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The End of the 'Long War'?

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The end of "The Long War"?

Tommy McKearney was one of those who fought the Irish Republican Army's "long war". He spent many years in prison and nearly lost his life on hunger strike. Three of his brothers died during "The Troubles". One was killed by his own bomb, one was shot down by the SAS, and a third, though uninvolved, was killed with his uncle by loyalist paramilitaries. McKearney and his family are typical members of the Republican movement, prepared to endure much for their cause.

by Ciaran Mulholland

In the aftermath of the Omagh bomb McKearney stated unambiguously (*Belfast Telegraph* August 27) that "the era of the 'Fenian dynamiter' must surely be at an end. No wisp of rationale remains to prolong a theory which believes that detonating explosives is a substitute for deploying the will of the people".

He is undoubtedly correct. His insight is certainly hard won. Moreover he goes on to argue, "Condemnation is not enough. An explicit scrutiny of the dynamiter's mistaken premise is essential." McKearney does not hold to the false assertion that "the war" achieved anything. There were no gains whatsoever. And what is not won in battle cannot be won at the negotiating table.

The Good Friday Agreement left the tradi-



Omagh bomb marked the end of the road for military republicanism.

tional demands of republicanism untouched. All the sacrifice endured and all the pain inflicted was for nothing. And it is a nonsense to say that armed resistance in itself was what mattered. The IRA's war was strategically destined to fail and was politically a disaster for the working class. No other analysis is or was, from the outset, possible.

"The Troubles" were a human tragedy on an immense scale. In 30 years of violence 3,500 died, perhaps 50,000 were injured and more than 10,000 went to prison. Over 300 young men and women died in the ranks of the IRA. The IRA did

not cause "The Troubles". Centuries of "divide and rule" tactics practised by British imperialism were followed by fifty years of Unionist misrule in the North and brutal repression particularly the introduction of internment in the early 70s. All this plus the lack of a clear socialist alternative which could have united protestant and catholic workers politically in the late 1960s and early '70s meant that the Provisionals had no difficulties recruiting in the catholic ghettos.

Nevertheless it is important at this point to turn the spotlight on the recent history of Irish

Republicanism, in particular the strategy of "armed struggle", now abandoned. It is also necessary to examine the current Republican strategy of building an alliance across nationalism, with the SDLP, Fianna Fail and Irish American figures. The Republican movement's hopes of future advances lie entirely with its newly found allies.

These are strange allies indeed for a movement that still proclaims, though no longer very loudly, that its aim is a 32 county socialist republic. This new strategy is no more likely to succeed than the old one. One

"mistaken premise" has been replaced by another.

The Omagh bomb

The Omagh bomb is significant not just because of its devastating human effect but also because it was probably the last serious act of military republicanism.

It finally brought to an end the idea of a sustained military campaign with "British withdrawal" as an objective. The paramilitaries will not disband, there may be isolated bombings, there will be further "punishment" attacks, others will die in feuds or to settle old scores, but the days of "the armed struggle" are gone.

It is absolutely certain that the Provisional IRA's war is finally over. In the aftermath of the Omagh massacre on August 15th the Real IRA and the INLA called their own ceasefires. Both are likely to be permanent. Only the Continuity IRA, by all accounts almost defunct in any case, remains on a war footing. And it is no coincidence that, in the Basque country, ETA called off its 30 year campaign for independence on September 16.

ETA have been affected by many of the same pressures as the IRA and have called their ceasefire on similar grounds. They too are placing their hopes on a new alliance with constitutional nationalist parties. Given the large degree of autonomy that the Basque country already has and the circumstances of the ceasefire it is unlikely that the Spanish state will make significant concessions at this point.

The campaigns of all these groups achieved absolutely nothing. The

thousands of men and women who passed through their ranks may have believed that their fight would create a better future. The reality is that they strengthened what they set out to destroy. The "armed struggle" of republicanism was a strategy that was always doomed to failure. And it has ended in failure despite claims to the contrary. The Socialist Party does not make this point in retrospect but stated clearly from the outset of the IRA campaign that it was wrong-headed, that it would achieve nothing, that it should end.

It was certainly not better that "people engaged in armed struggle rather than sitting at home doing nothing" as Eamon McCann of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has stated. It would have been better if they had stayed at home.

"Individual Terrorism"

Individual terrorism is the Marxist term for the process whereby small groups of men and women declare themselves the liberators of the working class or "the People" and launch armed campaigns in their name. Socialists are not pacifists. This society ought to be changed for the better. A struggle is necessary to achieve that. If a minority resist the genuine will of the majority then violence is justified to overcome their resistance.

Individual terrorism is a term which describes a false method of trying to change society. Marxists do not use it to differentiate "terrorist" actions from the crimes of the imperialist countries

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such as the US and Britain, who freely use terror tactics in their own interests. It is used to differentiate such methods from guerrilla wars in the developing world or mass insurrections of the working class in revolutionary situations.

The one force in capitalist society capable of changing society is the working class. The effective methods of struggle which mobilise the working class are those of mass action, demonstrations, strikes, the general strike and ultimately the insurrection. Individual terrorism is a method born of despair. When an individual has lost all faith in these traditional methods of struggle and can no longer see any possibility of changing society through mass action the idea that it is possible to get results through individual armed actions can seem attractive. The working class are assumed to have lost their revolutionary potential and to require the example of heroic acts to spur them to action.

This process was seen in many countries in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The mass movements of students and workers in the late 1960s did not succeed in changing society. A layer of students formed organisations that were to act as "detonators", sparking the masses to action.

Thus were born the Red Army Faction (or Baader-Meinhoff Gang as they were christened by the press) in Germany, the Japanese Red Army, the Red Brigades (and a host of other groups) in Italy, Direct Action in France, the Angry Brigade in Britain, the Weathermen

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Thus were born the Red Army Faction (or Baader-Meinhoff Gang as they were christened by the press) in Germany, the Japanese Red Army, the Red Brigades (and a host of other groups) in Italy, Direct Action in France, the Angry Brigade in Britain, the Weathermen

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in the United States, and others. The campaigns of all these organisations ended in defeat. Their members met a vicious response from the state apparatus in their respective countries. Many died, many went to prison.

Their actions, rather than weakening the state, had the opposite effect. In Germany for example, the RAF were "successful" in their primary aim of assassinating leading industrialists and American soldiers. Paradoxically every "success" became its opposite. The working class were passive, and then hostile bystanders. The German government were able to strengthen their state apparatus, producing a more repressive regime.

The RAF campaign came to an effective end 15 years ago. Its initial leading figures, such as Andreas Baader and Gudrun Enneslin, died in prison. Its final statement, earlier this year, admitted that not enough attention had been paid to its mass base, an admission that it was isolated from the beginning.

Individual terrorism is not a phenomenon of the late twentieth century only. Prominent Marxist figures in the past had cause to comment on similar campaigns. Frederick Engels, for example, whilst sympathetic to the Fenians unequivocally condemned an attempt to free prisoners in 1867 which accidentally killed a number of London slum-dwellers:

"The stupid affair at Clerkenwell was obviously the result of a few specialised fanatics, it is the misfortune of all conspiracies that they lead to such stupidities..."



Adams and McGuinness in earlier days.

Similarly Leon Trotsky argued against the use of individual terror on many occasions and on a number of grounds. He compared individual terrorism to the most important weapon at the disposal of the working class, the strike. He defined the strike as "the method of struggle that flows directly from the productive role of the proletariat in modern industry. Only the workers can conduct a strike. Artisans ruined by a factory, peasants whose water the factory has poisoned, or lumpen proletarians in search of plunder can smash machines, set fire to a factory, or murder its owner. In order to murder a prominent politician you need not have the masses behind you. The recipe for explosives is accessible to all and a browning can be obtained anywhere."

Violent action on behalf of the oppressed must be opposed, in Trotsky's words, "precisely because it belittles the role of the masses in their own consciousness, reconciles them to their own powerlessness, and turns their

eyes and hopes towards a great avenger and liberator who someday will come and accomplish the mission". The various terrorist groups did not agree with this assessment.

In a statement in 1978 one Italian grouping proclaimed "The armed strength of the proletariat in struggle is the only practical instrument of liberation from capitalist dominion". In other words, their tiny group, guns in hands, were of more importance than trade unions and political parties with hundreds of thousands of members.

Another group, stung by the criticism that they took no account of the mood of ordinary workers, argued "there is a logical mistake in the affirmation that armed struggle must await the pre-revolutionary phase, as it also plays a part in the creation of that phase."

The lack of results of any armed campaign over the last three decades demonstrates the nonsense of this statement. Isolated military campaigns throw back consciousness, not the

opposite. Assassinating this or that individual, even the Prime Minister, as the IRA nearly achieved with Margaret Thatcher or as ETA did with the Spanish Prime Minister in the 1970s, does nothing to weaken the state.

As Trotsky points out "the capitalist class does not base itself on government ministers and cannot be eliminated with them. The class it serves, always finds new people, the mechanism remains intact and continues to function."

The use of violence by small groups does not detonate the masses. Instead they are reduced to the role of passive bystanders. Mass mobilisations become an auxiliary to the armed struggle. The class struggle is relegated in importance.

"If it is enough to arm oneself with a pistol in order to achieve one's goal, why the efforts of the class struggle? If a thimbleful of gunpowder and a little chunk of lead is enough to shoot the enemy through the neck, what need is there for class organisation?"

asked Trotsky.

All of the above criticisms apply to the IRA and similar groupings in Ireland. Every concrete situation has its own peculiarities. However, Individual terror is a false method of struggle in a general sense. The particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, with a working class divided along religious grounds, makes it doubly and trebly false. In Ireland individual terror has played a completely negative role.

The IRA's campaign

The IRA could only ever hope to attract one third of the North's population. That one third were of course relegated to a supporting role in any case. By its very nature the campaign was secretive, including quite small numbers. As Mitchell McLaughlin of Sinn Fein states in a recent interview it probably never had more than 1,000 active participants at any one time (*Hot Press*).

The IRA and ETA, based on nationalist ideas rather than the ultra-left ideology typical of groups such as the RAF, were able to sustain campaigns for much longer. They did have significant support. The IRA campaign went through a number of different phases over nearly three decades. In the early 1970s British withdrawal was confidently expected at any time. Republican newspapers predicted "British withdrawal any day now" on one famous occasion and each New Year was greeted with headlines predicting "1973, The Year of Victory", "1974, The Year of Victory", and so on.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the strategy changed to one of sustaining the Long War, a war that would eventually weaken Britain's will to stay. This policy was prosecuted by Adams and McGuinness who came to prominence when the old leadership were discredited by the 1974-75 ceasefire. The IRA was reorganised on a cell structure and it was firmly stated that there would be no further ceasefires short of a British "declaration of intent to withdraw".

During the hunger strikes the twin strategy of "the ballot box and the armalite" was stumbled upon. The failure of Sinn Fein either to replace the SDLP as the largest nationalist party in the north or to make serious inroads in the South subsequently called this strategy into question.

The arrival of the Libyan arms shipments allowed the military activists to place their faith in "The Final Push" as the politicians were already seeking to treat with Whitehall behind the scenes. The prosecution of the war became an increasingly cynical strategy by the leadership when they knew clearly that it was soon to be over. The deaths of two young IRA volunteers in England after the first ceasefire is particularly poignant. They died to achieve a more comfortable seat at the negotiating table for Sinn Fein. In fact, at the end, Sinn Fein sat down at the table and signed a deal they could have achieved 25 years earlier.

In a *Magill* interview (October 1998) a Real IRA spokesman explaining their ceasefire stated "for a military campaign to

The IRA campaign was based on a number of obvious fallacies: that Britain wanted to stay; that the IRA could force a British withdrawal; and that protestants would simply accept a United Ireland as a fait accompli.

continue, it must have an attainable goal. After Omagh, there was none."

In condemning the Real IRA recently Mitchell McLaughlin has said, "Any kind of political analysis on their part would have told them that it was futile. So what was the purpose?"

These points are absolutely correct. The problem for Republicanism is that "any kind of political analysis", at any time in the last 30 years, would have reached only one conclusion: there was no "attainable goal". The IRA campaign was based on a number of obvious fallacies: that Britain wanted to stay; that the IRA could force a British withdrawal; and that protestants would simply accept a United Ireland as a *fait accompli*. Britain wanted out of the North in any case.

The IRA campaign, by alienating protestants totally and strengthening protestant reaction, made it more likely that Britain would stay, not less likely. If the Provos ever had achieved their objective of a British withdrawal the result would have been a sectarian civil war and repartition, not a united Ireland.

The IRA campaign came to an end because the Republican leadership realised that it was going nowhere. War weariness in the working class areas was compounded by the new world situation that opened up after the collapse of the Soviet Union followed by the economic upturn in the West of the early 1990s. There seemed to be no alternative to the economic and social status quo.

Various movements around the world moved

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sharply to the right and began to make their peace with imperialism. Thus the "anti-imperialists" of the PLO and the IRA found themselves reliant on American imperialism for whatever gains they could achieve. For the IRA these gains are few indeed.

Martin McGuinness assured his supporters when he entered the talks that "we are going in to smash the union". Instead they have effectively accepted the union.

The IRA and their defenders have argued over the years that there was no real alternative to their strategy. Even if this argument is examined from the narrow perspective of one community only it quickly falls down. They further argue that their strategy has produced significant gains for Catholics.

Again this is nonsense. "One man, one vote", the end of discrimination in housing allocation, the end of gerrymandered councils and other gains were won by the mass mobilisations of the Civil Rights movement. The supposed concessions trumpeted by the Republican leadership since the first and second ceasefires are in fact nothing of the sort.

Troops are no longer on the streets in most parts of the North simply because the state calculates that they can maintain control without them. Demilitarisation by Tony Blair follows upon the IRA ceasing offensive action. Everything on offer now was essentially on offer in 1972, at the time of the IRA ceasefire of that year, and was on offer at the time of the Sunningdale Agreement in 1973.

The idea that IRA "spectaculars", such as the huge bombs that devastated the City of London caused the British ruling class to come to the negotiating table and make concessions is a myth.

Unfortunately most of those who describe themselves as Marxists or revolutionaries offered support to the IRA campaign for the best part of 30 years.

The attitude of the ultra left groups

This support meant little to those who were actively involved in the campaign and was usually regarded by them with some contempt. Occasionally the sound of helpful advice from off-stage irritated those who were supposed to receive the advice. The People's Democracy earned themselves the nick name of "mosquitoes" in West Belfast because of their tactic of offering "critical" support to the IRA, support that kept them at a safe distance, parasites on the republican movement.

Today the SWP proclaim their belief in working class unity as the way forward in the North. They conveniently ignore their previously held political positions, only recently abandoned (if abandoned at all in truth). They, and organisations like them, have played a dangerous role, contributing to the confusion on what approach to take to the IRA campaign. Their support for organisations that have caused greater divisions within the working class has been a grave disservice to the attempt to build a socialist alternative.

Writing in the *Belfast Telegraph* recently,



Individual terrorism only winds up strengthening the state.

Eamon McCann, a leading member of the SWP, asserted that armed campaigns as the "cutting edge" of the struggle only sidelined those whom the campaign sought to free.

Similarly in their paper *Socialist Worker* in 1996 the SWP were headlining articles "No Return to the War". At that time, they argued that: "the tactic of bombing brought few results over the last 25 years. Instead it helped to isolate the struggle against discrimination to the Catholic working class. Increasingly it became more and more counter-productive as bombs were often concentrated in Protestant towns."

Honest shifts in political position are not a problem. The problem is that McCann and his co-

thinkers appear to be arguing against their own former positions without acknowledging that they are doing so. They simply somersault in mid-air and deny their past. This is a dishonest method and reveals an underlying political confusion.

Fine words about the need for working class unity mean nothing if they are based upon contempt for one section of the working class. How can a political group hope to gain the ear of Protestants when, in the recent past, articles in their paper explained "Why we are on the side of the Provos." They asserted: "socialists must take sides. While never flinching from our profound differences with the Provos, we recognise that

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they are presently leading the fight against sectarianism and bigotry. That means that we clearly stand on their side in the battle against the British army and the Orange State. Indeed standing on the same side as the Provos is the only practical way of supporting the mass of catholic workers who fight bigotry and repression." This is somewhat different from describing the Provos' tactics as "disastrous" or even "counter-productive".

McCann's best known book, *War and an Irish Town*, concludes as follows: "There is no such thing as an anti-imperialist who does not support the Provos and there is no such thing as a socialist who is not an anti-imperialist."

On other occasions the SWP asserted "We give unconditional support to the IRA in their fight against the Northern State" and "we are one hundred per cent with the Provos."

And their electoral strategy came down to support for Republicanism again and again. Through the 1980s, it was summarised with the slogan: "Vote Sinn Fein...But Build a Socialist Alternative".

At base their political analysis led them to the conclusion that protestants are a relatively privileged layer in society, tied to a sectarian, reactionary outlook. This is what they were saying about class unity in the 1980s:

"The greatest blow for working class unity would be the forced withdrawal of the British Army. Only then would the mass of protestant workers be forced to face the reality of losing mar-

ginal privileges and see themselves as part of a wider class."

If this is the case and, as is clear, "forced withdrawal" is not on the cards, does this mean that there is no possibility of the protestant working class coming to their senses?

In reality the correct socialist position on the Provo campaign was the same in 1970-71 as it is in 1998, namely that it was and is a blind alley, squandering the sacrifice and willingness to fight of the youth of a generation.

And what is worse is that it strengthened sectarianism and strengthened the state. Socialists who were interested in genuinely fighting sectarianism and repression did not offer the Provos "unconditional" or "critical" support but opposed their war from the outset.

This is not to blame the IRA for the Troubles. British imperialism, with its tried and trusted tactic of "divide and rule" sowed the seeds of the conflict. The ruling class, through their apparatus of repression, have inflicted suffering on the catholic working class in particular. The ruling class have blood on their hands. They allow 22,000 to die prematurely in Britain every year because of their class.

They bomb Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Afghanistan, they blockade Cuba, they allow millions to starve, all whilst holding aloft the banners of freedom and democracy. The most recent, and particularly glaring, example of the hypocrisy of the ruling class was shown by the decision of the 16 member states of NATO to authorise bombing of Serbia over its treatment of the Albanians of

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Kosovo. One of the votes was cast by Turkey, a country which has repressed the Kurds within its borders just as viciously and violently and for a much longer period. When will Bill Clinton and Tony Blair authorise the bombing of Ankara?

The socialist alternative

In the early 1980s Sinn Fein used socialist rhetoric freely. Those days are now long gone. Today Gerry Adams keeps company with the likes of George Soros, the international currency speculator who has impoverished millions with his deals and pronouncements, and Bob Torrecelli, the American Congressman responsible for tightening the blockade against Cuba.

The politics of the street have been replaced by high politics, reliance on the gun by reliance on financiers, industrialists and politicians of the ruling class in Washington, Dublin and London. This new strategy is as doomed to failure as was the Provo war.

The socialist rhetoric has been replaced by the equality agenda. The Socialist Party is opposed to all discrimination and stands for full equality. But as put forward by Sinn Fein, the equality agenda all too often comes across as putting one over on protestants. The Irish language and a certain culture are promoted in a belligerent way. Whilst socialists are in favour of equal treatment for all this does not mean the sharing out of poverty. Socialists are in favour of valuing all cultures and languages but this should not be done in

The long war

such a way as to diminish the value of other cultures and languages. Winning jobs for catholic areas is no alternative to jobs for all or decent wages.

There is no way forward based on the politics of the past. The Socialist Party welcomes the end of all paramilitary campaigns. Unfortunately the Good Friday Agreement and the new political structures it established will not relieve the problems that led to the Troubles, rather they will increase them. By its very nature the new Assembly will tend to strengthen the two sectarian blocs.

This new period does open up new possibilities however. The traditional parties will soon have their hands on the levers of power. Gone will be the luxury of opposing every cutback, every hospital closure, without making the case for a rational planned alternative.

Accepting the economic status-quo means accepting its dictates. None of the Assembly parties, including Sinn Fein and the PUP, can escape this logic. Socialists do have an alternative to the present system. An economy which is publicly-owned and democratically managed could provide a decent standard of living for all.

The problems which brought people onto the streets and into struggle in the late 1960s and early 1970s are still there. Poverty and exploitation remain, unemployment is higher and the economic blackspots of the 1960s are still economic blackspots today. Basic rights are denied, as, for example, with the legislation introduced after the

Omagh bomb. There are more restrictions on workers' rights, including the right to strike, than 30 years ago. What we need is a new struggle to end these injustices and build a decent society. The traditional methods of mass action will be taken up again by a new generation.

As issues arise there will be opportunities to make the socialist case again and again. The Socialist Party intends to be to the fore in campaigns for a better life and to help build an alternative to the tired-out politics of the past.

As part of building this alternative we have articulated a programme on the national question that respects the rights of catholic and protestant workers. The Troubles as we have known them have come to an end. Sectarian division runs deeper than ever, however, and the sectarian blocs are locked in battle on new fronts.



Our position has been consistent for 30 years.

Violence will return, probably at a more intense level in the future unless we remove

its causes forever. Building a strong socialist voice is the first step in doing so.

Revolution in Ireland-1798

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International capitalism's economic and political crisis

Russia's economic collapse at the end of August, one more broken link in the chain of international crisis, marked a qualitative turning point. Bourgeois strategists were at last forced to confront the stark reality facing them.

By Lynn Walsh

Asia, whose inter-regional and external trade makes up a third of the world total, has entered a deep slump, which is remorselessly spreading around the globe. Warning the US Congress against complacency, the financier George Soros said (15 September): "The global capitalist system which has been responsible for our prosperity is falling apart at the seams". Some commentators are now warning of the onset of a world depression.

The capitalist ruling elite is also realising another nightmare: they are now facing not only economic disaster but also the beginnings of a deep social and political crisis. This is already

clear in Asia. Far from being merely a cyclical downturn, cumulative losses are leading to a breakdown of society's productive capacity, opening the door to social turmoil and political upheavals. The fall of Suharto in Indonesia is just the overture. It has also begun to dawn on the gurus that, just as the economic contagion is spreading, political turmoil will also become a world-wide epidemic. In the sphere of international relations, the Indo-Pakistan nuclear tests and the US missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan are early symptoms of increased volatility.

The intoxicating aroma of capitalist triumphalism which flourished after the collapse of Stalinism has evaporated in a few turbulent months. The 'new economic paradigm' (model) - recently so popular on Wall Street and in academia - has been shattered. Conjured up by the born-again disciples of unfettered market forces - in

The intoxicating aroma of capitalist triumphalism which flourished after the collapse of Stalinism has evaporated in a few turbulent months.



reality, the advocates of the multinational corporations and banks - the new model was based on the claim that liberated market forces, combined with new technology and globalisation, have given rise to a prolonged period of unlimited economic growth and rising prosperity. This has proved to be a fantasy, more an hallucinogenic trip stimulated by the super-profits of the 1990s, than the product of rational economic thinking.

Despite repeated claims from the economic pundits that the "fundamentals" (meaning high profits, low inflation) were now much sounder than in the bad old days, the real performance of the advanced capitalist economies (ACCs) during the 1980s and 1990s has never approached the levels of the post-war upswing (1950-73). Average annual growth in real terms (ie allowing for inflation) has been about 2.3% in the 1990s, compared with 5% during the upswing. Rates of capital accumulation (net

Capitalist crisis

increase of capital stock) and productivity growth have also been markedly lower. At the same time, total unemployment in the ACCs climbed another 10 million every decade, and now totals over 35 million (according to official figures, which understate the real levels).

New features of world capitalism

There were undoubtedly new features in the world economy which appeared in the last two decades and were linked to the hollow, finance-driven booms of the eighties and nineties. But far from overcoming capitalism's long-term trend towards stagnation and decline, they have ultimately given rise to new contradictions which are aggravating the present crisis.

(1) New technology:

Microprocessors, new communications technology, and other innovations, it was claimed, would produce new products and processes, allow much more flexible methods of production, and would produce a productivity miracle. In reality, new technology has had contradictory effects. The growth of new high-tech sectors has far from compensated for the de-industrialisation and structural unemployment arising from the labour- and material-saving effects of new technology (combined with new management methods).

Microtechnology, especially in the field of communications, has served as a vehicle for globalisation, especially of financial markets. It has also allowed multinational corporations to locate plants and secure out-



Another 1929 on the way?

sourcing in cheap-labour countries, with minimal taxation and negligible environmental, health and safety, or labour regulation. Through accelerating some areas of production (motor vehicles, computer equipment, etc), while causing de-industrialisation and unemployment in traditional manufacturing areas, the new technological systems have helped give rise to over-production.

Even in the US, new technology has not produced the long heralded productivity revolution. Despite a cumulative investment of \$630bn (1987 constant dollars) on computers between 1980 and 1994, the US could not lift productivity growth above its pathetic post-1973 trend rate of 1.1% a year (compared with 3% between 1960-73). In the developing countries, it is also doubtful whether new technology has significantly raised productivity levels in the new plants above world averages.

Multinationals have primarily relied on the intensive exploitation of plentiful cheap labour.

Growth was mainly investment-driven, with the influx of capital mobilising enormously increased inputs of labour, materials and energy into production. (Ironically, this is analogous to the grossly inefficient investment-led growth during the last period of the state-planned economy in the Soviet Union.)

(2) Globalisation:

Facilitated by new technology, globalisation was increasingly finance-driven. It was an outgrowth of the relative decline of industrial production in most advanced capitalist countries. Wealthy investors sought new fields of investment for their super-profits, seeking higher profit levels than they could achieve at home. In the 1990s speculative investment in property, financial services, and shares and company bonds, became the fastest-growing sector. True, under globalisation multinational corporations seized opportunities of locating plant and securing outsourcing in about two dozen semi-developed countries,

mostly in East Asia. But even investment in new production plant was increasingly through shares and company bonds, and became more and more speculative.

During the 1980s net private capital flows from the ACCs averaged \$13bn a year, but rose to \$90bn a year in the early 1990s. By the mid-1990s \$300bn a year was flowing to about twenty-five "emerging markets". About 9% of this was invested in commodities, 37% in manufacturing, and 53% in services (a third of it in financial services).

Globalisation, however, works both ways. The flood of highly mobile capital to the emerging markets produced a speculative bubble, especially in Asia. This collapsed last year when inflated share and property prices and high debt levels could no longer be sustained. The rise of the US dollar, moreover, made it impossible for Thailand and the others to keep their currencies pegged to the dollar (as it raised their export prices to uncompetitive levels). However, the devaluation of the Thai bhat and other

regional currencies last July shattered the confidence of foreign investors. The resulting flight of capital triggered the opening of a world crisis. The globalisation of financial markets, under which a shock in one region is rapidly transmitted to other centres, has ensured that, in less than a year, the Asian crisis has spread across the continents.

(3) The ex-Stalinist states:

The capitalist re-colonisation of the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the massive penetration of foreign capital into China, it was claimed, would not only prove the superiority of capitalism but play an important part in a world-wide capitalist renaissance. In reality, capitalist restoration has been a catastrophe for the people of the former Stalinist states. Russia has suffered a drop in production of

between 50% and 80% since 1989. Following the collapse of the rouble and the government's default on dollar loans, the peoples of the former USSR are facing the spectre of mass starvation.

The rapacious antics of capitalism's infant prodigies, former bureaucrats and mafia turned robber barons, has provoked an economic and financial collapse which will inflict serious damage on international finance capital. Bad loans to Russia make up 20% to 25% of the loan portfolios of many US and European finance houses. At the same time, the international ambitions of Russia's emergent bourgeoisie are causing serious complications for US imperialism on the world arena.

China, recently hailed as a key component of the Asian miracle, also faces serious economic problems which will soon spill over into political turmoil.

(4) Neo-liberalism:

Free-market policies (privatisation of state industries, deregulation of markets and business activity, and the undermining of work-place rights and organisation to establish labour "flexibility") liberated big business from its Keynesian fetters (full employment, high social spending based on high taxation, strong workers' organisations). (See endnote on Neo-liberalism and Keynesianism.) The invisible hand of free-market forces, it was claimed, would regulate economic activity far better than governments. Far from being a 'natural' evolution, however, neo-liberal policies were forced through by capitalist governments using economic and state coercion, legitimized by an array of neo-liberal legislation.

The capitalists turned to neo-liberalism after the high inflation of 1974-79 which followed the exhaustion of the upswing. The turn away from Keynesianism provoked big clashes with the working class, but the labour leaders were incapable of defending past gains. Then the collapse of Stalinism, which despite its deformations had acted as a certain counter-weight to capitalism, allowed the ruling class to abandon all restraint in its switch to uninhibited free-market policies. Events like Reagan's defeat of the air traffic controllers' strike in 1981, and Thatcher's

By increasing the capitalists' share of the wealth, however, these policies inevitably accentuated social inequalities and ultimately undermined the market for capitalist goods and services.

defeat of the year-long miners' strike in 1984-85 in Britain, were crucial.

By increasing the bourgeoisie's share of the wealth, however, these policies inevitably accentuated social inequalities, ultimately undermining the market for capitalist goods and services. This inevitably sharpens one of the most basic contradictions of capitalism: the tendency of capital accumulation to outpace the growth of the employed labour force, which restricts the ability of the working class to purchase the goods they produce in the course of the capitalist production process.

In the late 1980s and 1990s the neo-liberal package appeared on the surface to have successfully provided an escape route from the contradictions of the post-war upswing period (1950-73). That period was also the era of the Cold War between imperialism and Stalinism. The increased strength of a working class enjoying full employment, together with the achievements in that period of the planned economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, compelled the capitalists to make significant concessions to the working class in the form of state welfare services and relatively high living standards. There was no shortage of demand for capitalist goods and services. On the contrary, high and sustained demand combined with new methods of mass production stimulated a prolonged investment boom and high profits, despite increased taxation.

In the early 1970s, however, that virtuous circle of economic and political

Capitalist crisis

factors gave way, through the internal contradictions of the system, to a crisis of capitalist profitability. As post-war technological systems (mass production of motor vehicles, chemicals, electrical equipment, etc) reached their limits, and a strengthened working class increasingly fought further intensification of exploitation, the unprecedented growth of productivity (output per worker/hour) slowed down. Rising real wage levels were therefore no longer compatible with high profits.

Moreover, the workers used their industrial strength to increase their share of the wealth produced. It therefore became imperative for big business to increase the share of the wealth produced (from workers' labour power) going to profits - which could only be at the expense of wages.

After the shock of the 1973 oil price rise, which triggered a world slump (1974-75), the capitalists therefore turned away from Keynesian policies to neo-liberalism. Step by step post-war concessions were reclaimed through privatisation, cutting back the "welfare state" and, most decisively, through attacking workplace rights and trade union organisations.

There was a similar rolling back of concessions by the advanced capitalist powers to Third World countries. Through agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank, and GATT, a free-market 'restructuring' was imposed in order to open up 'developing' countries to the free-ranging activities of the multinational corporations and banks.

Neo-liberalism restored the profitability of the capitalists in spectacular fashion. The tiny layer of wealthy capitalists reaped hyper-profits, with much reduced taxation into the bargain. Much of it came from speculating in finance and property rather than production.

But like every other capitalist 'paradigm', neo-liberalism has created the conditions of its own destruction. Hyper-profits were excavated from the chasm of inequality. In the US, the neo-liberal model, the top 1% now owns as much wealth as the bottom 90%.

The earnings of a majority of workers have steadily declined since 1973. For a time, the capitalists could develop new markets for luxury goods and services amongst the affluent strata and also exploit new markets in a handful of rapidly developing economies in Asia and elsewhere.

Accelerating inequality, however, inevitably undermines markets. So the strong demand but diminishing profits of the post-war upswing have been replaced by booming profits combined with increasingly inadequate demand. The result is the currently developing world slump.

A general crisis of the system

All the contradictions of the neo-liberal adventure are manifest in the current downturn. It is not merely, or even primarily, a financial crisis: it is a deeply rooted crisis of capital accumulation, now expressing itself as a crisis of production.

(1) Over-production:

There is a classical cri-



A new wave of struggles will be seen in the "Celtic Tiger".

sis of over-production. This is associated with the contraction of production and trade, and a general fall in prices - all coming together in a deflationary spiral. Even last year it was already clear that in Asia there was serious overcapacity (of probably 30% or more), especially in computers, electrical consumer goods, and motor vehicles. The Asian slump almost immediately caused

a sharp fall in the prices of oil and other commodities (down 30% this year to a twenty-year low), transmitting the crisis to mainly commodity-exporting economies.

East Asia is, in any case, part of the US, Japanese and European multinationals' global production complex. As the crisis deepens and spreads, rising unemployment, reduced income levels, mounting business and consumer debt defaults, and govern-

ment cuts, will further erode demand and accentuate over-production on a world-wide basis. Over-production will hit the advanced capitalist economies too. This must lead, according to the anarchic logic of capitalism, to a massive destruction of productive capacity and even higher levels of mass unemployment.

(2) Financial crisis:

The acute instability of globalised financial markets is accelerating and will, at a certain stage, provoke a major crash. There has been continuous volatility since the 1987 crash. But in the last three or four years the volume and volatility of world capital flows has increased enormously. The recent flight from "submerging markets" in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America has dramatically increased volatility. The flight to "quality" (ie "safe" investments in the US and

Europe) has temporarily postponed a crash on US and European stock exchanges. In fact, for a time some of the capital returning from "emerging markets" went into US and European shares, leading to further rises.

In the last few weeks, however, there has been a series of sharp falls. The traders now acknowledge that, after sixteen years, the (rising) "bull" market has given way to a (falling) "bear" market.

Nevertheless, leading shares, especially in the US, are substantially over-valued in relation to companies profit performance. It is only a matter of time before the US slow-down (which will be followed by Europe) will precipitate a much bigger stock-market "correction" - ie an almighty crash.

At the moment, exchange rates between the US dollar and major European currencies are relatively stable (though there are some signs that the dollar is beginning to slide). But a marked decline in the dollar, which is likely in the next few months, will once again provoke world currency turmoil. Among other things, this will sink the EMU.

(3) Excessive debt:

Neo-liberal policies, despite their emphasis on sound money and balanced budgets, have not overcome the problem of excessive debt which first emerged after the 1974-75 slump. The world debt mountain (both private and government) is rising rapidly and will sooner or later collapse under its own weight.

Credit is essential for capitalist production and trade. The relative decline of production and

the turn towards financial speculation, however, has produced a disproportionate burden of debt. Much of the investment in emerging markets - in shares, company bonds, privatisation, etc - has been financed on the basis of loans (ie debt). Consumer spending has relied heavily on credit cards and consumer finance. All's well when business is booming. But a downturn inevitably produces a chain of bankruptcies, a so-called credit-crunch.

The sharp fall in prices of commodities, the main exports of many Third World countries, is drastically undermining their ability to repay debt and interest. At the same time, increased unemployment and reduced incomes will make it impossible for many consumers, especially the new middle class which enjoyed a short burst of prosperity, to repay consumer debt.

'Bad debt' is a worldwide problem, but the Japanese banks excel all the others with unrepayable loans of at least \$1,000bn. An implosion of the Japanese banking system and/or cumulative defaults around the world will have a devastating effect on the US and European banks and finance houses.

These are the interlocking elements of a critical chain reaction. The sequence and timing of events cannot be accurately predicted. The leaders of the major capitalist states are powerless to reverse this process and, on the basis of their current policies, are unlikely to slow it down or mitigate the effects of a major slump. Japanese capitalism, as its leaders now admit, is sliding into

Given the importance of the US as a world market and the pivotal role of the dollar internationally, a slump in the US may well open the door to the deepest economic depression since the end of World War II.

a deep slump. And it is only a matter of time before the US, which is already experiencing a marked slow-down, also enters a serious downturn. Given the importance of the US as a world market and the pivotal role of the dollar internationally, a slump in the US may well open the door to the deepest economic depression since the end of World War II.

A crisis of bourgeois economic policy

The leaders of the advanced capitalist countries have been plunged into a crisis of policy. Buoyed up by the apparent continuation of the rising 'bull market' on US and European stock exchanges, bourgeois strategists (with a few exceptions like George Soros) were resolutely denying the seriousness of the Asian crisis and its global effects. Earlier this year Clinton said it was just a "glitch on the road". Greenspan, head of the US central bank, even described the Asian crisis as "a salutary event" which would dampen the markets "irrational exuberance" and help counter inflationary trends. It took the August collapse in Russia to jolt most of them out of their blind complacency.

Even now, the G7 leaders have no idea of what measures they can take to avert the onset of a world slump. Despite Clinton's call for decisive leadership, there is no real agreement on policy co-ordination by the leading capitalist powers. They are still tightly laced in the ideological strait-jacket of neo-liberalism.

The G7 governments are (a) still bound to the minimalist, non-inter-

Capitalist crisis

ventionist role of the state in the capitalist economy; and (b) their thinking is still dominated by the anti-inflation policies which reinforced the financial booms of the late 1980s and early 1990s but which are counter-productive in the present situation.

(a) The role of the state:

Privatisation of previously state-owned industries and the cutting back of state investment in infrastructure projects, social welfare, and so on, has to some extent reduced the ability (in any case limited) of capitalist governments to influence economic trends. With the free movement of capital and commodities across frontiers, not even the major capitalist economies can, under present conditions, escape the pressures of world financial markets.

In fact, the ideologists of capitalism have in the recent period elevated "market forces" to the level of mystical forces operating above the social and political relationships through which real economic activity develops. Some even hail 'the market' as society's ultimate - and of course benevolent - governing authority.

Government is seen merely as a ringmaster maintaining the circus arena for a troupe of private performers. If they all pursue their own individual profit (it is claimed), the "hidden hand" of the market will ensure that everyone is better off as a result. The ringmaster, of course, is expected to use his whip when necessary against the workers outside the privileged bourgeois circle. And despite the glob-

alisation of finance and trade, capitalist governments are still charged with the task of maintaining the apparatus (including the armed forces) of the national states, which remain capitalism's basic territorial units.

In the 1980s and 1990s it was no wonder that the major capitalist powers willingly accepted the dominance of the global market, when they operated as a siphon sucking profits from the whole world into the coffers of the metropolitan bourgeoisie.

Through the IMF, World Bank, GATT, and other agencies, backed up with threats of financial sanctions, the imperialist powers forced the underdeveloped countries to open up their economies and drastically scale down state intervention in their economies. Third-world countries, which had previously been allowed some protected national economic development, were opened up to plundering by the multi-national corporations and banks. As a result, globalisation has not only produced a slump but provoked deep social crisis, already posing the threat of revolution to the ruling class in a number of countries.

That is why Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's president, has turned against the free market, reimposing controls on capital, foreign currency exchange and imports. This is a pointer to the future. Other governments, faced with economic collapse and the prospect of revolution, will resort to similar measures to defend the national interests of the ruling class.

The leaders of the

Neo-liberalism and Keynesianism

Neo-liberalism, or "new-liberalism", is a return to the liberal or "free market" policies which prevailed in the mid-nineteenth century during the first period of capitalism's world-wide industrial expansion, dominated by British capitalism. Its slogan was "laissez-faire", or "leave alone", and it favoured international free trade and non-interference of government in the national economy.

Keynesianism takes its name from the British economist John Maynard Keynes, who after the great crash of 1929 advocated increased government expending on public works and social welfare in order to stimulate demand and "pump-prime" or jump-start the stagnant economy. His policies were hardly implemented in the 1930s, except in the US New Deal, which was not very effective in reviving the US economy.

Keynesianism came into its own after the second world war on the basis of new social and economic relations which produced a prolonged economic upswing. Within the national economies Keynesianism supported increased state intervention through nationalisation of some basic industries, higher levels of welfare expenditure financed from progressive taxation, and government manipulation of spending, taxation and monetary policy to try to smooth out the boom-slump cycle, particularly to stimulate demand during a downturn.

advanced capitalist countries are, at the moment, unanimous in their condemnation of Mahathir's rejection of globalisation. But when the economic crisis hits the US and Europe with its full force, they will undoubtedly move in a similar direction. They will not be able to preserve an "open" global economy any more than they could after 1914, when the 1870-1913 world upswing gave way to a period of depression and intense inter-capitalist rivalry.

When the US national economy faces devastation, its capitalist leaders will once again turn to controls of capital and protectionist measures against foreign imports. This will not prevent US imperialism from contin-

uing to preach free trade to the rest of the world. In the next period, the return to protectionism will most likely be on the basis of the main trading blocs rather than individual states. Both NAFTA and the EU, while relatively open at present, have all the reserve mechanisms needed to establish a continental siege economy behind protective walls. The looser Asian block dominated by Japan would also raise protective walls.

When the capitalist class is faced with the threat of social explosions and mass political movements, it will be forced to turn back towards state intervention to prop up big business and banks. Spending programmes will not pri-

marily be social programmes (though they will also be forced to concede temporary reforms) but the "socialisation" of big business's liabilities. Such policies will not provide a way out for capitalism, any more than similar measures did in the Great Depression of the 1930s. For the moment, however, the capitalist powers are still locked onto free market policies. In relation to the Asian slump, these policies, imposed through IMF intervention, have exacerbated the crisis.

(b) Neo-liberal orthodoxy:

The new orthodoxy, which took over from the early 1980s, is that the 'freeing up of markets' will overcome every problem. Clearly, this corresponded with the interests of the finance capital based in the major centres. The only real danger, it was argued, was that posed by monetary and fiscal laxity (that is, excessive money supply or budget deficits). This reflects the capitalists' phobia about inflation, which above all erodes the wealth of finance capital (price rises reduce the real value of borrowers' repayments to lenders). After all, it was the high rates of inflation which infected the world economy in the late 1970s, when the Keynesian order was crumbling, that impelled the capitalist class towards the sound money policies of monetarism and neo-liberalism.

When the Asian crisis broke out with a round of currency devaluations in July 1997, the IMF intervened on the basis of anti-inflation policies. As the price of rescue loans, the IMF demanded that

the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, etc, should shut down insolvent banks, raise interest rates, and slash government expenditure - in other words implement a severely deflationary policy.

This was a classic case of incompetent generals fighting the last war rather than the one engulfing them. Monetarist policies which preserved currencies as a store of value and a sound medium of exchange served finance capital well in the 1980s and 1990s. But in Asia today, and the world tomorrow, the capitalists face, not an imminent threat of inflation, but the reality of a deflationary spiral. The collapse of banks, a flight of capital abroad, falling prices, drastic cuts in employment and wage levels, all combine to bring about a massive reduction of liquidity in the economy. The cash flow required to finance production, trade, and all forms of commerce dries up. Government measures like interest rate increases and spending cuts can only exacerbate the problem.

Some capitalist policymakers are now beginning to recognise this. In recent months, the IMF has begun to come under severe criticism for the policies it tried to impose on governments in South East Asia. Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist at the World Bank, complained that the IMF was pushing East Asia into a severe recession: "virtually every American economist rejects the balanced-budget principle during a recession. Why should we ignore this when giving advice to

other countries?"

Now, while they would never dream of advocating such policies at home, some economists are advocating a reflationary policy for Asia, especially for Japan. In effect, they are turning back to a form of Keynesianism.

A return to Keynesianism?

Could a return to Keynesian-type policies provide a way out of the slump for capitalism? The continued paralysis of Japan shows that it will by no means provide a quick fix. Despite the complaints of western governments that Japan was not doing enough to stimulate growth, since 1993 the Japanese government has introduced six government spending packages, estimated to total over \$651bn. True, a large share of it went to subsidise big construction companies to build 'roads to nowhere'. The spending packages were also undermined to some extent by the government's attempt to claw back some of the cost through increased taxation in order to prevent a further rise in the budget deficit. Nevertheless, these packages constituted the biggest Keynesian-type stimulus in modern times. But even combined with near zero interest rates, they have not succeeded in jump-starting the economy.

There is no easy way for reflationary policies to overcome the deep structural contradictions that have built up since the bubble economy of the 1980s. The banks' mountain of unrecoverable loans (which probably totals over \$1,000bn) and the black hole of overvalued shares and

Defying the inflation taboo of the last period, a number of US strategists have now begun to advocate the unthinkable for Japan - a policy of deliberate long-term inflation.

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property concealed under the fictitious figures currently entered in bank and company accounts, remain an apparently insuperable obstacle to any economic revival. Short of the liquidation of a series of banks and major industrial conglomerates, in other words allowing a slump to take its course, it is hard to see how any recovery can develop.

Defying the inflation taboo of the last period, a number of US strategists have now begun to advocate the unthinkable for Japan - a policy of deliberate long-term inflation. If zero interest rates have not stimulated any upturn in spending, either by companies or consumers, then (their argument goes) there must be a prolonged period of price rises which will effectively produce a negative real interest rate (ie the nominal interest rate minus the rate of inflation). If savings are thus threatened by prolonged inflation, companies and consumers will be persuaded to spend their money on goods and services. Moreover, negative real interest rates have the inestimable advantage for governments of eroding the real value of their national debt.

Support for such a policy, strictly to be applied to Japan and 'lesser breeds without the law', is gaining ground in Washington and EU capitals. Support for inflation, however, remains an abomination for the US and Europe. This is shown by the refusal of Greenspan, chair of the US Central Bank, to substantially cut US interest rates. The fears of the capitalists that spending packages will push bud-

get deficits up to much higher levels underlines the dilemma they face in this period. Government debt has reached historically unprecedented levels, despite a period of neo-liberal policy. (The huge costs of mass unemployment and pensions for ageing populations is a big factor in this.) But in order to stave off total economic collapse, governments will be forced to resort to new spending packages.

However, this will soon impose a crippling burden of debt on many states. Nevertheless, as the Asian slump spreads to the West, the US and Europe may well face the very same kind of liquidity trap as Japan. In that situation, regardless of government policies, 'market forces' will sooner or later produce new inflationary effects. Whether these will be effective in reviving the economy is an entirely different question. At a certain point, the spectre of inflation, even hyperinflation, would reappear. While it can be a stimulus in mild doses, inflation is a deadly cancer in its virulent form.

Capitalism will not be able to escape from its fundamental contradictions. Whatever the depth and duration of the coming world slump, however, the world economy will sooner or later, given the political weakness of the forces opposed to capitalism, move into a new period of cyclical growth. This will not allow the capitalists to repair the damage to the system's foundations - and the ruling class will face mounting mass opposition to its rotten system.

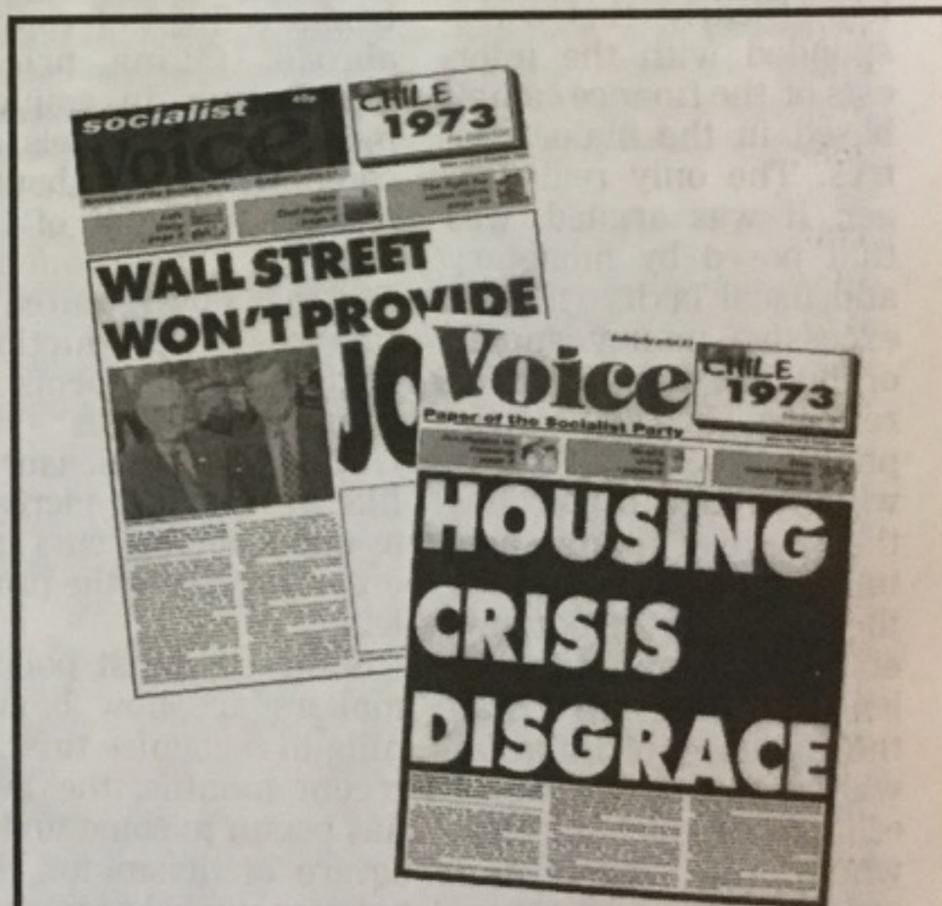
The main set-back of the 1980s and 1990s was a pushing back of working



Indonesia—first revolution of the post-Stalinist era.

class consciousness. The capitalist class was only able to turn the clock back because of the political disarming of the working class. But a period of deep international crisis for the capitalist system will produce enormous struggles and a radicalisation of consciousness. What is required in

addition is a programme to defend the interests of the working class and fight for an international socialist transformation. The starting point is a clear analysis of the present economic crisis and a perspective for its unfolding in the months ahead.



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The brutal side of state racism

Deportations have taken centre stage in the fight against racism. Against us we have the full force of the state poised to send innocent people back to the persecution and suffering they have fled from. However, the anti-racism movement is still weak and divided.

By John McCamley

It is on the issue of deportations that the battle for the hearts and minds of ordinary people will be won. The Socialist Party which has played a key role in the Anti-Racism Campaign (ARC), Mid West against Racism (MWAR), Immigrant Solidarity and now Students against Racism (SAR) has always argued that the issue of deportations be put to the fore. But there are factions in the movement who say that the anti-racist groups are too small, divided and badly organised to stop any deportations. They put forward the view that refugees must stand alone first and then we will come around their campaign. We would argue that, yes, anti-racist groups are small and have limited resources but this can't be used as a reason to sit back and do nothing. In

some areas of work we must take the lead.

For many reasons, refugees and some of their organisations tend to keep a low profile and are very cautious about demonstrations and other militant protests. Many refugees are told by different

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to "keep your heads down, stay out of trouble and you'll get to stay here." This could be the worst thing to tell people. It should always be pointed out that the Department of Justice makes its mind up about who can stay or go without looking at half the cases. There is a racist mindset in the Department and, according to one source, they will wind up deporting 98% of all asylum seekers.

On Friday, 25 September we scored a victory against deportations. We were able to get an asylum seeker who was being held in Mountjoy prison and awaiting deportation released. The asylum seeker was being kept in prison illegally. In fact, the whole deportation was illegal. With the aid of Joe Higgins TD, we were able to get in contact



It is a nightmare world of illegal deportations, of people just disappearing from their homes at night, not to be seen again.

with the Department of Justice. They claimed there had been a mix-up and that the person involved would have been released anyway. This seems very unlikely. In our opinion, it was through our intervention that this illegal act was exposed and they were forced to release him.

It was a small victory but in doing this we came upon something very big. According to a Garda source, the Department of Justice has been breaking its own rules on the asylum process. It is a world of illegal deportations, of people just disappearing from their homes at night, not to be seen again. Every resource of the state is being used to hide this process and all this is being run by a small group of people inside

Deportations

the Department. The Gardai only find out who they are deporting 1/2 hour before they are to pick them up. The airport police only know that the Gardai and the asylum seeker are coming ten minutes before they arrive at the airport and the Department only books the flight within 1/2 hour of it taking off. The Department can now deport anyone within the state within four hours of the order being given. The group in the Department of Justice are completely unaccountable to the people of this country and have played a key role in feeding the anti-refugee hysteria.

For these reasons, asylum seekers must resist. Most have no choice and nothing to lose by resisting. The anti-racism movement must be ready if individuals or groups decide to do so. This could happen anywhere in Ireland now that asylum seekers are placed all over the country. The movement has to be national, support has to be well organised and coming from all corners of Ireland. We would have to act fast. There won't be time to make decisions on every single issue at weekly meetings so there would have to be some sort of coordinating committee. These are the simple facts and nothing do with an attempt by anyone to "take control" of the movement in an undemocratic way.

There are ongoing discussions in the anti-racism movement on what direction to take from here. But in this discussion there has unfortunately been a certain amount of sectarian point-scoring. There are people who are putting



Romanian refugees arriving in Monaghan.

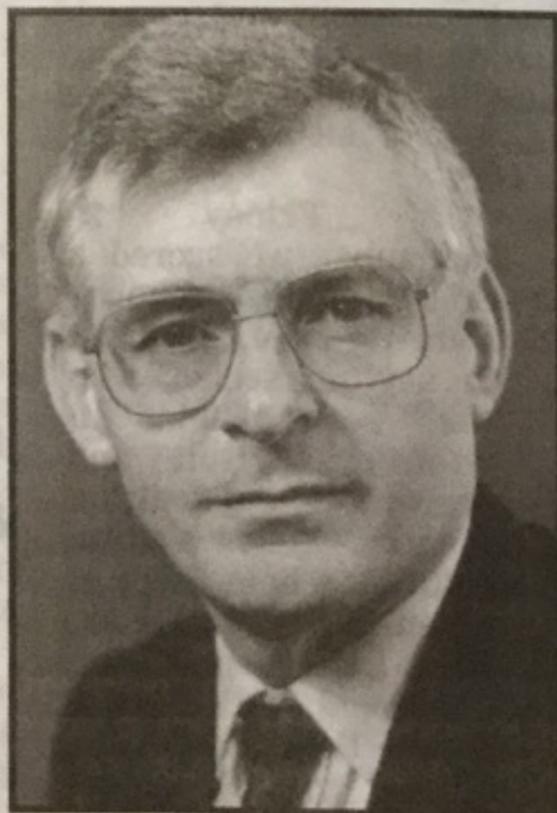
their own political interests before the lives of the refugees who face deportations. If we do not stop the Department of Justice and asylum seekers do not resist, lives will be lost. In the end who cares who controls what if the deportations are stopped. Surely that would be a victory for everyone.

Fighting deportations is the key task but it is not the only issue we face. There is also the forthcoming government legislation which represents a major assault on immigrant rights in Ireland. In particular it is a savage attack on the social welfare entitlements of those seeking asylum. The government now intends to give refugees food and clothing vouchers instead of social welfare. This is on top of asylum seekers not being allowed to work. There needs to be a campaign against this legislation and this could be built on the back of the Right to Work

Campaign organised by the Asylum Rights Alliance which the Socialist Party, ARC and SAR are all members of.

It should be the aim of the anti-racism movement in the long term to bring together all the different organisations fighting on these issues into one national network which can offer practical support to asylum seekers while resist-

ing deportations and taking on state and media-sponsored racism. But if this petty sectarianism goes on, the movement will stay small and with the new legislation and mass deportations soon there will be no refugees left in Ireland. The time for action is now and it's time we brought the fight to the racists in the government, the media or any other quarter.



*Joe Higgins is
the Socialist
Party's TD.*

*Any asylum seeker
facing deportation
should not hesitate
to contact our Dail
office, weekdays,
9am - 5pm.*

*Tel: (01) 618-3038
Fax: (01) 618-4158*

REVIEW

DRUGS AND THE PARTY LINE

BY KEVIN

WILLIAMSON.

PUBLISHED BY REBEL
INC.

£6.90 (WATERSTONES)

This is an important book, it poses itself the question, "What should be done about recreational drug use?" And then sets out to answer the question by posing and addressing a series of related questions including:

How did drug prohibition come about; does drug prohibition make things better or worse; can recreational drug use ever be eradicated; do anti drug campaigns make any difference; is it hypocritical to license the sale of alcohol and tobacco; is it right to criminalise people for taking drugs; is harm reduction the way forward; should the sale of recreational drugs be legalised?

These are questions that the political and judicial establishment in this country make no attempt to answer, in truth they don't even allow themselves to ask them. Their standard "one size fits all" answer is "zero tolerance" which is as meaningless as it is useless.

Kevin Williamson is the editor of Rebel Inc. publications, the first publisher to put Irvine Welsh into print. Williamson persuasively argues that the origins of drug prohibition have little if anything to do with the health concerns so commonly cited in recent times. He details a combination of class prejudice,

racism and corporate interests that combined to prohibit in turn alcohol, heroin and cannabis.

He states in relation to the prohibition of alcohol: "The years after World War 1 ushered in a new era in America where all sorts of social changes were taking place. Like everywhere else the 1917 October Revolution had a profound effect among a huge layer of workers in America. A new kind of music was drifting down from the Mississippi, from the impoverished and disenfranchised blacks in the southern American states. And people were gathering to drink in bars where they would discuss the past, the present and what the future might hold. And since alcohol was at the centre of a lot of these social gatherings it soon came under fire. While the good ladies of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union were at the forefront of the moral campaign against alcohol, behind them stood many American industrialists who wanted a more manageable workforce."

Prohibition brought a wave of smuggling, organised crime, illicit hooch poisoning, bribery and corruption of public officials, police chiefs, politicians and the judiciary, and murder and mayhem as rival gangs fought territorial wars. By 1933 America was screaming to be released from the chaos and prohibition was repealed.

Williamson goes on to

detail the failures of the war against drugs. The United Nations' own World Drug Report, published in July of last year, states that the world trade in illicit drugs stands at \$400 billion, 8% of international trade, bigger than international trade in iron, steel or motor vehicles. The UN report estimates that 141,000,000 people used cannabis in the previous year (3% of the world adult population) and that there are 8,000,000 heroin users.

The international response to the World Drug Report was a round of promises to tighten legislation, and step up the war on drugs. These actions amount to a repeat prescription of all the failed policies of the post war period.

Williamson's thesis is that the consumption of drugs is a matter of personal choice and a victimless crime. Prohibition has failed to control or manage drug use. The war against drugs is an expensive disaster. The war against drugs has criminalised tens of millions of people, allowed the gangsters and smugglers to enrich themselves, spawned innumerable campaigns of often counterproductive sloganeering, and all of the time the numbers of people taking drugs has spiralled, and so has the number who die as a result of consumption of contaminated street cut supplies. It is, he believes, time for a change of policy, and that change of policy should be the decrimi-

nalisation of possession for personal use, as a first step to the legalisation and licensed sale of drugs and the adoption by the state of the policies of harm reduction, the provision of clean heroin under medical supervision to addicts, allowing them to live normalised lives where they are not obliged to beg and steal to support their habit.

In the space allowed it is impossible to do justice to the depth of research, and force of argument employed by Williamson. The case histories cited of harm reduction projects on Merseyside and now in Switzerland illustrate the positive worth of the arguments put forward in the book. If you are shocked by these ideas and many people will be then that is all the more reason to read *Drugs and the Party Line*.

This is an impressive, informative and easily read book. I cannot however finish this review without taking public issue with Williamson's contention that the use of drugs is a matter of personal choice and that drug use is a victimless crime.

There is undoubtedly an important civil liberties question in relation to personal consumption of any substance. However while we are creatures of free will, the choices that are available to us and our ability to exercise them in an informed, rational and free manner is conditioned and subject to our economic, social and

REVIEW

political circumstances. As long as we live in a world of such enormous inequality it is not balanced to argue that the respect of free will is sufficient grounds to wash our hands of the consequences of the "choices" that some people make.

The reality is that there are thousands of victims of drug abuse in Dublin

alone, I am not talking about recreational weekend clubbers. I am talking about young people who think that they have no future, have little self confidence and who initially take drugs for the simple pleasures of escapism. Thousands of these young people are criminalised; they lose their identity and the

remnants of their self respect; they are transformed by chemical addiction to steal from their families, their communities and from strangers in order to feed their habit. Most often these people die at a young age never having fulfilled any of their potential and having caused great pain to those

who love them most.

These people are nothing if not victims of drug taking. And it is particularly for these people and all those who may follow in their footsteps that we must address the questions that are raised in this valuable book.

by Alan Bermingham

Hidden Agendas

by John Pilger

Printed by Vintage £8.99

Hidden Agendas is a devastating assault on the powerful and the privileged. Page after page refutes their power, propaganda and censorship. Pilger is master at exposing the Orwellian double-speak of the establishment.

The world's media comes under his particular scrutiny. There is a myth that we live in an "information age" when the truth is we live in a "media age".

Today we get less investigative news than 20 years ago, when people in the industrialised world can now receive between 50 and 100 channels in their homes. Pilger explains the difference between what the media moguls call "news" and "slow news". "News" has become entertainment and it follows seamlessly into "info-advertising".

President Clinton is rearming Latin America, and US and British arms exporters will make a bonanza of £22 billion as

NATO expands into Eastern Europe. This news is virtually unnoticed. Nuclear rearming is almost extinct news.

There is no news from Africa, unless it serves official interests. Western sanctions killing Iraqi children is slow news. The Liverpool dockers' struggle was slow news. The systematic impoverishment of working class people is not news. Large corporations receive large state handouts while the poor see their benefits cut to the bone. We live in a 'new' system which means capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich. And today's journalists fail to expose these hidden agendas.

A consensus has developed that accepts "Globalisation" and the market. Tony Blair claims that this is a non-ideological age. Pilger says: "The ideology he shares with many in the media is one of the most powerful of the modern



John Pilger (right)

era and more pervasive for its concealed and unconscious attachment to a status quo of inequality based on class and wealth".

Pilger reveals that Mo Mowlam, Peter Mandelson, George Robertson, Chris Smith and Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, are all members of the British-American Project for the Successor Generation. This elite band of politicians, journalists and academics are funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts of Philadelphia, whose founder, billionaire Howard Pew, is a supporter of the US Republican Party and right wing groups.

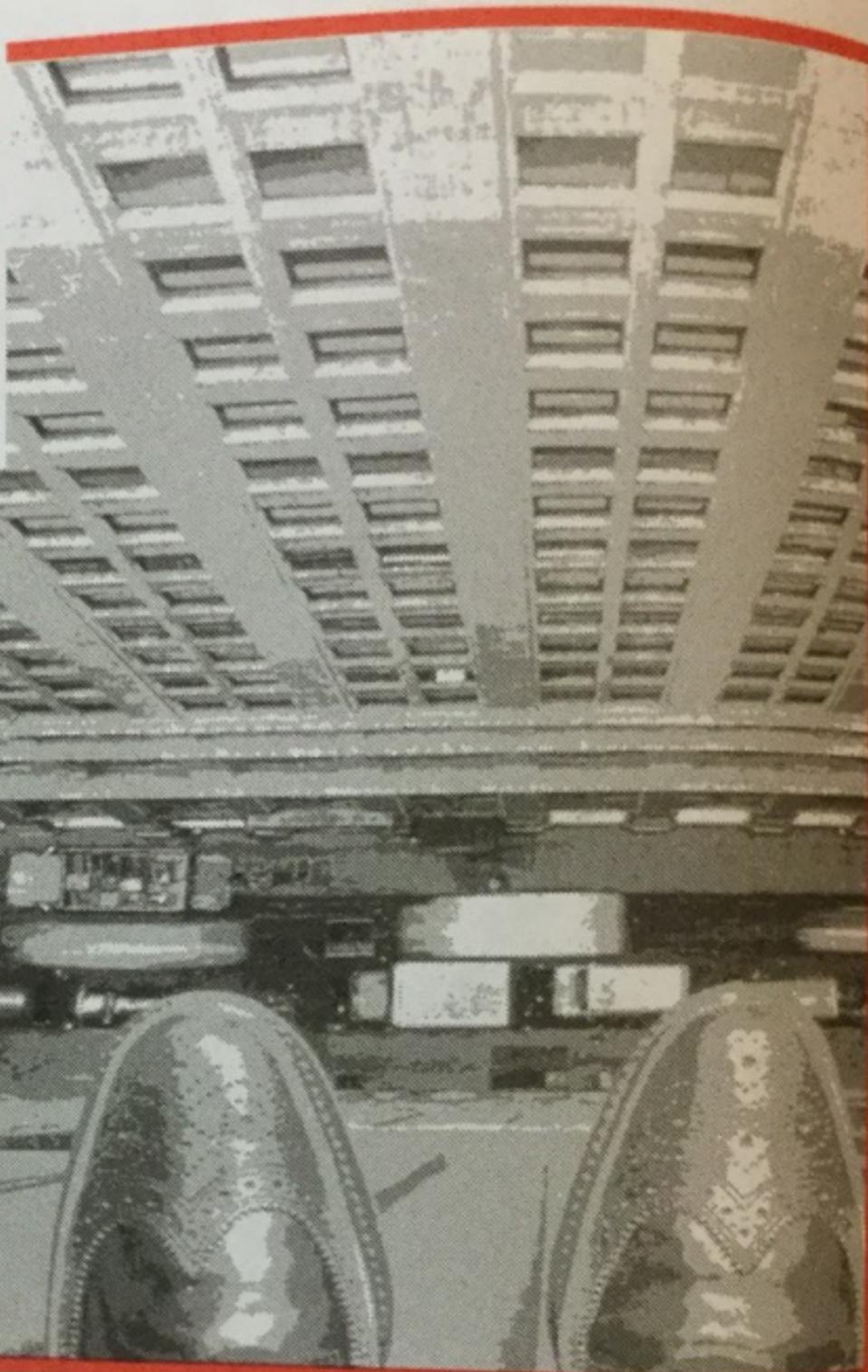
Hidden Agendas deals

with the Liverpool dockers' strike, the profits made trading with Indonesia and Burma. Tommy Sheridan also gets a mention. Pilger has access to many sources never revealed even in the so-called quality press.

The poet Eduardo Galeano said: "We are all invited to the world burial of socialism". Pilger devotes his book to "people who, in refusing to attend the funeral, have brought to light the hidden agendas of governments, bureaucracies and corporations". Hidden Agendas is certainly not a book to be missed.

By Manus Maguire

In this issue of Socialism 2000



Hidden Agenda
by John Pilger
Printed by Vintage

Hidden Agenda is a devastating account of the powerful and the exploited. Sage after sage relates their greed, their power and corruption. Pilger is master of words and the Orwellian double-speak of the industrial world.

The world's most corrupt leader has just been elected. There is a world that we live in, an "international system" where the truth is we live in a "mediocrity".

Today's world has been created by a few people who own the world's resources and the world's people. They are the "global elite" who control the world's economy and the world's people. They are the "global elite" who control the world's economy and the world's people.

Perhaps, Clinton is the only Latin American president who will make a difference to the world.

The End of "The Long War"?

**International Capitalism's
Economic and Social Crisis**

**Deportations: The Brutal Side of
State Racism**

£1.50

Title: Socialism 2000, No. 3
Organisation: Socialist Party
Date: 1998

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