UN out! Lift the arms embargo!

Bosnia's blood on UN hands

Socialist Outlook has always argued that neither the U.N. nor N.A.T.O. was interested in defending Bosnia. The brutal crushing of Srebrenica and renewed Chetnik attacks on the 'safe havens' of Zepa, Bihac and Sarajevo has shown the complete bankruptcy of the United Nations.

When the U.N. introduced its 'safe haven' policy in Srebrenica it first disarmed the Bosnian army. Rather than let the Bosnian people defend themselves the U.N. claimed it would "protect" them. The slaughter of thousands of people in Srebrenica is the result.

The U.N. has encouraged the Greater Serbian chauvinists by agreeing to the division of Bosnia. Every single plan produced by the U.N. and E.U. envisaged the carve up of multi-ethnic Bosnia-Hercegovina.

"Ethnic cleansing" is not just an excess on the part of the Serbian Serb army. It is a deliberate policy agreed to create the largest possible area over which the Serbian bureaucrats rule. Far from the U.N. plans producing a solution for peace they have given the green light to General Mladic and Radovan Karadzic to step up their war against Bosnia.

The attempt by Mladic and Karadzic to create Greater Serbia, with the support, sometimes tacit sometimes open, of Slobodan Milosevic, is the total rejection of Tito's Yugoslav ideal.

Those who defend the idea that all peoples, whatever their ethnic origins, can live together in a single state are those fighting to defend Bosnia-Hercegovina. The multi-ethnic defence forces of Bosnia are the real heirs of the Yugoslav ideal - not Karadzic and his Chetnik thugs.

The war in Bosnia is not a 'civil war' between 'warring factions', it is a war between those who want to create ethnically 'pure' states and those who desire a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Tens of thousands of Serbs and Croats continue to fight alongside Muslims to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia.

The unwillingness of the U.N. to defend the 'safe havens' stands in marked contrast to its determination to maintain the arms embargo. The Chetnik attacks on the 'safe havens' demonstrate that the arms embargo affects only one side in the war - the side fighting to maintain a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

It is the Bosnians' lack of arms and the tacit support of western imperialism that encourages Mladic to continue his bombardments. It is the Bosnians' lack of arms and the lack of real international solidarity that allows mass slaughter. Far from halting the war the arms embargo has caused it to continue for longer than the First World War.

Despite the embargo the Bosnians have been able to improve their military capability. This reflects the mass and active support of the Bosnian people for multi-ethnic Bosnia. It was this increased fighting capacity that allowed them to defeat Croat forces trying to carve out their own state and renew the Croat-Bosnian alliance.

Over 5,000 marched in central London in solidarity with Bosnia. There have also been demonstrations in Spain and South Africa.

The only useful thing the U.N. can now do is get out of Bosnia, hand their weapons over to the Bosnian army, lift the arms embargo and let the Bosnian people defend themselves.
ASLEF ‘Yes’ shocks tube bosses

By an ASLEF Southern Region activist

THE 75 per cent majority in the ASLEF underground ballot was obviously a shock to the LUL and BR managers. LUL thought it had turned the drivers in to strikebreakers with salaries well above other manual grades and a cosy arrangement with officials for ASLEF, which organises two-thirds of drivers. But a 2.7 per cent pay rise is an insult whatever it is based on. BR had been hoping for a no vote so it could argue its own drivers are isolated.

An all-out underground and BR drivers strike will bring the country to a halt on 27 July.

BR was lured away by more talks for 24 July when they were expected to marginally improve their ‘last chance’ offer — a productivity bonus of between nothing and £200. Talks revealed that the vast majority of drivers would get... nothing. ASLEF’s joint LUL-BR mass meeting on 25 July discussed progress. Socialist Outlook supporters joined others on the left stressing that workers must not accept bonuses that do not affect the rate of pay.

Despite all the talk in the press of drivers’ numbers, £30,000 a year, the basic is £11,227.

By working every real day and every other Sunday, and including shift allowances and high mileage payments, this can be increased to £25,000 or even £23,000 at some depots. Others are stuck at £13,000 a year. But at the end of the day, it is the £11,227 that pensions, holiday and sick pay are based on.

It would have been good to be on strike with the RMT fighting for a decent pay increase for all grades.

Many are paid as little as £120 a week, but the level of anger is high amongst drivers, who are the first to be blamed in case of an accident and subject to more and more monitoring and harassment from petty-minded management more concerned about their corporate image than public safety or efficient services.

Negotiations for a decent basic salary have been going on for more than two years. The only figure to result was £15,000 plus £1,000 for 100 attendance. For this, BR wanted massive productivity gains, which would eliminate all overtime and other allowances.

There is a tendency in ASLEF to go down that road, where the only argument is about figures. Furthermore, General Secretary Lew Adlam suggests that drivers should be regarded a professional grade, with ASLEF as a professional body, arranging transfers and seniority with officials. An end to the manner in which the BMA or the Law Society is a union. These mistakes should be fought against, but I agree today it is to win the strike; it alone can stop privatisation.

Unity on the tubes at last

By an LUL train operator

AT LONG last we have it. The moment London Underground (LUL) workers have been waiting for — the RMT and ASLEF are coordinating strike action on LUL...

It is supposedly over pay. This is what both unions bailed out on. Understandably, engineering members of the RMT have been bailed out on job security in response to the LUL ‘make or buy’ privatisation policies. Both ballots and have been given decisive three-to-one votes for action.

All grades of staff are under enormous pressure from the increased workloads and the new regime of bullying. Stress-related illness has rocketed since the introduction of the Company Plan package of new management techniques.

There are whole teams of managers whose sole purpose is to get more work out of us. A year part of our pay claim is therefore a reduction in working hours.

The union bureaucrats hope that the issue will go away, pretending the dispute is merely over percentage points. It would be cheaper for the government to settle immediately than let it go on.

But they know that what is really at stake is the morale and organisation of railway workers and, beyond that, other public sector workers and the whole trade union movement.

The Tories don’t mind spending a few bob of the taxpayers’ money to push a deeper wedge between unions and the Labour Party.

The RMT London Transport District Council and LUL Executive Member Pat Sikorski have played an important role in the run up to the dispute. We have managed to maintain our organisation, in contrast to the large area of BR.

Leaflets

The steady flow of militant叶lets from the District Council, in contrast to the head of...
His Masters’ Voice

What we think

The Problem with Tony Blair’s trip to talk to the assembled bosses of Rupert Murdoch’s empire in Australia was that he went, but what he said when he got there.

If he now decides to pull the plug on the referendum, it may well not be the first time that sections of the capitalist class have opted to back a rotten government in order to ensure its political dominance. Of course we cannot see this as their most overtly political action, but a milestone in the development of Murdoch’s media conglomerate.

He was careful to pick only the softest and most bank-fed targets for his denunciation of the Leader of the Opposition’s radicalism. The House of Lords, the ‘old boys’ network in the City, the West End public school domination of Oxford and Cambridge. This is only the start of a long list of Murdoch’s favourite targets. It is clear that Blair’s ‘right wing’ voice is more likely to be directed against the welfare state and the public sector unions and against these traditional ‘so-called’ targets.

But there will not have been a few rights of a trickle at the extent to which Blair has run the white flag to their various forms of socialist realism. The difference between his party and the old Left is that Blair’s men will also have spotted and welcomed the complete absence of any positive reference to socialist realism which has been suppressed by the right-wing ‘communism’, which runs alongside Blair’s, in tailoring his policies to this audience, has already developed the most right-wing Labour programme since Ramsay MacDonald.

He boasts that the next election will be more than half the membership of ‘New Labour’ will have joined since he took office. It is simply accelerating the momentum of the original Blairite program. The consequences for Blair and the ‘old Left’ of Murdoch’s media empire are vast.

We can only hope that Blair has not noticed that the same ideas were also embraced by the left-wing Labour establishment, and that few socialists would today look back on those grim years of Hitler’s conquest of Europe.

Ernest Mandel

The death of our comrade Ernest Mandel will come as a blow to many readers of Socialist Outlook.

For fifty years Mandel has been a core member of the International. In 1958, on the occasion of the First Congress of Socialist Outlook, he declared that the International was a genuine force in the struggle of the oppressed.

His enthusiasm for the struggles of the oppressed is evident in his writings. He was aatar of the International, a prolific writer, and a brave and principled speaker drawing large audiences of students, workers and intellectuals.

His commitment to internationalist activity was significant. He had a deep understanding of the international dimension of the struggles of the oppressed and the importance of solidarity.

Ernest Mandel was a committed internationalist, and also of the need for Marxist theory and organisation. As a mark of respect, Socialist Outlook is proud to dedicate our summer issue to the memory of Ernest Mandel.

Pillars of the British establishment are facing up bravely and with good humour to the prospect of Tony Blair’s radical reforms.

Blair, in tailoring his policies to this audience, has already developed the most right-wing Labour programme since Ramsay MacDonald.

Blair’s reactionary focus on the family unit – itself the backbone of the attempt to view Labour as the party of the working class. Blair has not noticed that the same ideas were also embraced by its radical elements. It is simply accelerating the momentum of the original Blairite program. The consequences for Blair and the ‘old Left’ of Murdoch’s media empire are vast.

We can only hope that Blair has not noticed that the same ideas were also embraced by the left-wing Labour establishment, and that few socialists would today look back on those grim years of Hitler’s conquest of Europe.
Left policies nodded through, but standing ovation for Blair

No contest at TGWU conference

By Peter Parton

SUPPORT for a national minimum wage based on one half median male earnings, the repeal of all Tory anti-union laws, and a commitment to full employment and public ownership were hardly a resounding support for the Blairite programme.

The TGWU’s biennial conference of July confirmed the crushing victory of Bill Turner over Blairite president Jack Dromey.

Despite the media coverage of Blair’s anti-union message there was hardly a voice in dissent from the positions of the union.

One of the few areas to generate any passion was equal opportunities. The leadership conceded that it had failed to address properly the apparently low participation of women, black and disabled members in the union.

A motion on lesbian and gay equality was carried despite vociferous opposition from homophobic elements in the conference.

The TGWU remains firmly under the control of an unaccountable and secretive body left. Calls for specific actions, and anything that threatened to be controversial, were carefully filtered out as the opposition stage.

The union seems to have pulled through a period of severe financial difficulties. It remains a crucial bulwark against the attacks in the labour movement.

But the struggle of a bureaucracy against the left continues to restrict the potential for a powerful challenge to the government, and any future attacks on its members.
**FACE gears up for 30 September demo**

**By Roy Leach**
(NUT National Executive, personal capacity)

WHILE government ministers sat down to horse-trade over how much to cut from public expenditure in order for Chancellor Clarke to engineer the hoped-for election-winning tax cuts, FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education) met in Coventry to plan the campaign to achieve precisely the opposite.

Campaigners are demanding at least a billion pounds extra for education, to reverse this year’s brutal cuts, and no more cuts next year.

Central to the campaign is a national march and rally, to be held in London on Sunday 30 September, plans for which are well underway. While the core support will come from local FACE groups which are springing up all over the country — Reading, Bristol, Cambridge and Brighton are among the most recent launches — FACE nationally is making tremendous efforts to secure the support of other organisations, in particular trade unions organising education workers.

Mobalising for the 25 March demonstration was hindered by the opposition of NUT General Secretary Doug McAvoy who enlisted the TUC’s John Monks to warn against cooperation.

However, recognising the significance of FACE, the second largest teachers’ union NASUWT has already indicated its support for the September demonstration and looks likely to distribute FACE material to its branches.

Blunkett

At a recent conference organised by Sheffield City Council even David Blunkett admitted he wasn’t entirely sure what FACE is, although he wasn’t happy with its demand for more money for education, rather than just an end to cuts.

Against this background, McAvoy will find it increasingly difficult to maintain his opposition to FACE.

While the last meeting of the NUT Executive amended a resolution calling for support for the demonstration to one noting it, the door was left slightly ajar.

There was a call for a meet-
go between the leaders of the NUT and a request for more information about the organisation of FACE and the degree of support from NUT branches that it enjoys.

FACE will continue to seek the support of the largest teachers’ unions and has even offered McAvoy a slot on the 30 September platform.

With even more members working in education than any other union, UNISON is a potentially key supporter of FACE, and a number of Executives have expressed sympathy.

It will be asked to add a fringe meeting at TUC Congress, where FACE can establish itself as a central element in the upsurge to defend public services.

Enforcing its non-party political character, FACE has also agreed to organise fringe meetings at each of the party conferences.

In a further positive development, student activists look set to launch a student FACE.

If thousands of FE and HE students can be mobilised for 30 September this will both help to swell the demonstration and link up two main arcs of education funding campaigns.

Likewise involvement of the nursery education campaign, which was given a recent boost by the cross sector scheme announced by Education and Employment supremo Gillian Shephard — apparently against her own wishes — offers to bring many more onto the streets of central London.

It is essential that local FACE groups and anti-cuts campaigns use the full of the school holidays to make sure that their plans for 30 September are fully in place: coaches booked; mobilising meetings in early September planned; leaflets and posters printed; street stalls planned and so on.

The demonstration must be huge if it is to force the government’s hand. It is up to all of us to make sure it is.

Posters and leaflets are available from FACE: 01203 310193. The next FACE paper will be available at the end of August. Place your order now!

**Bid to bribe the wealthy with cash snatched from state nurseries**

By our correspondent

In 1997, just before the next general elections, Major’s government is going to introduce one of its biggest ever con-tricks.

The parents of every four-year-old child parents will get a voucher for a lump sum of £1,000 to be able to ‘shop around’ for their ‘child’s nursery education. There is no guarantee that they will be able to find what they want: provision is left up to the ‘market’, while council spending on state nurseries is heavily restricted.

In a deliberate ploy to favour the middle classes, the Tories, arch-opponents of universal benefits, are insisting that the hand-outs will be means-tested, but handed to rich and poor alike.

Ministers claim parents will be able to ‘choose’ between a part-time (half-day) place in a state school’s nursery, a full time place in a reception class, a place in a private nursery (for which they would have to pay most of its costs), and a place in a play-group.

Playgroups which provide a half day placement have been encouraged in the past by this government as representing good ‘value for money’.

Their staff receive only short and inexpensive training (compared with teachers, NNEB or BTEC), and many rely on parents’ involvement, while suffering from over-stretched, uncontrolled resources. The playgroup movement recently threatened to boycott the scheme when they found they will get only £550 for each part time place.

**Condemned**

The vouchers initiative is condemned by all teachers, educationists, and nursery workers. Private nursery chains have warned that it could actually force some of them out of business. Local authorities have dismissed it as unworkable.

Even Geoffrey Wright, the Tory education chairman in Scotland said ‘We would be no better off, and could be worse off’.

Up to now the only authority that may volunteer to run a pilot scheme is Tory Wandsworth, an authority which already has excellent nursery provisions for four year-olds. Councils fear the scheme, for which they got most of the bill, will cut their grants for providing nursery education.

The essence of the scheme is transferring money from public to private hands. The main beneficiaries will be parents who already send their children to private nurseries, whether by choice or because only private provision is available locally.

They will receive a generous hand-out towards these costs: those dependent on state provision, and unable to ‘top up’ the voucher to the level of private nursery school fees are likely to lose out. The money will be deducted from local authority spending on nurseries for those dependent on state provision.

The other big winner from the scheme is the administration and inspection apparatus, whose role it would be to distribute, cash and evaluate the ‘service’.

The cost of this apparatus cost is estimated to £20 million, money which should be used to extend free nursery education.

Socialists should campaign for free, high quality nursery education for three and four year olds.

We should also demand provisions for extended day care which would truly answer the needs of working parents.

This should be part of our fight for high quality state education for all. All this requires more funds for training, resourcing, and establishing new provision.

We should be demanding and supporting our councils to resist this scheme, which is set to batter the wealthy middle classes by smashing up what little nursery provision working class people currently enjoy.
The grisly logic behind Serbian ethnic cleansing

GeoFF RYAN reviews Norman Cigar: Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing". Texas A&M University Press. £27.95.

GENOCIDE in Bosnia is the best exposition so far of the fundamentally reactionary, racist ideology of the advocates of Greater Serbia. Whilst Cigar is aware that Croats have suffered at the hands of Serbian nationalists (and have also been responsible for attacks on Muslims - the Serbs) he focuses primarily on Serbs on the Muslim population of Bosnia.

According to Cigar 'the genocide - or ethnic cleansing as it has been commonly known - that befell the Muslims of Bosnia-Hercegovina was not simply the uninitentional and unfortunate byproduct of the war. Rather, it was a rational policy, the direct and planned consequence of conscious policy decisions taken by the Serbian establishment in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. This assertion is meticulously argued and demonstrated throughout the book and one of the numbers of references to press sources throughout former Yugoslavia.

Nationalism

Cigar shows how Greater Serbian nationalism became the dominant ideology of the political and intellectual elites in Serbia during the war. The Serbian Orthodox Church, Milan Panic, Vuk Drakovic and others portrayed as liberals in the west do not escape responsibility. They were frequently the most vociferous Serb chauvinists. However, it was the wholesale adoption of Serbian nationalism by Slobodan Milosevic that paved the way to war in Croatia and Bosnia. Such an argument is clearly a rejection of the conventional explanation that the different peoples of the Balkans have always hated each other and that 'ethnic cleansing' is somehow inevitable. It also places him firmly on the side of multi-ethnic Bosnia-Hercegovina.

Cigar demonstrates that 'ethnic cleansing' is not purely an act by individuals but a necessary part of the whole Greater Serbian project. On an ideological level Bosnia's Muslims were de-mobilised by the Serbian chauvinists, thus fueling hatred. But more importantly, there is a material basis for 'ethnic cleansing'. The more territory the Serb chauvinists capture, the smaller becomes the percentage of Serb inhabitants. Because of the higher birth rate amongst non-Serb populations Serbs would soon become a minority. In order to prevent this it is necessary to drive out people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Greater Serbian nationalism is, of course, by no means cohered. The Bosnian Muslims are presented both as Serbs who converted in Islam and as Turks who settled in Bosnia. Such contradictory positions may well be irrational, but if anything the sheer irrationality strengthens the hold of such a reactionary ideology.

US military

Norman Cigar is by no means a revolutionary Marxist. Indeed, he is an intellectual working for the United States' military. It is no doubt this background that leads him to direct his fire against the failure of the United Nations to prevent slaughter in Bosnia.

Unlike his political masters Cigar clearly does believe in much of the rhetoric of the New World Order. He cannot understand why almost the only intervention the U.N. has carried out effectively is to maintain the embargo against the Bosnian government.

But he also sees the Montenegrin Tricic who talks in terms of a non-class 'world community'. He doesn't put forward any independent working class solutions.

He also tends to present the conflict too much in the terms used by the western media. Thus, although he is clearly aware that the Bosnian army is multi-ethnic he tends to refer to 'the Muslims', rather than to the multi-ethnic resistance.

Despite these weaknesses it is undoubtedly the best account of the nature of Greater Serbian nationalism and a damning indictment of the complicity of western leaders in genocide.

Although Cigar is an academic book it is well written and very easy to read. It spells out the real reasons for the war in Bosnia in terms that even Tony Blair, Tony Cliff, Peter Taaffe and others (who continue to portray Bosnia as a 'civil war' between three equally bad 'warring factions') may even be able to understand.

My one real objection is not the content of the book but the price - £27.95. It is far too cheap: but well worth it.

More recommended reading on ex-Yugoslavia

General background on the break-up


Magas' book is undoubtedly the best politically. The other two are rather academic in tone, making for fairly heavy reading, but well researched and contain lots of valuable material.

On Bosnian history

Noel Malcolm: Bosnia: A Short History. MacMillan

Noel Malcolm is by far the easier to read, and apart from the absolutely outrageous final paragraph, is generally good.

Donia & Fine are more academic.

Journalists' accounts

Ed Vulliamy: Seasons In Hell: Understanding Bosnia; Simon & Schuster

Mark Thompson: A Papel House: The Ending of Yugoslavia, Vintage

Roy Gutman: A Witness to Genocide; Element

Misha Glenny: The Fall of Yugoslavia; Penguin

Alex Russell: Prejudice & Plum Brandly, Michael Joseph.

By definition these tend to be somewhat impressionistic. Ed Vulliamy is probably the best overall: very readable and pacy.

Roy Gutman is perhaps a little too inter-ventionist. Misha Glenny is the favourite of the Socialist Workers' Party, which his political analysis is given to support.

However, his book contains valuable material, some of which tends to contradict his overall views.
UN hypocrites connive at the rape of Bosnia

By Roland Rance

WHILE THE Bosnian people continue to suffer atrocity after atrocity, the cynical hypocrisy of Western policy has never been more apparent.

The fall of Srebrenica has led to the disposition of about 40,000 Bosnians. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, have been killed, and reports of mass rape and appalling massacres are frequent.

With the attacks on Zepa and Ribnac and the continuing shelling of Sarajevo and Tuzla, all of the UN-designated 'safe havens' in Bosnia are under simultaneous attack.

Meanwhile, the NATO and UN forces in Bosnia do nothing, while Western leaders issue further empty threats against the Serbians, without the slightest intention of taking any genuine steps to prevent the genocide in Bosnia.

Their main concern is the protection of their own forces, their only effective policy is to block the food supplies to the besieged Muslims. This strategy is a scandalous failure. To allow the Serbs to starve the non-Muslims into submission is the most卑劣的 tactic one can imagine.

Joh Major's London summit on Bosnia issued a ringing call for an end to ethnic cleansing, and a threat to take action to protect Gorazde. The ultimate threat seemed to be: "If you attack us, we will retreat." As the Guardian pointed out, the fiscal day of the summit was almost identical to the declaration of the 1992 London conference. Since then, thousands of Bosnians have been killed, tens of thousands of women have been raped, hundreds of thousands of people have left their homes.

The Serbian army's strategy was to treat the Western forces with contempt. This contempt is justified: the Serbs seem to understand better than some activists in Britain that the UN will not take any action against them, that it has no intention of preventing the killing of Bosnians and the slaughter of the people.

This demand for the withdrawal of UN and NATO forces from Bosnia does not mean that we favour abandoning the Bosnians to their fate. On the contrary, we demand that the forces arm the Bosnian people to enable the Bosnian people to acquire the means to defend themselves.

Leading opposition to arming Bosnians: Rilkid

The Serbian army and their Bosnian Serb surrogates do not ask for arms; they inherited virtually the entire Yugoslav army, its munitions and factories, and they still receive arms from several sources. The Bosnians, on the other hand, have virtually no arms, especially lacking in heavy weapons, while the blockade prevents them from receiving any arms.

Not only does the UN encourage a one-sided arms embargo - in Srebrenica and elsewhere they actually disarm the Bosnians with the false promise to defend the town against attack.

Recent reports suggest that a group of Arab and Islamic states is proposing to supply arms to Bosnia.

We welcome this, and demand that these arms be allowed to reach the Bosnian army.

We defend the right of the Bosnians to acquire arms from whatever source possible.

New Bosnia Solidarity Campaign hits the road

An estimated 5000 people marched through central London on July 22 in the biggest demonstration yet in support of multi-ethnic Bosnia. The marchers demanded 'Stop the rape of Bosnia!' 'Free the arms embargo!' 'End UN collusion with genocide!' Many marchers carried red planks on the signs 'UN out', though others seemed uncertain of this question. After the march, a packed meeting in Westminster Central Hall listened to several speakers, including the Bosnian Ambassador, Aidan Harper of the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Hercegovina, Workers Aid for Bosnia, and the Muslim Action Group.

The march and meeting were called by the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Hercegovina, Workers Aid for Bosnia, and the Muslim Action Group, and were attended by dozens of other groups, including Socialist Outlook and International Workers' Aid. These groups have agreed to establish a Bosnia Solidarity Campaign to continue the political struggle for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and against genocide and fascism.

The march has already started, with the non-stop 24-hour picket outside Downing Street, and calling for further demonstrations in London on 6 August. It will be organized by open meetings.

Socialist Outlook welcomes the establishment of this campaign, which is long overdue. We will play an active role in its work, and urge all our readers and supporters to become involved in it.

IWA spreads net of solidarity

INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid continues its work in Bosnia. With new groups established in Norway and Austria, and contacts with a group in Austria, IWA is now active in at least 15 countries, and for the Bosnian unions continues to arrive at the warehouse in Makarska.

Unfortunately, due to continuing problems with the Herzeg-Bosna (Croatian) authorities, most of it is still going there until the convoys receive permission to take aid to Tuzla. Despite this, much work is still being done, with the Koka miners union in Tuzla preparing the eventual arrival of fresh convoys. IWA groups have also adopted various projects in Tuzla, including a union newspaper and a youth club, for which they are raising funds.

The Swedish IWA, together with the Swedish Workers' Party, has organized a 'Ship to Bosnia' project. This will sail from Sweden on 30 September, carrying hundreds of tonnes of medical aid to Bosnia.

The IWA office in Makarska is helping to coordinate the receipt and distribution of this aid. Aberdeen Trades Council and municipality have pledged support for five containers of aid.

Please support these projects; more money is always needed. The IWA group in Britain will forward all money received. Please send donations to IWA, PO Box 1139, London N4 2UW. Cheques should be payable to 'International Workers'
The limits of liberalism

Tony Blair’s rewriting of Labour’s constitution and political platform amount to an outright rejection of socialism and an embrace for the values of liberalism. But just how liberal can capitalism afford to be at the close of the twentieth century? Simon Kennedy looks at the curious evolution of the idea of democracy and the concept of ‘liberal capitalism’.

Decades of Stalinism gave capitalism’s apologists and enthusiasts an opportunity to counterpose “communism” to democracy. However caricatured, the picture of a regime without democratic rights in the East was a pretty accurate one. For decades it was their most powerful propaganda tool, an “anti-model” for capitalism’s ideologues to scare the western working class into believing socialism meant totalitarianism. They had a great deal of success.

In the popular mind socialism and democracy have become severed. The Soviet Union’s “actually existing socialism” has established in mass consciousness the definition of socialism as an all-powerful state, with intrusive and authoritarian interferences into a daily life which is highly regulated and centralised.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall capitalism’s ideologues have gone hell for leather in an attempt to exclude any alternative to their system from political debate. A central tenet of this offensive has been the attempts to identify the free market with “liberal democracy.”

Democracy has become more than an alternative to “communism.” It is now synonymous with capitalism. Newsreaders and philosophers alike make no distinction between the two. Yeltsin justifies his market reforms by equating his restoration of capitalism with the restoration of freedom.

Brutal

Ask any trade union militant in Sao Paolo and the identity of capitalism and democracy will immediately be thrown into doubt. The so-called “free world” has always included some of the most brutal and disgusting regimes of the twentieth century.

For most of its history, and in most of the world, capitalism has not been accompanied by parallel democratic openings. Furthermore, the meaning of “freedoms” in the west can be connected quite firmly to the economic domination of the colonial world by imperialist powers.

Linkage

Nevertheless those who seem to be a real and powerful linkage of capitalism and parliamentary “democratic” forms of politics in the advanced capitalist countries. This linkage takes the form of a state with a plurality of parties competing for office. Electoral rivalry is decided upon by a mass popular vote. The state formally has a series of “checks and balances” involving differing decision making centres, so as to maintain continuity and moderation.

The most conspicuous among these institutions is parliament, which appears to offer a place of free debate and decision making by representatives chosen by the electorate. All citizens are equal in the polling booth — we get one vote each.

This arrangement deserves explanation. The coincidence is not by chance. There is good reason why liberal and parliamentary rule remain the best possible shell for capitalism. The political form has its roots in the special features of this way of producing.

Capitalism is unlike any previous system of organising the economy. Previous to capitalism goods were not generally produced for exchange. Resources were not structured around the demands of the market.

Work was also differently organised. So, for example, peasants in feudal times would work so many days for themselves and their families, and then a set amount on top of this wholly for their lords.

This second period of work was therefore over and above that needed by the peasant to maintain him or herself. It was ‘surplus labour’. Traditional ties of duty, enslavement and coercion of various kinds, were used to “extract” it from the producers.

Capitalism is different. In this form of production the extraction of surplus labour is not so obvious — it is hidden in with the rest of a worker’s labour. In other words, the organisation of production and the appropriation of surplus labour by capitalism occurs at the same time.

The fact that the economic system enables those who own the factories and machines to extract surplus labour without overt coercion makes it a lot more difficult for the workers to see how they are being exploited. On the surface of things “a fair day’s work for a fair day’s wages” seems an equitable exchange.

This arrangement nevertheless rests upon a fundamental inequality. The vast majority of people are excluded from effective control and ownership of workplaces and machines, unable to prevent their labour power in order to survive. This division is basic to the system.

Goods are produced for exchange and the market. Alongside a “private” economic sphere, there is a separate public political one. The two are distinguished. This political sphere is called the state, with various administrative functions and a monopoly over the use of violence.

They are, of course, remade. The state’s primary political business is to sustain capitalism.

No need to divide

But in a capitalist society there is no longer any need to embody the division between the rulers and the producers in the same sort of rigid exclusionary hierarchical political division that characterised other economic systems.

Capitalist exploitation is therefore divided into two separate moments: i) economic appropriation and ii) political coercion. The state becomes a highly centralised, specialist and exclusive body. The economy is allowed to follow its own rules, “outside” of politics.

It is this division between the political and economic that provides the basis for capitalist democracy. It is a unique form of rule, for a unique economic system.

While the division of economic and political is in place then the narrower political sphere can be opened up to those outside of economically dominant classes. On a formal level, politics becomes expanded in a way that is “not liberal”.

But it is an exceptionally restrictive form of politics. While the citizenship of western countries is vast, they are excluded from decision making about some of the most important things that affect them. The citizen body is essentially passive. “The people” are not an active citizen community, but a col-
In this framework it becomes impossible to even think of freedom from the market. This is why Tony Blair can tell the leaders of News International that “the war between the public sector and private is over.”

The peak of democracy: the Petropod Soviets meets after the October Revolution


The concept of private individuals. Although it includes rich and poor owners of factories and offices alongside their workers, voting is confined to a small range of issues.

Capitalism’s new relation of economic and political devolves the very same citizenship in liberal advocacy to extend. The powers of private property are placed outside the remit of politics.

Yet in this same arrangement the economic domain of the market is given unprecedented powers. Capitalists are given huge rights of control over the working day—probably have more control over the productive process than at any other time in history.

The market is allowed to invade every aspect of our lives—personal relations, life chances, choices, diet, recreation, everything. No medieval despot ever had such powers.

In social economic features of capitalism that make possible a form of democracy that concentrates on formal matters of equality and representation while leaving huge basic conditions of power and control untouched.

Liberal politics, whether espoused by Labour or the Labour Party, remain trapped in its restrictive framework. Liberal doctrine looks only at one side of the question. It restricts itself to a discussion of how capitalism enhances personal liberties from the powers of the state and from traditional repressive forces, but refuses to confront the more pervasive inequalities.

The prevailing ideological offensive that began in the 1980s has at present been on this even further.

The market becomes described not just as a mechanism for the distribution of goods and services, but as the sphere of true freedom, unhindered by bureaucracy. It portrayed as an open sphere of freedom without compulsion or constraint.

As the assertion of independent powers by the feudal barons and Whigs. It is where liberalism’s emphasis on rights comes from—statements protecting “lords” liberties from crown encroachment.

Liberalism, with its baggage of “rights,” is therefore a very anachronistic creed. It borrows its roots from a pre-capitalist period when the idea of freedom was primarily aimed at the traditional privileges of the aristocracy. This kind of privilege is no longer the chief source of inequality or oppression. Political status is not the determinant of our life chances. It can therefore have next to nothing to say about more fundamental inequalities which determine people’s existence.

The origins of parliamentary rule lie in this struggle by a privileged class against another privileged layer. The original “political nation” was a community of lords bent on retaining and extending their power by a vote once every five years.

This is the value of the Greek example. Unlike in the demos the capitalist state stands “above” the community. It has an identity outside of the community of producers. There was no need for liberal individual “rights” in Greece because the state had no separate existence from the producers themselves. Greek democracy was thoroughly not restricting. Liberal parlia-

mentarianism can therefore be said to be a replacement for democracy rather than its codification. It is a substitute.

The English revolution provides a good example of this contradiction between parliamentarianism and democracy. Radicals within Oliver Cromwell’s army asked directly for the franchise after their victory. The army leadership turned them down, saying that the right to be governed by a constitutional parliamentary government was enough. No one thought to pretend that this was “democracy.” They understood, better than liberal commentators today, that parliament was an alternative to popular power. To be sure, for example, is mistaken to see Cromwell as a democrat in the sense we should mean by it. He was in favour of a constitutional oligarchy.

This would suggest that liberalism is not just inadequate, it is need of massive extension, but an anachro-

nomic and ineffective political creed for confronting the realities of modern capitalism. Liberalism fails to touch the economic sphere of capitalist domination that so determines our lives. The powers over production, appropriation and distribution of our products are excluded.

Vast areas of daily life remain outside its definition of “politics.” The workplace, the allocation of most resources, the distribution of the products and the organisation of labour are controlled only by “laws of the market” Interference with its de-
mands is deemed anti-libertarian.

The redefinition of democracy away from popular power made possible by capitalism makes possible such a limited perspective. Democracy is reduced to liberalism.

Even if liberal democracy was massively extended by the opening up the institutions of the state and more regular voting this reality would be no more than a rhetorical exercise, just as do away with hereditary porosity and the “old boys network” of Oxford and Cambridge do not even begin to alter it. They amount to little more than an overdue and partial modernisation of a Victorian system that protects class division and capi-

talist exploitation.

Liberalism claims to offer rule by the people. But really it limits politics to the defence of “rights” which are often secondary or irrelevant. Its formal language encourages the illusion that formal political equality can achieve social and economic equal-

ity, whereas in fact it eburnises and codifies their division and disassoci-

ation.

This means that socialist democ-

racy has to be more of a break with liberal democracy, rather than its ex-
tension.

Bolsheviks

History offers few examples of the kind of democracy to which we aspire. Probably the most powerful was the fledgling years of the Soviet Union. The social democratic aca-

demic Neil Harding explains it well: “For a brief period of perhaps nine months after the October revo-

lution in 1917, the Bolsheviks com-

mitted themselves to the most audacious attempts at transforming the vocabulary and practice of poli-

tics since the French Revolution of 1789... the idea of soviet democracy was directly counterposed to that of ‘bourgeois,’ ‘liberal’ or ‘parliamen-

tary’ democracy. It signified the di-
rrect, unmediated participation of the people in the administration of pub-
lic affairs.”

Such an extension and transfor-
mation of democracy is only made possible by the overthrow of the state. Liberalism does nothing to make this a reality. In the meantime can only stress the reality of capi-

talist exploitation behind a smokescreen of “rights.” As an out-

dated and ineffective ideology it is a replacement for democracy, rather than its champion.

Elene Melkians Wood’s book Capitalism Vs Democracy was published by Cambridge Uni-

versity Press 1995

Enemy

Anyone who interferes with its operation becomes an enemy of freedom and liberty. Any and all restrictions are deemed subversity, to be permitted only where there is a threat of social breakdown that would get in the way of profit maxi-

misation.

In this framework it becomes im-

possible to even think of freedom from the market. This is why Tony Blair can tell the leaders of News International that “the war between the public sector and private is over.”

The idea of a civic community and active citizenship, as opposed to a state apparatus imposed from out-

side, meant an unprecedented degree of freedom. This was limited of course, slaves were excluded, but it was one of the few examples in his-


tory of genuine political role by the direct producers.

It is interesting to note here that the ancient political philosophers who have shaped modern liberalism were amongst the most vociferous opponents of this democratic experi-

enment. Plato in particular, was con-


temprous of all those who work for a living. He was an anti-democrat.

Modern liberalism grew not out of the ideas of Greece, but the struggle between the lords and their mon-

archs. The much celebrated “demo-

cracy” of ancient Athens was in fact a master’s charter asserting the free-


dom of lords against the crown—and, for that matter, over the peasants they lived off.

The origins of modern political forms date to a large degree why liberalism—meaning an emphasis on limited government, civil liberties, toleration, individuality and plural-

ism—has become the dominant po-

litical ideology.

Magda Carta and other utterers of liberalism, 1668 Glorious Revolution, were not milestones in the struggle for democracy, so much

“rights” to exploit those below them.

Representative democracy’s true meaning was those who considered themselves social superiors repre-

senting those below them.

It is then, the opposite of demo-

cratic self-government. It expresses the control of political power by an elite, excluding the producers. It dis-

associates politics from popular power. Thus, strictly speaking it is a government that is sovereign, not the people.

The only place legitimate lib-

eral politics is possible is in the chamber. The rest of us have to make
The entire Greek political spectrum has shifted sharply to the right. PASOK has done little to fight it. The mainstream parties, the church and the mass media are trying to present a so-called "anti-imperialist" front against Turkey and the USA, using the recognition of the Macedonian Republic by the USA and the EU to whip up Greek nationalism in their own interests. Greek Fourth Internationalist ANDREAS KLOKE reports from Athens.

THE WHOLE of Europe has been hit in the last ten years by a rise in far-right and fascistic parties. A wave of nationalism spread across Europe as soon as the regimes of so-called socialism broke up. The "White" and "brown" centers of East Germany by the West German imperialist state marked the end of an historical period. The break up of the Soviet Union showed clearly how the Stalinist bureaucracy had been incapable of solving the national question. It had simply hindered its free expression. This demise of the bureaucratic regimes provoked and abetted a rising of anti-Semitic chauvinism. When the other republics asserted their claims to national independence the Belgrade leadership answered with military violence. It is not an accident that nationalism developed so rapidly when the Eastern European states started to turn themselves into "ordinary" bourgeois states.

National myths

Nationalism and the cultivation of national myths and prejudices are indispensable components of the ruling ideology in capitalist states. One of the strongest of Greek national myths is the military expansion of the Greek state during the so-called "Macedonian struggle" (1904–1908) and the Balkan wars (1912–1913). The supreme liberation meant in reality the conquest by the Greek state of those areas where the Greeks lived in both. Inasmuch as the population of the nowadays Greek areas of Macedonia and Thrace could not identify with the aims of the Greek state, the result was the imposition of a new foreign yoke.

This was obviously the case in areas like the Bulgarians, Slavomacedonians, Turks, Vlachs, gypsies, Albanians, Jews and other minorities in the area. In this sense the experience of the Greek state was "unjust" from a national point of view. However, the state man-

Unwelcome embrace: Greek President Papandreou's government denies national rights and alliances against "Muslims" of the area.

The Greek bourgeois has not hesitated to drag up all the medieval legends about struggle between "Christian-orthodox" and "Islam" groups. The mass media at the front of the spread of the clerical hierarchy's chauvinist propaganda. They are supported in this by the PASOK "socialists" and the right. Indeed, the policy of the entire ruling class has undergone a profound shift to extreme nationalism, affecting broad layers of the population. The lack of response by the traditional left-wing parties aids this process.

The essence of the policy is aggression towards Albania and the Republic of Macedonia. The Greek state uses all the economic power at its disposal to impose its will, including deportations of illegal Albanians and immigrants, and an economic embargo. Military engagement does not appear its intention at the moment, but the climate is being created for such an adventure in the future.

Greece is denying the right of self determination to the Republic of Macedonia by its refusal of the symbols of statehood, and the controversy over the republic's name. It is also using Albanian immigrants as a tool of blackmail. It refuses to recognize any national minority on its soil, talking only of "Muslims" in regard to the Turkish and Pomak minorities in Thrace. It denies the existence of Slavomacedonians.

In this policy it is behaving entirely like an imperialist country.

The reactionary Albanian regime of Berisha has responded in the completely wrong way. It has fostered Greek nationalism by a farcical trial of the five members of "Onoma". In doing it violated the elementary rights of the Greek minority in Albania. Nevertheless, the Greek state bears the brunt of blame for the rise in tension.

The entire Greek political spectrum has shifted sharply to the right. PASOK has done little to fight it. And despite a show of rejection, both the Eurocommunist SYN and its GCP split have adapted to this shift.

They are near silent on the suppression of the minorities and the GCP callous to the state's aggressive foreign policy by calling Albania and the Republic of Macedonia pro-tectors of US imperialism.

They are not even raising opposition to the armament race which is dominating relations between Greece and Turkey, devouring huge sums of money on both sides.

The poison of nationalism is exploited by Turkish and Greek politicians. While Greek reactionaries exploit anti-Turkish chauvinism, the Turkish right preaches the nationalistic virtues of 'Ataturkism'.

Greece is denying the right of self determination to the Republic of Macedonia and using Albanian immigrants as a tool of blackmail.

The struggle against the nationalist wave in our country is the first duty of all those who are striving for peace, defending democratic rights and the rights of all working people, including immigrants and national minorities.

The world is watching and the trade unions are more or less boycotting this struggle in various attempts to align themselves with government policy.

Our medium term aim must be the construction of an anti-racist, anti-militarist and anti-nationalist movement.

Greece is denying the right of self determination to the Republic of Macedonia and using Albanian immigrants as a tool of blackmail.
By the Editors

ERNST MANDEL, one of the world’s most eminent Marxist economists and a lifelong revolutionary socialist activist, died in his native Belgium on the morning of July 20th, 1995.

In the post-war period, there were few more passionate and well known representatives on the international stage of the revolutionary socialist movement then and today than Ernest Mandel.

His life seemed to embody the struggles, hopes and setbacks of that period. Mandel would wish to be remembered first and foremost in his role as leader and foremost theorist of the Fourth International, the world-wide organisation founded by Leon Trotsky and his followers in 1938 to reconstruct an international revolutionary socialist movement from the wreckage of Stalinism.

Resistance

Born in 1923, Mandel joined the Trotskyist movement in Belgium in 1940, helping to rebuild an underground group against the Nazi occupation. He was active in the Resistance throughout the occupation, arrested twice and sent to a prison camp in Germany in 1944. Prior to this, he had participated in the first European conference of the underground sections of the Fourth International, in 1946. In the second world congress of the International, a generalised meeting of the world party, he remained on to his death. The 1950s proved difficult years for Trotskyism in the context of an unexpected stabilisation of international capitalism.

Throughout this period of “crossing the desert”, Mandel was instrumental in developing a non-sectarian and internationalist brand of Marxism which allowed the International to link up with and grow rapidly out of the world communist movement.

Mandel was a key intellectual influence on many of the student leaders of the May 68 revolt in France, as well as other revolutionary student leaders like Tariq Ali in Britain and Rudi Dutschke in Germany. In the post-1968 period Mandel became one of the best-known spokespersons for revolutionary Marxism internationally, analysing the problems of the revolutionary movement in a host of pamphlets and lectures.

Banned

In that turbulent period it was evident that the governments of the day did not regard Mandel as a minor irritant; he was banned at various periods from entering the United States, France, Switzerland, West Germany, and Australia. The militant solidarity with the oppressed evinced by his support for the student revolt, workers in struggle and oppressed nationalities was a tradition he maintained in recent years with the active support he gave to the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the emergence of the Workers Party in Brazil. Shortly before his death, Mandel attended the fourteenth World Congress of the Fourth International; the building of that organisation, which today includes sizeable sections in countries as diverse as France, Sri Lanka and Mexico remained his central and burning concern until his death.

Outside the revolutionary movement, Mandel, who was Professor Emeritus at the Free University of Brussels, was best known for his pioneering work in the field of Marxist economics. “Marxist Economic Theory” (1962) was an ambitious attempt at applying the principles of Marx’s “Capital” to modern reality. “The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx” (1971) traced the development of Marx’s economic analysis from the early philosophical manuscripts to the writing of “Capital”. Mandel’s most ambitious work was “Late Capitalism” (1975), which predicted the end of rapid capitalist growth which had characterised the three decades since the 1945s. It was followed soon after by the second world war and put forward the theory of “long waves” of capitalist development (or rather updated the theory initially developed by Kondratiev in the 1920s). The theory of “long waves” has been at the centre of a debate going well beyond. The cycles of Marxian economists alone; it was restated in “The Long Waves of Capitalist Development”, based on a series of lectures given at Cambridge University in 1978 (a revised version of this work has been published by Verso later this year).

Global recession

“The Second Stagflation” (1978) was Mandel’s attempt to analyze the global capitalist recession of 1974-75. Many readers will also be familiar with the substantial introductions which Mandel wrote to the Penguin edition of Marx’s “Capital”.

Mandel’s theoretical output was not confined to economics; he produced a host of major works taking up a whole series of political and historical questions. Of these, “The Meaning of the Fourth World War” (1985) and the series of interviews collected in “Revolutionary Marxism Today” (1979) are perhaps the best introductions to the breadth of his thought.

In recent years, Mandel’s creative output barely flagged: he produced major studies of Goebbelsheim, the nature of bureaucracy, and most recently “Trotsky as Alternative” Mandel’s activities in the wider labour movement, in particular in his native Belgium, should not be forgotten.

During the 1950s and 1960s he was a member of the economic studies commission of the GTB, the Belgian national union federation, as well as editor of the socialist newspaper Le Gauche and he actively participated in trade union and workers’ seminars throughout Europe.

Optimism

Always concerned with making economics accessible to workers, he took satisfaction in the fact that his “Introduction to Marxist Economies” had been translated into many languages and sold over half a million copies. “From Class Society to Communist” (1978), later republished as “Introduction to Marxism”, sold at similar levels.

Mandel has been disappointed with many of the trends in global politics over the latter years of his life, but retained an unbroken optimism, perhaps best summed up in the peroration to a talk he gave a couple of years before his death at the New York Marxist School: “Understand that you cannot be happier than if you know that you have dedicated your life to this defense of human rights everywhere in the world; the defense of the exploited, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the defeated. There is no more noble human being in this world than to dedicate your life to this great cause. That’s why the future is with Marxism!”.

20th July 1995.

British left shares the loss

MESSAGES from Britain poured in to the Belgian section of the Fourth International, two days after Ernest’s death.

We are saddened by the news of Ernest’s death this morning and deeply feel the loss. Our sympathy and support go to all of Ernest’s friends, comrades and those close to him. We are aware of the immense amount of work he has accomplished and we feel his loss deeply. Our sympathy and support go to all of Ernest’s friends, comrades and those close to him.

The editorial board of Socialist Outlook and workers on the fourth international, consolidating its unity, leading its international collaboration, is taking steps to inaugurate the new generation. British section of the fourth international.

DESPITE our differences with Ernest we recognise that he was a highly committed to socialists in Belgium and internationally. An important voice for the left.

British left shares the loss

Ernest Mandel speaking at 1988 Socialist Outlook rally supporting 50th anniversary of the F1

Writings of Ernest Mandel

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Make cheques payable to ‘Socialist Outlook’ and send to PO Box 1109, London NW 3U2. Please allow 21 days for delivery.
It's a fit-up

By Harry Sloan

I was offered better sex on my way into Tesco. Obviously I was interested. I stumped up my £2.28. But, predictably, I was left less than satisfied with the result.

The message that promised 'Better sex than you deserve' was one of the stable ones. I find it reassuring to read that me and my man. Health

While women's health magazines have been around for years, almost all of them focused obsessively on issues of diet and fitness, the men's mags have emerged relatively recently, coming much closer to performance' - and the selling of a range of sporty toys for the boys.

Fitness rather than fannies is the niche they've spotted in the market, but the target audience appears to include men who prefer to let their wallet to the work. Not many men will be able or willing to match up to the knockabout routines suggested so hunched-sinus into the bite. athletic bodies depicted in the photos. According to the latest survey just 30 percent of men over 40 were or on below their ideal weight - suggesting that in the battle of the bulge the man is winning hands down.

XL magazine is up-front about the varying level of men's commitment to losing weight. It offers three levels of exercises: 'No messing about', 'Gently does it' and 'Can't be arsed' - with exercises that could be done while watching the telly. A survey of readers of Men's Health magazine, a section of the male population, most aware of health and fitness issues, showed just 46 percent claimed to visit a fitness centre, while 51 percent said they exericed at least three times every week.

The new mags cash in on men's insecurity and aspirations, and rehearse some sensible injunctions not to smoke, drink too much, or eat fatty food - while they market consolidation price in the out of shape, in the form of a predictable range of after-treaters, care, sunglasses, watches as well as designer sportswear.

Adverts

Adverts for heart rate monitors (£69.99 + £29.99) remind us that exercise can kill. Men are urged to seek BUPA health screens (£32.91) while fea- tures compare aerobic cycles (from £15 to £1.99) with a new £3,500 mountain bike, and just a range of new, healthy super-knackers - at a mere £30 per pair! The mags are glossy, col- orful and full of bio-size articles designed to tempt the sad and weary.

Of course sex sells magazines, even when it is only hinted at. On a quick skim through Men's Health full open at page 20, where the headline 'Improve your positi- on on the job' is accompanying disappointingly, to deal with adjusting your chair while using a computer. It's not the only disappoint- ment. The August-Sept- ember issue of Men's Health, researched especially for this article, prom- ised a tantalising feature on 'Great Sex: 20 ways to per- fect your style'. But this got- ted pumfer found that there is no such article: instead there was a comparison of different quick remedies for baldness, and a depressingly psychological article on how to get sex (and get it right) on the first date.

The headline article in Men's Health which trig- gered this investigation, of- fering 'Better sex' under the title 'All Night Long', and the bold assertion that 'Men who work out regularly re- port increased libido', con- sisted of a few suggestive monochrome photographs accompanying an exhaust- ing routine of exercises.

"Men who work out mod- erately and regularly report increased libido, more satisfac- tory sex and fewer erectile failures," claims an expert. Where? Prettiest stuff! So the facts?

We are told that "in a study" 78 men followed a moderate aerobic programme (a staggering four times a week!) for nine months. At the end of this - the results were ambiguous "the men reported their rate of sexual intercourse had reached an average of 32 per- cent, with 26 percent more orgasms. An increased fre- quency of masturbation was also exceeded."

But all this raises a series of unanswered questions. How sexually active were these men beforehand? How many "erectile failures" did they have? Is this why they resorted to a positive regime of exercise? Did their obes- eive physical jocks lead to the departure of bored partners, triggering the rise in masturbation?

Casualties

Indeed the same article confuses the, as many of us suspected, the super-fit are no hornier than us ordinary folk. 'Marathon runners, triathletes and strongest men competitors find that their sexual desire greatly de- creases. If you avoid the exercises, the result can be a very fit man who's al- ways got a headache'.

Sex - and the quest for it - is the more of less hidden agenda behind most of these magazines. XL is more down-market, with a gratui- tious article on 'Husbands of readers' wives' (who beg on their wives to strip for photos which they will send to soft- porn magazines: is this healthy?), and a consumer testing of sex toys. But the mags also offer a range of handy hints which many socialist men will ap- preciate: how to tie a bow- tie; a step-by-step guide on how to look at women on the beach, wacky him on how to use childhood pic- tures of yourself to get

Elaborate, expensive toys are the order of the day

women into bed; consoling evidence that it is healthier to eat and sleep alone; and healthy recourses you can cook quickly - assuming you have a vast array of complex ingredients to hand.

After poring through three of these magazines for this article, this correspon- dent was exhausted and de- pendent. There was nobody in any of the pictures looking as old and knackered as me. And short of a Doctor Who- style transformation, no amount of exercise, calorie counting - or magazine reading - could redress the balance.

But a couple of pins and a pork pie to restore my spirits. 

Revolutionaries They Couldn't Break, by Ngo Van (tr.Harry Ratner) Index Books London 1995. 234pp £11.95;

Reviewed by K Govindan

Ngo Van deserves our sini- cide thanks. As an eye- witness and participant in the events he restores a forgotten chapter in the history of the interna- tional workers movement.

Revolutionaries They Couldn't Break is a gripping account of the struggles that exploded between 1930 and 1945 in Vietnam, with a special emphasis on the role of Trotskyist activists. New light is shed on the origins and formation of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (PCI), fore-runner of the Communist Party of Viet- nam. An amalgam of national- and stalinism, the PCI was a devoted follower of the twists and turns of the Soviet bureaucracy. Far from leading the masses, the PCI was often way be- hind the consciousness of workers and peasants in their struggle against French and Japanese colonialism.

While Ho Chi Minh was looking for help from the Chinese Guomindang after their massacre of commu- nists in Shanghai and Can- ton and cultivating the support of landlords and capitalists, a number of Viet- namese political activists in France came into contact with Trotskyism. Among their number was Ta Hu Thau.

From 1933 onwards Thau and his comrades became active in Saigon politics. The authorities repeatedly an- nulled election results, ar- resting and torturing members of the group. Ho Chi Minh was also concerned about their growing popular. Although his supporters had collaborated with Trotskyists between 1934 and 1938 in the publi- cation of a common paper, he wrote to the Comintern in 1939 that the time would come soon to 'politically ex- terminate' the Trotskyists. In December and Octo- ber 1945 he delivered on his promise, arresting and kill- ing their leaders, including Ta Hu Thau. The repression destroyed the group. The handful who survived in Viet- nam had no choice but to abandon active politics. The Trotskyists of La Lutte (The Struggle) and the League of International Com- munists had exercised a real influence, particularly in Cin- chin-china. They organised thousands of militants and, according to colonial re- cords, were more popular than the PCI among the ur- ban working class.

DURING the "Inti revolu- tion" of August 1945 La Lutte published a daily news- paper with a print run of over 15,000 copies! The Trotskyists were also well implanted among the peasantry. Their literature shows close attention was paid to rural grievances and revolutionary potential. No "underestimation" of the peasantry here.

Today the organisational and political continuity with these brave fighters for inter- nationalism and socialist de- mocracy and against the bureaucratic Communist Party is maintained by their comrades in France who publish Chroniclea Viet- namien.

The recovery of Bothevick-Leninist and the con- struction of a genuine revolutionary Marxist party in Vietnam is our related. Ngo Van's book helps that struggle.

Other reading:


Unsung victims of Ho Chi Minh


Other reading:

In memory of Ernest Mandel: a six day summer school of internationalist discussion and debate

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This year we have added an extra day to the school, offering six days of discussion, debate, entertainment and relaxation to supporters of Socialist Outlook and Liberation! and those sympathetic to our ideas from around the world.

The all-in fee for the school has been pegged at just £310 (£350 waged) and £45 (£50 unwaged) for the full six days. For those who can only negotiate shorter holidays, a sliding scale of charges will apply: Four nights £65/£62; three nights £70/£75; two nights £50/£52; single night £25/£15.

A deposit of £35/£35 secures your place. Make cheques payable to Socialist Outlook Summer School, and send to us at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ.

WORLD NEWS

Burmes pro-democracy leader freed

Whose tune will she sing?

By K. Govindan

Aung San Suu Kyi’s unconditional release from house arrest on July 12 by the military junta has raised the spirits of Burmese oppositionists. In 1988 a brief “pro-democracy” spring swept through Burma demanding an end to military rule, human rights and democracy. It was led mainly by students and young Buddhist monks. Nevertheless Suu Kyi, daughter of the national hero Aung San, soon became a symbol and spokesperson for the frustrations and hopes of the Burmese people.

The regime which had isolated Burma from the rest of the world and pursued authoritarian economic policies reacted with typical brutality, killing 1,000 demonstrators in one month and up to 3,000 in total. Hundreds of thousands fled to the border regions for safety. They were protected and supported by ethnic minority armies who have been fighting separatist struggles for decades. The two forces formed a National Coalition Government for the Union of Burma with Karen, Kachin, Mon and others.

Facing a new junta offensive: Karen National Army rebels

The regime had succeeded in making its two fiercest enemies into friends. The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, rode to victory winning 83% of the 485 contested seats.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) comprising senior military figures took power, ignoring the results and stepping up repression. The Nobel Peace Prize winner’s release may be indicative of the regime’s self-confidence rather than weakness. A number of the armed forces of the seven ethnic minority groups have concluded separate peace agreements with the regime, relieving some of the pressure on its forces in the strategically important border regions.

In her book Freedom From Fear (Penguin 1991) Aung San Suu Kyi spells out her political programme: It is one of western liberal democracy, founded on Buddhist ethics and sensitivities.

For the national minorities she suggests that the removal of the dictatorship would resolve their grievances. Much of the political initiative in recent years has been in the hands of the students living on the border and in Thailand, through the All Burma Students Democratic Front.

The NLD by comparison has been weak and divided. Some of its members have been participating in the SLORC’s National Convention to draft a new constitution.

Most of the opposition movement is called for a boycott of the process, knowing that it is simply a sham to legitimise military involvement in politics. Now many will be watching to see how Suu Kyi responds.

SLORC recently began an offensive against the Karen National Army. While the US government makes regular protests about the production and sale of drugs it nevertheless maintains its contact with opium warlord Khun Sa.

The Rangoon government is also involved in the drugs trade. Generals who serve in the border regions and the rubber- and rice-growing areas are enriching themselves. The timing of Suu Kyi’s release may be in response to a possible US trade ban. The regime has begun opening up the country to foreign investors, particularly in the oil and gas sector. The US’s Total and Unocal are two of the largest.

The Japanese government has been a large aid donor, pledging Y11 billion (US$11.5 million) in March and writing off Y4 billion of debt in May this year. Southeast Asian countries have been investing in Burma while protesting concern about its human rights record.

A Channel 4 documentary showed how villagers are kept in chains and used as slave labour in infrastructure projects. The army press-gangs people to carry ammunition and goods for soldiers. Where a family cannot provide a member for these projects it has to pay a huge fine.

Further investment will only keep these tyrants in power.

A caged bird has been set free. Will it now be allowed to sing, and if so, whose tune will it choose?
OVER one million homeworkers are largely ignored by the trade unions, BOB WOOD spoke to Peggy Alexander of the London and National Group of homeworkers about the role of unions in organising homeworkers and the potential impact of minimum wage legislation.

THE NATIONAL Group on Homeworking (NGH) is a membership organisation open to any individual or organisation that wants to do something about homeworkers’ rights.

We’re supported by local authorities, church groups, trade unions, advice agencies and individuals. The GMG is the only union which is a full member at the moment, but we are working closely with MSF and the TGWU.

Trade unions are one of our priorities. We work to ensure that the needs of homeworkers are met as far as possible because most of the time they are totally forgotten.

The number of homeworkers in this country who are members of trade unions is negligible and I think that there are a few of reasons for that. The main one is that the unions haven’t offered home workers anything.

For example, the GMG has recently produced a new health and safety pack that says nothing about health and safety outside the workplace. We would like to see a deal with trade unions to improve this.

At the moment, we are working with the Scottish TUC to produce a code of practice for membership for trade unions, so that we can say “think about the homeworkers as well!”

Many trade unions are worried that one way to cut costs is to sack people in the workplace and put the work out to homeworkers. Poor rates of pay and conditions for homeworkers can undermine conditions in the workplace.

If you are doing collective bargaining, you try and get the best for everyone in the workplace, even if they may not all be union members. When an hourly rate is being negotiated, we think it’s important to think about piece rates for people working at home.

We believe in the right to work at home and that should be a right. Obviously it’s not now, but it should be. What we’ve got to work towards is a situation where working at home is alright and is not affecting what’s going on in the workplace.

We work with the MSF looking at teleworkers. It’s a totally different emphasis from the Scottish TUC, who are concerned with more traditional forms of homeworking: sewing, packing and so on.

We want the unions to see homeworking as a trade union issue. If you are concerned with employment rights for all, how can you miss out this group of workers? We reason that there are over a million of them. They are mainly women and a lot of them are black.

It’s important that the trade union movement does something. In the long term, it could see an increase in membership.

One problem is the question of membership subscription, because if people are working separately and for a different union, they can’t take up the benefits of the trade union.

In other parts of the world, trade unions have successfully organised homeworkers.

In Europe, there are some agreements in Europe that provide for homeworkers’ movement, and they have been used and spoken at conferences.

Low pay for homeworkers can undermine conditions in unorganised workplaces

A group of homeworkers in Belgium interviewed a group of homeworkers.

In some other European countries, there are agreements which provide for homeworkers’ movement, and they have been used and spoken at conferences.

Asian women, who a year ago would not have gone further than the end of the street, are now going to meetings in the centre of Leeds.

They are not really self-employed. The problem is that if you don’t complain, you lose the work. Being an employer gives you certain rights which are denied to homeworkers - maternity leave and holiday pay, for example. Although they are not in the same situation in the building industry with so much casual work.

Let’s look at the situation of homeworkers in the debate about the minimum wage. Minimum wage legislation talks about employers, then homeworkers won’t be included. Employers will dis- cover that saying people are self-employed is a good way to avoid paying the minimum wage. Homeworkers won’t be in a position to challenge that.

It won’t just be homeworkers and building workers affected. The whole workforce will be under threat. So it’s vital that any minimum wage legislation refers to workers, not employers. It’s interesting that homeworkers were covered by the old Wages Council legislation because that referred to workers. We found in a survey that some of the big home-based homeworkers (compared to other homeworkers) were still paid poverty wages. As Asian women doing sewing work, because they were working in an area covered by the old Wages Council. The rates were below the level of Wages Council minimum but were significantly higher than those for homeworkers doing similar work.

The other issue that any minimum wage legislation would need to look at is the question of piecework and how the rate is calculated. Someone sitting in a factory in decent conditions is going to produce at a much faster rate than a homeworker with children around.

Most homeworkers face child care problems. They often work at night after the children have gone to bed. The need for childcare is as great for people who work in the home as for those who work outside the home.

One of the main problems homeworkers have is finding work with decent firms. It would certainly help if homeworkers could be linked into the Wages Council (they aren’t at the moment) and if there was some kind of national regulation scheme. Unfortunately this is the subject of self-regulation.

National Group on Homeworking Office 26, sign F21, 4 Lśnie, LS10 1LF, tel: (0113) 245 4273.

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WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism.

The capitalist class, driven by its own crises, and politically unified by its need to maximise profits at a time when the working class, has determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to abuse the unions, to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist policies of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while itching at any pretext for building a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and unionism.

New realism is the latest form of reaction, seeking to reassert the class conditions within capitalism.

We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class.

We are a Marxist current, based not on the intellectual paradigms of Stalinism, nor on the fashionable theories of social democracy, nor the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful liberal change.

We must mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary ruling class and establish its own rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarities among the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of racial minorities, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organise in over 40 countries.

August

Sat 5

Sun 8
BOSNIA Solidarity campaign demonstration Hyde Park, Marble Arch tube 2.00pm for march to Trafalgar Square.

Tue 10
ASLEF rail strike

Sat 12
SOUTH African women’s day commemoration rally 11.00am Praxis Centre, Polt Street Bethnal Green. tickets £3/£2. Details: 0171 924 9033

Wed 23 - Mon 28
SOCIALIST Outlook Summer School Aberystwyth. Send your £35 (waged), £15 (unwaged) deposit now to ‘Socialist Outlook Summer School’, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ.

Fri 25
ASLEF rail strike

Sat 25
SUPPORT Guy’s hospital 12 noon - 6pm King’s Stairs Gardens, Jamaica Road, Bermondsey. Details: 0171 327 9000.

September

Sat 9
ASLEF rail strike

IRELAND and the trade unions conference called by Manchester TUC.

Tue 12
ASLEF rail strike

Sat 16
ERNEST Mandel memorial rally, subject to confirmation 6pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Speakers include: United Secretariat of Fourth International, Charlie van Gelderen.

Sat 23 September
LINDMINES day of action deals details phone/taxi 01296 632056.

Sat 30
FACE demonstration against education cuts, London.

October

Fri 13-Sun 15
AFRICA in the world Manchester civic celebration. Details Simo Katznel- lebongen on 0161 275 3112/taxi 275 3008.

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Stop the West arming Nigerian junta!

By Paul Walker

The sentencing to death of 15 leading oppositionists and the life sentence imposed on Olusegun Abasanjo, a former President of Nigeria, on 14 July has underscored the crippling political crisis unfolding in Nigeria.

Supposedly found capable of planning a coup, the convicted were simply guilty of organising resistance to the military dictatorship.

In the two years since the 12 June annulment of the civilian elections following a result that did not please the army (a victory for the bourgeois populist candidate Chief Marshid Abacha) Nigeria has been wrecked by civil disorder and economic chaos.

Despite the repression of critical newspapers, the jailing of oppositionists and the takeover of the offices of the Nigerian Labour Congress, the military regime has been unable to restore any semblance of normal life in Nigeria.

On 12 June this year a nationwide security operation was required to ensure calm on the second anniversary of the annulled elections. Tanks and fury loads of anti-riot police and soldiers were on the streets on a day when businesses in the south west, the scene of violent protest, preferred to remain closed.

The critical reactions of Western Governments to the latest events are based on the fear that the roof might fall in and with it the stabilisation of the Nigerian Federation into a civil war.

That Shell might lose control of the oil fields in Ogoniland is a nightmare scenario for the multinationalists.

The hypocrisy of the attacks made by the British government on the Nigerian regime is now so routine as to be banal. While the left hand waves a finger, the right signs expert licences for military equipment contracts to Lagos. Supposedly operating a policy of "a presumption of denial" since December 1993, the Government has permitted twenty contracts since January 1994 and denied one. The Foreign Office has been forced to admit that CS gas and rubber bullets have been licensed in the last 18 months.

Other suspected contracts are for tank spares for the Scorpion 100s which the Coventry based company Avis supplied in the 1980s.

These are the tanks that were rolled out onto the streets on 12 June to ensure no re-appearance of protests against the regime.

The Labour Party seems content to hide behind a campaign calling for greater transparency in arms transfers to Nigeria and demanding that the Foreign Office gets assurances that none of the equipment will be used for internal repression.

Rather than calling for more radical measures, such as an arms and oil embargo, the Blair leadership is preparing for power by practitioners Foreign Office circles while oppositionists sit on death row in Lagos.

Tories launch racist snoopers’ charter

JOHN MAJOR’S crisis-ridden government is ruthlessly playing the race card in its efforts to retrieve its lost electoral support.

Leading the charge is right-wing Home Secretary Michael Howard. As we warned in Socialist Outlook 87, he is forcing through new measures designed to increase suspicion and harassment of black people under the guise of detecting so-called ‘illegal immigrants’.

On July 18 Howard proudly announced that head teachers, college admission officers and hospital managers will be called upon to act as freelance immigration officers, fingering and denouncing black people and those from ethnic minorities whom they suspect – or claim to suspect of being illegal immigrants.

Other government departments will also be dragged into the act, while the vast majority of black and ethnic minority people are British citizens.

If Howard has his way, and the new ‘snooper’s and racists’ charter is implemented, it will only be a matter of time before the outrages begin, with black patients denied hospital care, black students denied education and black claimants denied social security.

The Labour movement must challenge this reactionary legislation, and prepare to defend the first victims of Howard’s cynical racist play.