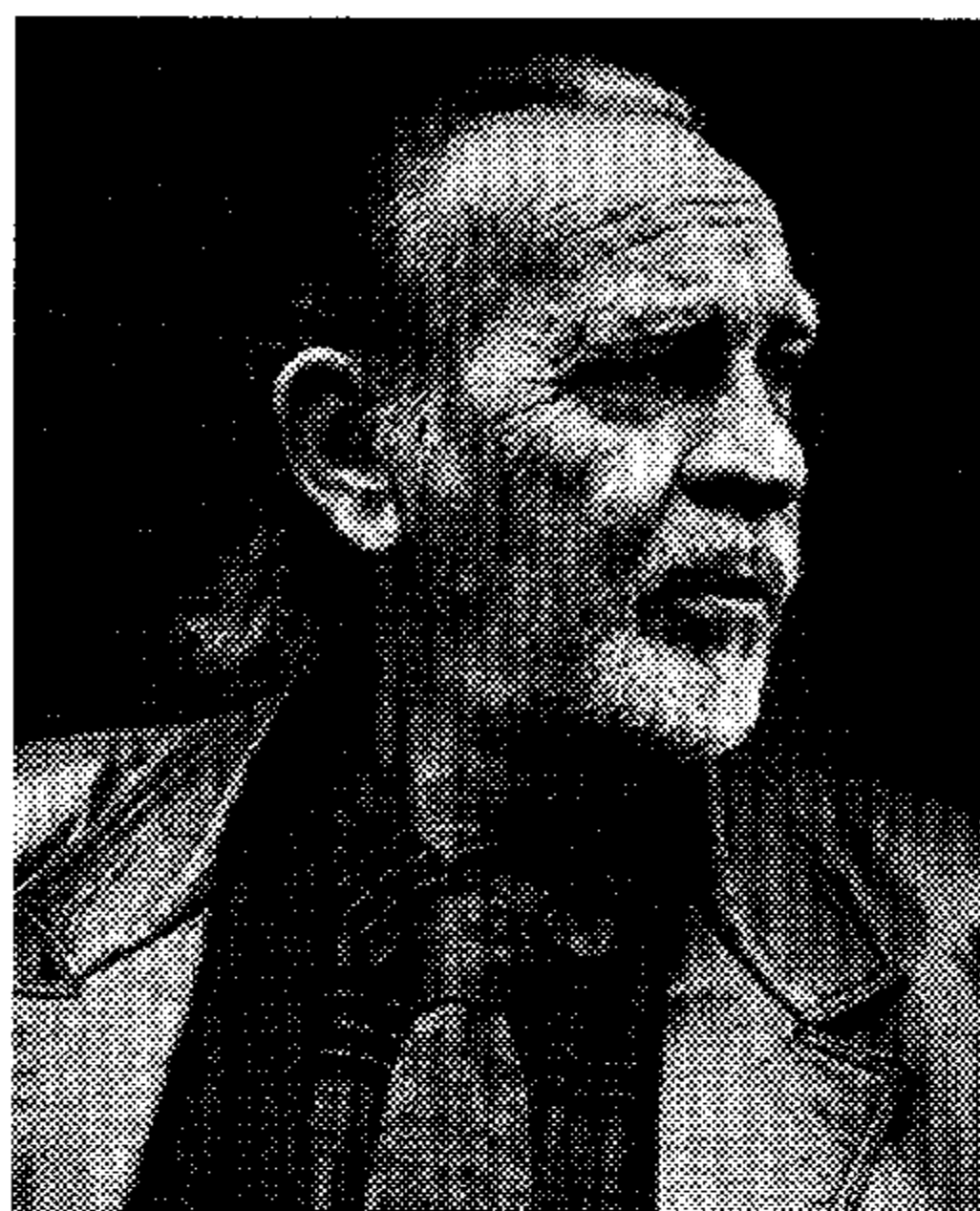
In post-war Britain “non-figurative” or “abstract” art, especially the Informal variety, was regarded, as a prime means of alienating the public. “It was therefore left to non-figurative artists to form their own groupings and seek out new exhibition space”, as Margaret Garlake wrote in the first-ever history of Bowen's New Vision group.

Bowen's early work captured the rebellious, secretive, often explosive qualities that characterise the “informal-gestural school” quite brilliantly. A sense of mystery and excitement is evident, for example, as Bowen makes variations on the theme of a strong horizontal “beam”, which has vertical sprays bursting out, reflected from above and below.

SPECIFIC IMAGE

Reading a specific image into the work is up to the viewer, but not really necessary. The marks and the materials used can be enjoyed as forms and colour in themselves, expressing energy and rhythmic movement.

In 1956 Bowen, together with two other



Denis Bowen, 1988
(photo by Michael Woods)



Moon Rising 1989

painters, Halima Nalecz and Frank Avray Wilson, launched the New Vision Centre Gallery which showed abstract art in the heart of London at a time when it was considered “new, incomprehensible and quasi-scandalous”.

The NVCG came into being as an indirect reaction to the Institute for Contemporary Arts, (the ICA), which tended to cater for an artistic elite. In contrast, the New Vision gallery was run by artists as an independent non-profit organisation. Its policy was to promote young international and unknown non-figurative artists.

TALENTED VISUAL ARTISTS

The New Vision Gallery offered a way forward for a significant number of talented visual artists, who rejected the notion that art had to conform to any dogmas, including the Stalinist dogma of socialist realism, and who wanted to form a collective anti-establishment movement.

The gallery made use of two basement spaces at No.4 Seymour Place, Marble Arch. Taking advantage of the low rents of the day – and

Bowen’s salary as a lecturer at the Royal College of Art – the New Vision group staged an staggering number of exhibitions over a period of ten years – around 250 one-person and group shows. The greatest proportion were either first one-person shows or first London exhibitions.

Out of the 220 artists shown, more than half came from outside Great Britain, as Bowen’s flat became a meeting point for them. He himself was born in Kimberley, South Africa, only taking UK citizenship in 1962. Painters and sculptors from Pakistan, Germany, Holland, France, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Guyana, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand and other countries, especially the Commonwealth, visited Bowen and joined in the venture.

Amazingly, Bowen kept down a full-time teaching job at the Royal College of Art, organised between 25 and 30 shows per year and still produced outstanding work of his own.

During the 1960s, the dark earth colours – mainly browns, reds and burnt blacks of the early 1950s were joined by greens and then bright primaries. Canvases like *Exploded Image*,

Crystallised Landscape and *Burst* display a lyrical skill with the brush, lightly dribbled paint, encrustations, and delicate use of deep colours which are a pure delight.

Gradually a cosmic element comes to the fore. Depth is created by contrasting the immediacy of surface with undefined, floating spheres in the background.

The theme of orbs or discs with a planetary feel, often with a nimbus or corona has remained a central feature of Bowen's art to the present day. The formless possibilities of distant space – intimations of infinity – take Bowen from the here and now of his material world to another more abstract world of symbolic form.

There is an obvious association with space travel in *Re-entry – Colonel Glenn* (1962), where an experimental use of chemical reaction creates an astonishing, almost photographic appearance of the burning explosions associated with space flights.

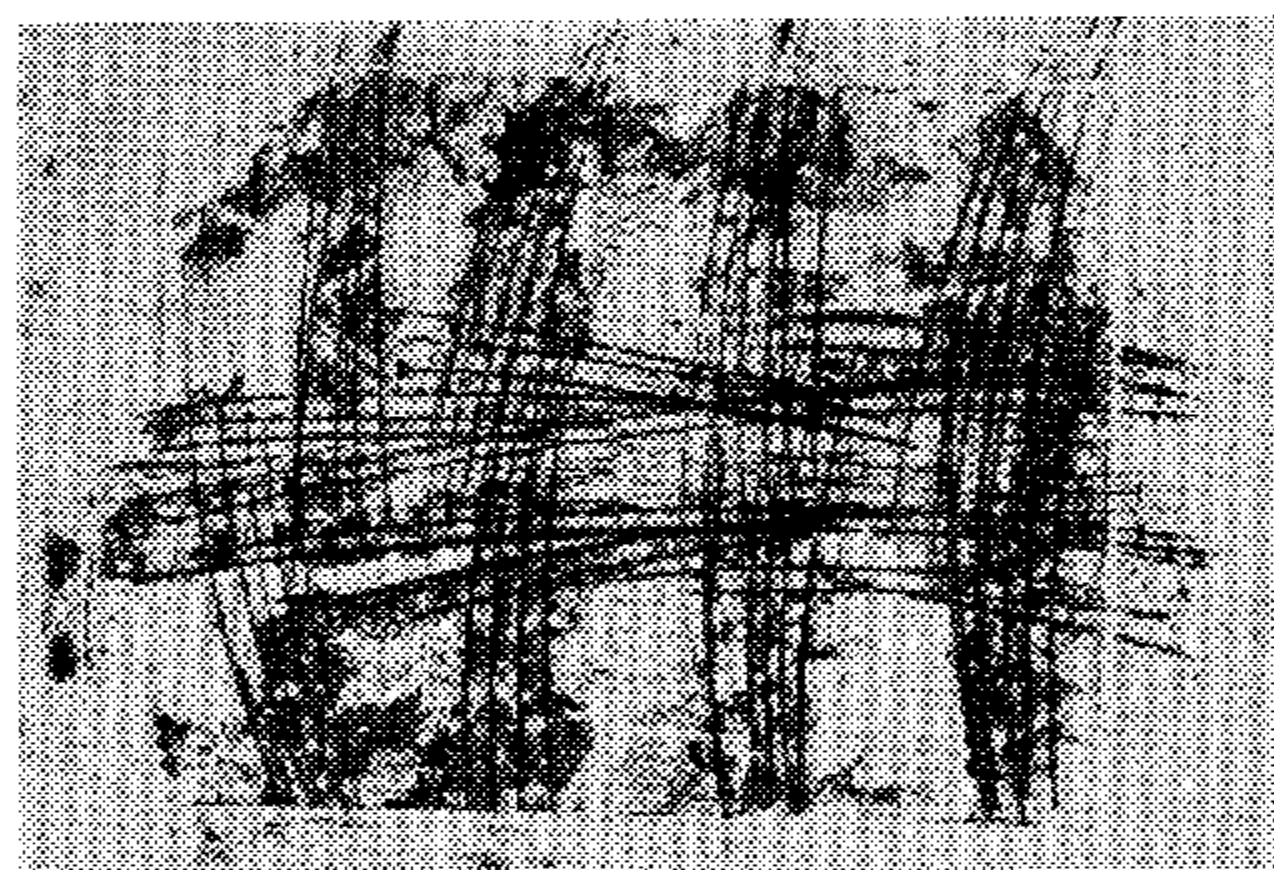
NEW ART FORMS

By 1966 a changed political climate and the rise of new art forms led to a loss of interest in the original New Vision project. Many artists in Europe and elsewhere were inspired by the revolutionary political atmosphere of the time and participated directly in artist projects and politics outside their studios.

There may have been other factors at work, but unfortunately not much light is shed either by the exhibition in the Belgrave Gallery or Davies' book on Bowen's transition to a new phase in his life. He now joined a group of British artists in Vancouver, Canada, teaching at the University of Victoria between 1969 and 1972. Throughout the 1980s Bowen participated in the Celtic Vision group which exhibited in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and Galicia.

The New Vision project was the subject of an exhibition which began in Jarrow in 1984 which was shown again at the Warwick Arts Trust in 1986, accompanied by Bowen and Garlake's documentation. But in general the existence of an abstract, painterly school of art in Britain remained a well-kept secret, excluded as it was and still is, from most surveys of modern art and art criticism written by British and US authors. The Other Story, a Hayward Gallery exhibition about Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain was a notable exception to this rule.

Undeterred and perhaps even strengthened by



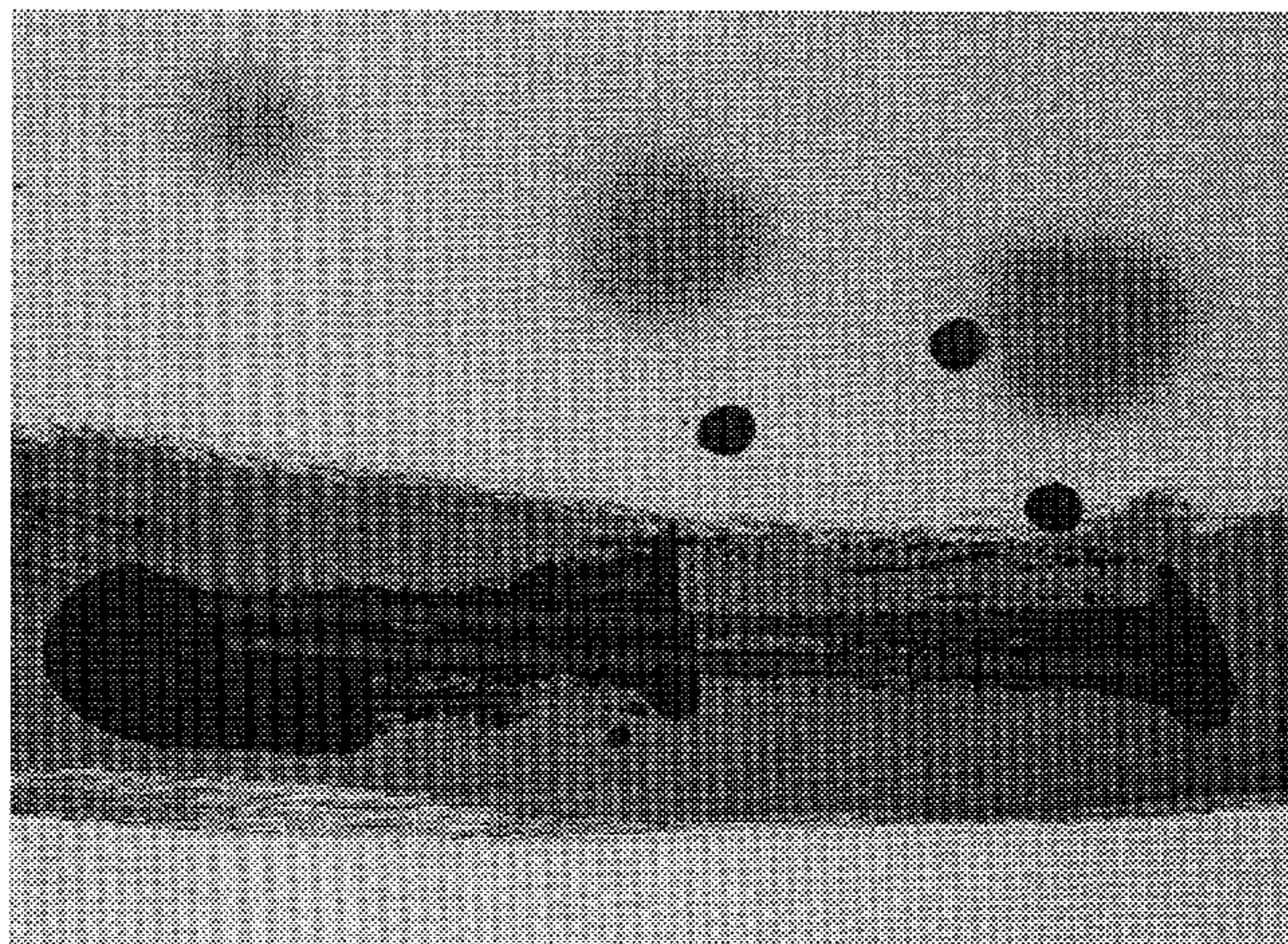
Top: Denis Bowen painting, Earls Court 1952 Above: Untitled 1955

the attitude of the art establishment in Britain, Bowen travelled and exhibited extensively in the Balkans during the 1980s and 1990s, preserving and extending his cosmopolitan approach to life.

In this period he created an enthralling series of "planetary" works, with swirls of paint rising up and leaping, like aureoles and sun storms. They seem an artistic foretaste of the extraordinary images brought back by the Hubble telescope during the 1990s.

His exploration of the chance effects of paint, originally developed into an explicit artistic method by Surrealists like Max Ernst, take Bowen down a variety of avenues. He increasingly evokes a parallel universe, full of natural forms and allusions.

The activity of the artist's hand is often mediated through a variety of instruments as



Untitled 1962

pigments are splashed or sprayed rather than manipulated directly by a brush on the canvas. This intensifies the appearance of natural growth, of things coming out of themselves in a spontaneous fashion and imparts a feeling of dynamic life to most of Bowen's creations.

The closing years of the 20th century saw Bowen make powerful small paintings like *To Earth*, *Yellow Sea* and *Lagoon*. They capture the ambiguity of the micro and the macro – the earth seen from a great height above, thus continuing Bowen's fascination with space travel, but also assimilating the latest advances in a variety of technologies which enable the human eye to view nature in new ways.

LIVING CONTINUITY

Denis Bowen at 80 represents a living continuity with vanguard art in 20th century art. He remains true to the principles of informal art, although, naturally he deploys them within a general pictorial concept of his own making. His presence in the London and international art scene has encouraged innumerable artists, gallerists and critics.

With this book the "other story" of British

abstract art can begin to be told. It sets a marker which is doubly important at a time when the crudest commercialisation dominates and smothers alternative outlooks as to what the aim of art may be. It also puts the Belgrave Gallery, which also has a space in St Ives, Cornwall, on the map as a key art publisher. ■

Denis Bowen's paintings can be seen until May 15 at The Belgrave Gallery, 53 Englands Lane, London, NW3. Telephone 020 7722 5150.

*** *Denis Bowen* by Peter Davies, in a limited edition, available at a special launch price of £25 until the end of May. www.belgravegallery.com**

BREAKING the silence

Since last year, the Imperial War Museum has devoted a large area to documenting the crimes of the Nazis. Walking through it is an unbearably oppressive experience, since many of the photographs and artefacts are the tainted products of the Nazi's own propaganda machine.

The curator of Legacies of Silence, also on view at the Museum, presents history from another standpoint – a record through the eyes of its victims. Here we see the horror, but at the same time incredible resilience and courage in the determination to remain human and to preserve the memory of the millions who lost their lives.

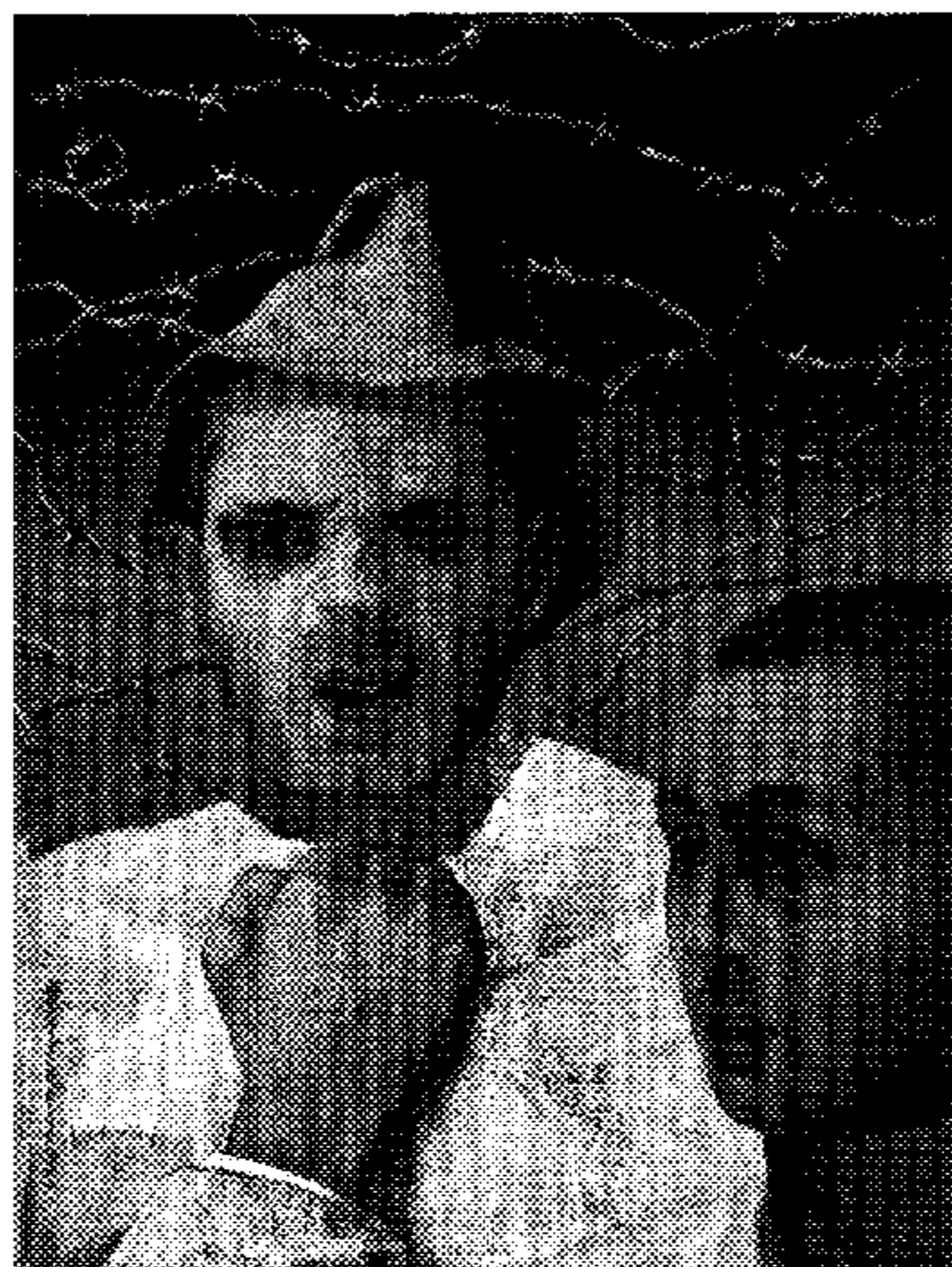
The drawings of those imprisoned in the ghettos and camps have a quality of resistance by the mere fact that they were made at all, that they are still preserved, and that they do more than present a record.

Halina Olomucki, one of the 46 artists whose drawings and paintings are on view, recalled being told by a fellow concentration camp inmate: "If you live to leave this hell, make your drawings and tell the world about us. We want to be among the living, at least on paper."

Curator and artist Glenn Sujo describes the way that tens of thousands of Jews took part in resistance movements by joining partisan groups and organised themselves in the camps and ghettos. Making clandestine works of art "not only placed the artists' lives at grave risk, but by resisting the barbarism and brutality of the perpetrator, also constituted acts of spiritual resistance".

Visiting memorial sites, museums and libraries in Europe and Israel, Sujo painstakingly pieced together as much information as possible about the circumstances under which artists functioned. Although cut off from the outside world, their work is intimately connected with the development of art during the 1930s and 1940s.

As Sujo explains, living in France and Belgium was no protection for artists against the



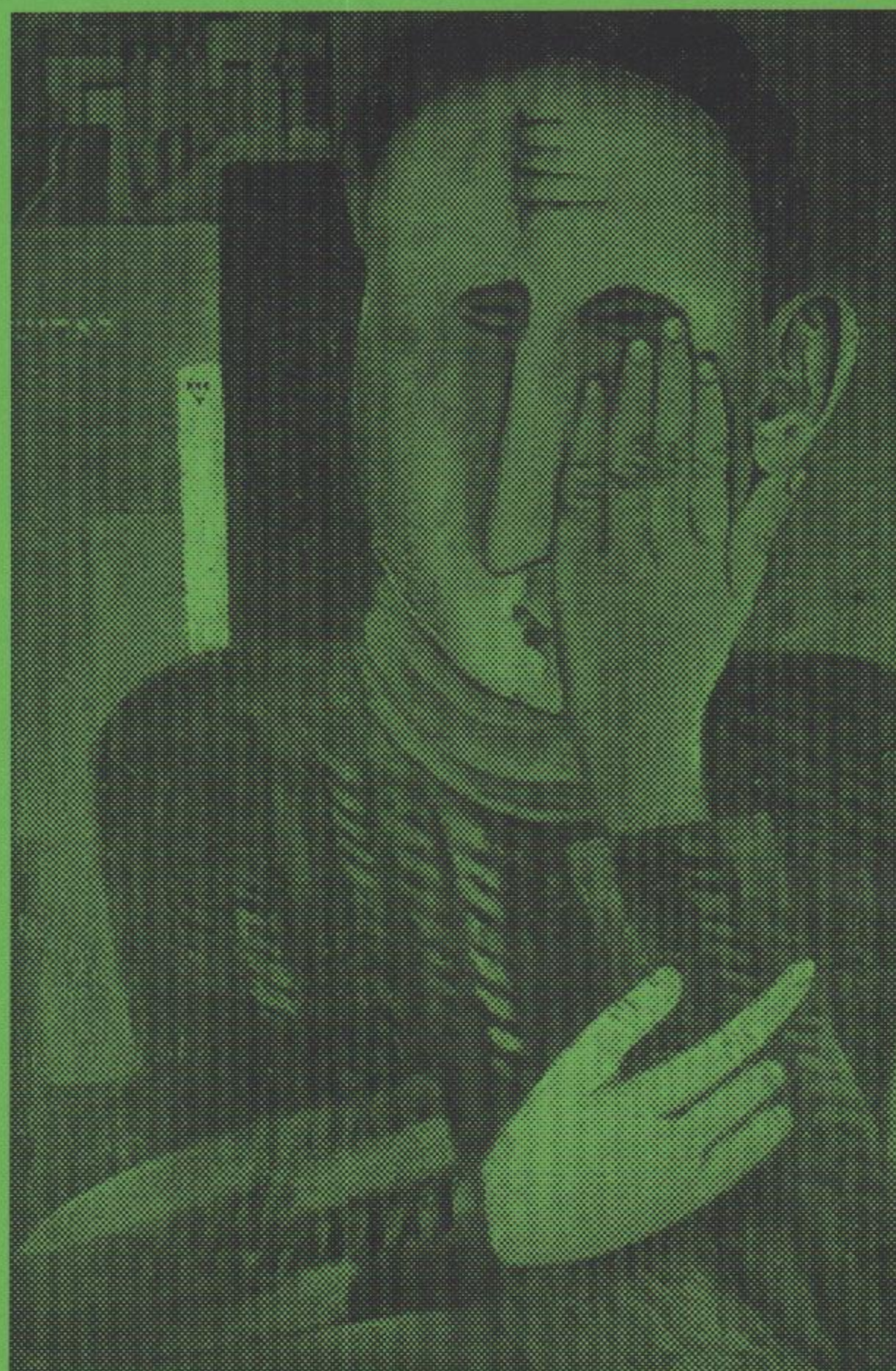
concentration camps. Amongst those arrested and interned in France were well-known artists like Max Ernst, Hans Bellmer, Wols, Otto Freundlich and Marc Chagall. The luckier ones were rescued or managed to escape.

Others, like Freundlich, Leon Landau, Adolphe Feder and Felix Nussbaum were sent to concentration camps. Nussbaum's *Self Portrait with a key in St Cyprien* (1941) (above), for example, shows the hideous conditions through his own accusing and scornful eyes.

Drawings made in Terezín, 50 kilometres from Prague, (opposite page bottom right) depict one of the most bizarre aspects of the Nazi occupation of Bohemia. Re-named Theresienstadt by its new rulers, the town became a major transit point for the planned annihilation of Jews from Western Europe. However, the pretence of a model town was maintained and a measure of self-administration extended to the Jewish Council of Elders, which was drawn into the repression of the inhabitants.



Opposite page: Felix Nussbaum, *Self Portrait with a key in Saint Cyprien* 1941
 Above right: Jankel Adler *What a World: The Destruction of Lodz* 1923-24
 Below right: *View of Theresienstadt* 1943-44 ©Estate of Bedricht Fritta
 Above: *Portrait of Stefan Antoniak* 1944 Franciszek Jazwiecki ©Panstwowe Muzeum, Oswiecim

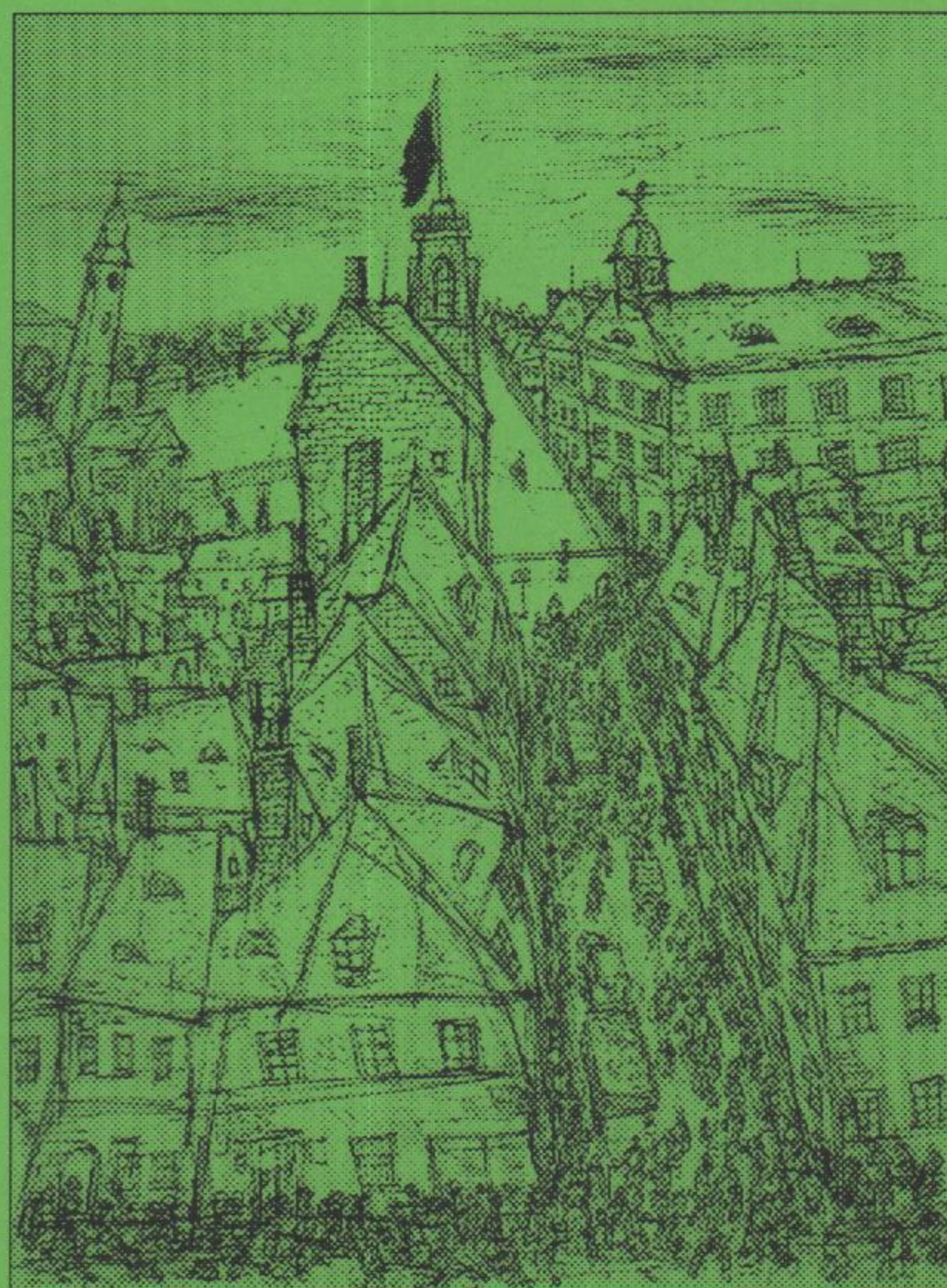


Artists like Bedricht Fritta, Otto Ungar, Moritz Nagl, Charlotte Burešová, Karel Fleischmann, Leo Haas, and Jan Burka produced an astonishing array of images which reveal the horror of life in a surreal world where funeral hearses were used to transport not only the dead, but the living and essential commodities like bread.

Fritta's pen and ink drawings such as *Film and Reality* and *Deluge*, Sujo explains, were not as surreal as they may seem. The Nazis employed artists to depict the town as a picture-postcard utopia with modern shops, a children's marionette theatre, and neat gardens.

In 1944, SS Sturmbannführer Hans Günther commissioned a propaganda film about "Theresienstadt" intended to show it was a well-run community "under the protection of the Führer himself". The crew and many in the cast were soon deported to their deaths. Legacies includes drawings made in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Birkenau and Dachau, and paintings made later by those who survived. ■

Legacies of Silence is at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 daily 10-6pm until August 27. Entry £6.50/£5.50; free for children and senior citizens and for all after 4.30pm. Book published by Philip Wilson (£17.95) available at the Museum - www.iwm.org.uk



www.socialistfuture.org.uk