

socialist **f** **uture**

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LEADING ARTICLE

Corinna Lotz
shows how the
struggle for national
self-determination
coincides with the
struggle for
socialism

Open access to a financial catastrophe

The financial earthquake that overwhelmed Mexico at the turn of the year marks a qualitative leap in the world economic and political crisis. It brings to a stormy end the attempt to overcome fundamental contradictions of post-war capitalism through allowing "emerging" economies unrestricted access to funds.

What finally produced the economic catastrophe in Mexico, moreover, was the resistance of the masses. This was expressed through the struggle of the Zapatista-led insurrection in the state of Chiapas against the IMF-led policies of the corrupt government of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Just the mere threat by the Zapatistas to resume their armed uprising was enough to send the peso crashing through the floor. We are in a period when the class struggle has an immediate effect on politics, whether in the form of the trade unions defending living conditions in Italy against the extreme right-wing government or the heroic Chechen people fighting against the wanton barbarism of the pro-IMF Yeltsin regime in Russia.

Deregulation of international financial markets, particularly since the great stock market crash of 1987, was trumpeted by free market governments as the basis for the new world economic order. The export of capital by the major capitalist countries to areas of cheap labour became a sort of gold rush.

But it was fictitious capital in search of fool's gold. Now the collapse of the Mexican peso's value by more than 30% against the dollar has led to a flight of the same capital out of the country and fears that the crisis will take in the rest of Latin America as well as areas like Malaysia and Singapore. And, of course, the American ruling class is the most nervous of all considering that most of the capital tied up in Mexico is from north of the border. That is why President Clinton will find it difficult to persuade a hostile Congress to provide a \$50 billion package to back Mexico.

The drive to find a home for the mountains of paper money accumulated during the post-war credit boom was simultaneous with technological developments in the fields of production, communications and information which have revolutionised the nature of the international division of labour and economy. Capitalism is able to switch production and distribution at a speed unknown before in history.

Alongside this leap in the techniques of production, the requirement of the owners of capital to extract profit has become more and more difficult. To compete with their rivals in a limited market, each multinational must constantly invest greater amounts of money in ever more advanced technology while cutting labour costs, wages, at the same time. This sharply increased competition has changed the conditions of life for the working masses throughout the world.

Mexico, a country with a population of nearly 100 million, with more than 10% living in the capital, Mexico City, had defaulted on its international sovereign debt in the 1980s. The world's banks are still owed around \$100 billion by the Mexican government. But the prospects of low labour costs across the border attracted private investment by American capitalism.

What brought Mexico's "economic miracle" to a head this time was the attempt to avoid becoming an economic colony of America. Mexico set out to become an equal with the United States following the implementation 12 months ago of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta). It tried to keep the peso tied to the dollar as imports poured into the country. The government financed the deficit – estimated at nearly \$30 billion last year – by issuing securities denominated in, and payable in, dollars.

As the peso came under pressure, the government spent 80% of Mexico's foreign currency reserves in a vain attempt to maintain the value of the currency.

There was precious little left to redeem the maturing securities in 1995. When the government in January issued \$580m worth of new securities, foreign investors were prepared to subscribe to only \$11m. The same investors who had boosted Mexico in the past were now on strike!

The Guardian noted: "But the world cannot counter the power of private financial markets. And if they won't buy Mexican paper, then Mexico and its partners must bear the consequences. Nafta, Mexican social cohesion and even the integrity of the international financial system are at risk. Nobody, not least the OECD, predicted this or has the power to change the course of events." (January 5, 1995)

The acceleration of the international financial crisis, expressed in rising interest rates on both sides of the Atlantic, is the surface of a much deeper process. As two articles in this issue of *Socialist Future* show, capitalism has conjured up production techniques which in turn have their own objective power and logic. The world economy is in the hands of a handful of multi-nationals and the money markets, with the planet now divided into increasingly mutually-hostile trading blocs. Not long ago "the end of communism" was hailed as proof that capitalism was here to stay for the rest of history! How hollow these claims seem now.

What collapsed in the Soviet Union was, of course, not "communism" but a monstrous perversion and distortion embodied in the Stalinist bureaucracy. The important article by Professor Anatoly Butenko on the alternatives in Soviet society following the death of Lenin show this clearly. Butenko's socialist anti-Stalinist history is in stark contrast to the Kremlin apologist Eric Hobsbawm, whose history of the 20th century has received such a rapturous response in the bourgeois press. The critical review of this book is timely. The fact that Stalinism was the antithesis of Lenin's politics is examined in the review of an important new book by a Russian scholar on the inner-party

struggle of the 1920s. The revolutionary significance of the disintegration of Stalinism is discussed in the article on Chechnya and the relevance of the theory of permanent revolution today.

In Britain, the dramatic changes that have taken place in class relations since the Tories came to power in 1979 have made the role of the state the key question for socialists. The review of the book dealing with the conspiracy by the state against the miners' union brings the issues out clearly. What is significant is the role of the Labour and trade union bureaucracies in maintaining the rule of the capitalist state and its oppression of all those opposing the destruction of basic rights.

It is in this overall context – and with the Tory Party itself disintegrating under the strain – that the leader of the Labour Party, Tony Blair, steps into the breach. He wants Labour to become the undiluted political expression of the state and the capitalist class. All his decisions, whether on Clause Four, education, law and order, taxation or the European Union, point this way. Blair and the new Labour leadership express the changed world conditions. Simply to fight to maintain Clause Four as "an article of faith" is not enough. This reduces the struggle to one of correct word forms which, of course, no one intends to do anything about. After all, 77 years and countless Labour governments have come and gone and only a few bankrupt industries were taken into ownership at great expense during this period.

Common ownership, in fact, is the only way out of the impasse that international capitalism has produced. To establish this, however, requires a far more significant perspective than an adherence to parliamentary struggles within the capitalist state framework. The articles in this issue demonstrate that only a perspective of international socialist revolution, embracing the destruction of the old state, can offer a way forward for humanity.

by Corinna Lotz

Chechnya and the permanent revolution today

The savage war waged by Boris Yeltsin's forces against the people of Chechnya has elicited a deafening silence from most capitalist governments, democrats and so-called socialists alike. In Britain live animal exports have aroused protests, but the blanket bombing of Grozny has not even brought the usual flutterings of letters to the press.

And yet seldom in recent history has there been such heroic resistance from a massively outnumbered people to a gigantic and heavily-armed enemy. Fighting only with captured tanks, hand-held guns and no anti-aircraft weapons, handfuls of Chechens inflicted serious casualties on the Russian invaders, and held the city of Grozny, under continuous aerial bombardment and ground attack. Deployment of Russian forces began at the end of November, building up in weeks to mass destruction of buildings and indiscriminate killing of civilians.

The silence of the West and the support for Yeltsin is in sharp contrast to opposition within Russia. Not only the mothers of Russian soldiers but even former supporters of Yeltsin's government have demonstrated their desire for the war to end. Soldiers have defected from the army and held press conferences. Wounded soldiers have told how they were lied to by the authorities that the problem was one of "armed gangs" in Chechnya. Calls for the self-determination of the Chechens have come from Yelena Bonner, human rights campaigner and widow of Andrei Sakharov, and author Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Among the Russian political parties only the fascist Zhirinovskiy and other ultra-nationalists have given their unqualified support to Yeltsin's war. The military leadership was deeply split, with some senior officers refusing to obey orders to invade Chechnya, and others driving Yeltsin deeper into the conflict.

By contrast, in Britain a National Peace Council vigil on the steps of St Martin's church was supported only by members of the North Caucasus Centre and the Socialist Future Group. All the main political parties have maintained a stony silence. The groups of left-wing MPs, both in the British and

European parliaments, have sat on their hands. They could find time to make a song and dance about Clause 4 but not about the plight of the Chechens.

The Chechen people's struggle raises political questions not adaptable to comfortable protests for social democrats and "lefts". On the contrary, Yeltsin's monstrous repression - and the Chechen response - pose not only the break-up of an existing country - the Russian Federation - and other countries which contain small nations within them.

Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze summed up why bourgeois leaders world-wide have adopted a "hands-off" attitude to the Chechen conflict: "No one can forbid Russia from fighting for its state integrity ... Unless Russia eradicates separatism ... it will disintegrate as a state." (Georgian Radio, Tbilisi, January 9, 1995). In contrast to Shevardnadze, many people in the North Caucasus recognise that there can be no "national" solution to their problems. Nor can their struggle be reduced to one of religion. In most parts of the Caucasus religion plays a relatively small role. Adherents of Islam are in a minority.

As Cambridge academic Akbar Ahmed remarked in *The Guardian* (January 12): "To stand alone against the brute power of the Russian onslaught, the hundreds of tanks, and the non-stop air raids, they need to keep their spirits up. One way they can do so is to invoke Islam and the tribal code."

The call "God is great" by the Chechen fighters is a religious form, but the content of the Chechen resistance is self-determination.

Those who write off the naked courage of these people by tarring it with the brush of "Islamic fundamentalism" do not deserve to lick the Chechen fighters' boots. As Ahmed writes: "What we are seeing is not just tribal warriors resisting a puffed-up invading army but an entire population at war. By definition, all Chechens have become part of the fight for independence."

What has changed today is that war in Chechnya is a struggle for self-determination, not against the old imperialist power or Stalinism, but against the desperate need of world capitalism to restore itself in areas where it has lost control. This gives the Chechen war a unique character, and explains why

not since World War II has there been such heavy fighting in a major city.

It is simultaneously a civil war: a battle of both Russian and Chechen people for survival, under conditions where the Russian troops were demoralised before the war even started. As one teenage deserter said: "I would fight if it was to defend Russia against a foreign enemy, but I won't fight within my own country against civilians."

● *Independent people* ●

Chechnya has struck terror into Yeltsin and Shevardnadze and is increasingly becoming a symbol of the violent break-up not only of political states, but of the botched attempt to restore capitalism in the former Soviet Union and in other countries as well. *The Guardian's* Edward Balls referred early in January to China's "Chechen syndrome". "Russia," Balls writes, "is not the only former planned economy whose transition to the market [read capitalism] is threatened by regional tensions. In China too, the gaps between rich and poor regions, and between Beijing and its richer coastal provinces are growing."

The Chechens, who have long been a fiercely independent mountain people, simply want to determine their own fate. It is exactly the simplicity of this struggle that terrifies the pro-capitalist government of Yeltsin and his Western allies.

Equally ill at ease are the bourgeois regimes in the Arab countries, and even the Islamic government of Iran. Iran has just signed an \$800m deal for the Russians to repair their nuclear facilities on the Gulf, and is therefore opposed to inflaming the poor masses of Iran against the Russian military aggression.

The Saudi and Iranian governments in particular, though presiding over an Islamic states, are afraid of their own masses becoming mobilised by the struggles of the oppressed elsewhere. In fact, on November 19, 1994, exactly on the eve of the Russian invasion of Chechnya, Russian premier Viktor Chernomyrdin was in Riyadh signing a co-operation agreement with King Fahd Al Sa'ud, the "servant of the two holy places of Islam".

Journalist Robert Fisk notes that "in the Middle East the Chechens are seen as a Muslim people fighting for survival". (*Independent*, January 11). "But in many Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, the Bosnian conflict and the Chechen war have been the subject of self-censorship. 'There was a time when our government wanted to unify the country over Bosnia,' a Saudi journalist commented bleakly. 'Now they just want to keep it off the screen because

it's so inflammatory'."

Fisk warns that the West's support for Yeltsin's war will "encourage the Islamists of the Middle East in their campaigns against the 'moderate' Arab regimes upon whom the West depends." For "moderate" read national bourgeois.

Many of the most oppressed masses see the Muslim religion as the form of their struggle against their oppressor, whether it is Russia, the United States or their own national bourgeois government as in Algeria.

Within all the states, whether in Africa, the Middle East or Asia, which achieved national liberation during the 1960s and 1970s, the national bourgeoisie has not been able to satisfy the needs of the poor masses. "Some men have prospered in the new order and many have lost out in the boom... This has coloured the relation between the winners and the losers both within the Arab countries and Iran and among the Arab states themselves," writes Fouad Ajami in his book *The Arab Predicament*. (Canto 1992).

It is this inequality, Ajami notes, that made people seek "the voice of authenticity and tradition, with its own compelling message. It promises to sweep away injustices and troubles and to erect a more caring and true order. It raises the banner of brotherhood at a time of mounting inequalities."

The example of Algeria shows most sharply that the vacuum of caused by the lack of a proletarian revolutionary leadership has been temporarily filled by Islamic ideology. But this is a highly contradictory and explosive movement. As Ajami notes: "Algeria's elections [won by the Islamic Salvation Front] were a verdict on the post-colonial state and its entire baggage - one-party rule, the command economy, the repressive state living off the faded memories of the great anti-colonial struggle and the cynical *nomenklatura* that talks left and lives right."

The interaction of the economic and political crisis of capitalism with the break-up of Stalinism, starting in the USSR and working its way throughout the rest of the world has transformed political relations globally. This is especially true in the countries which have freed themselves from the yoke of imperialism and those still struggling against big power aggression, whether from the United Nations (read US), or Russia.

The rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and his policies between 1986-1990 spelled the end of Stalinist support to repressive regimes throughout the world, especially those in Syria, Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq and many countries in Africa. Stalinist backing for these regimes had been

based on the "two-stage" theory of social development, which held that a long period of bourgeois development was necessary before the masses could engage in a struggle for socialism. This meant in practice support for the national bourgeoisie after it had achieved liberation from the imperialist masters.

● *Despots overthrown* ●

The break-up of Stalinism in the former Soviet Union saw the reversal of a number of disastrous Stalinist policies. Gorbachev withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1988, recognising that occupation had been a serious mistake. As Ajami writes, 1989-1990 was "a springtime of nations", an *annus mirabilis*. Despots were being overthrown throughout the world in Chile, Argentina, Romania and Nicaragua. The killing of the tyrant Ceausecu was particularly noteworthy, watched by people all over the world, as the Romanian revolution unfolded on the world's television screens at the end of 1989.

It was the disintegration of Stalinism which allowed the heroic Eritrean national revolution finally to take power in 1992, after decades of military struggle against the Moscow-backed dictator Colonel Mengistu of Ethiopia. The end of Stalinist rule, whether in the Former Soviet Union or in smaller states such as Romania spelled the end, in practice, of the theory of socialism in a single country, which as Trotsky wrote¹ "is the only theory that consistently, and to the very end opposes the theory of the permanent revolution.

"This theory," Trotsky continues, "imposes upon revolutions in backward countries the task of establishing an unrealisable regime of democratic dictatorship, which it counterposes to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thereby this theory introduces illusions and fictions into politics. paralyzes the struggle for power of the proletariat in the East and hampers the victory of the colonial revolution".

Trotsky's description of how the theory of Stalinism held back the struggle of the masses in the former colonial states is truer today than ever. To it must be added the following. The break-up of Stalinism and with it all those national bourgeois regimes which it sustained, thrusts the world revolutionary struggle of the oppressed masses everywhere on to a different and higher plane.

Karl Marx said in 1850: "But they [the German workers] will accomplish the greatest part of their final victory for themselves through self-enlightenment as to their class interests, by taking their own independent party attitude as early as

possible, and by not permitting themselves to be fooled as to the necessity for the independent organisations of the party of the proletariat by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty-bourgeois."²

Such self-enlightenment as to their own interests is the essence of process unfolding amongst the masses in those countries which have achieved liberation from imperialist domination. The reactionary buffer of Stalinism, responsible for so many disasters and betrayals, no longer impedes this movement. It is an open struggle for power by the working masses and the poor, whether peasants, landless migrants or unemployed.

A crisis of leadership exists, not only in Algeria but within all those countries which saw national bourgeois regimes come to power during the last decades, including today the newly-elected government of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation is also having to contend with these issues. Democratic populism, Palestinian nationalism and the PLO's heroic record of resistance to Zionism cannot answer the problems of the poor Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

One bourgeois observer, Conor Cruise O'Brien attacks the term "Islamic fundamentalism", so much bandied about at present, insisting that "Islam is indivisible" (*Independent*, January 1994). He admonishes the French colonialists [!] for their mistake in backing the military junta in Algeria. He rightly says that the cancellation of the elections in 1992 precipitated the outbreak of the jihad.

The only alternatives for the bourgeois thinker, whether Western or Arab are military dictatorship or the dictatorship of "Islam". Only socialist revolutionaries can envisage a third road. But the road of working class dictatorship and the establishment of socialism can only be found if those masses presently caught up in Islam see another leadership coming forward.

The jihad of the poor and oppressed - in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi, Chechnya and anywhere else, cannot be equated with the capitalist state enshrined Islam of the Saudi royal family, the governments of Pakistan or anywhere else. At present these masses have no other form of self-expression.

In Afghanistan, as well as Algeria, the most medieval Islamic practices are being reimposed on society by Islamic leaders. No revolutionary can support the cruel treatment of anyone - man or woman - who refuses to conform to this doctrine.

The reactionary religious form of the mullahs and the clergy as a whole must not be confused with the social content of the mass struggle for a better life.

Because secularism is identified with foreign domination and repression, the masses have turned to religious forms. These masses have nothing in common with their own bourgeois, who have either collaborated with the foreign oppressor or have established a dictatorship over the poor.

The great achievements of the past decade in overthrowing imperialist regimes in country after country remain. Imperialism and its bourgeois hangers-on cannot return to their former political hegemony. They are forced to adapt and make compromises with the rising masses in order to survive, as in South Africa.

The African National Congress in power already presents a spectacle of self-aggrandisement, with a small fortune spent on presidential silverware alone. A greedy race for official positions on the state gravy train dominated the ANC conference at the end of December. This was held behind closed doors to avoid revealing splits within the leadership. Archbishop Tutu has already warned about the explosive consequences of the hideous display of bourgeois privilege.

● *Resolute democratism* ●

The decisive question for revolutionaries today is to distinguish clearly the opposite strands within all national movements. As Lenin wrote: "The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to *fortify* nationalism."

Thus national and ethnic aspirations are inseparably interwoven with social inequalities - i.e. class struggle. The war in Chechnya, like all the great battles taking place in today's world, shows the truth of Lenin's theses, *The socialist revolution and the right of nations to self determination*, written in January 1916.

"The socialist revolution is not a single act," Lenin wrote. "It is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e. on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie."

The advanced crisis of the world capitalist system and the maturity of the social revolutionary process

today, 80 years after Lenin wrote this, is revealed precisely in the Chechen conflict. The Chechen war was turned into a national liberation struggle by the genocidal action of Yeltsin's army. It now involves not only the Chechen people, but oppressed peoples throughout the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Asia.

In fighting Yeltsin the Chechens have taken on the main exponent of capitalist restoration. Yeltsin is the man who brought down Gorbachev, the symbol of the political revolution which ended Stalinism. Therefore, like it or not, the Chechen struggle has not only a national liberation, but a social revolutionary character, whatever the nature of its leadership.

Its implications shatter the fixed concepts of formal thought and small-time national insularity. Of course there are a multiplicity of interests at work. Naturally, capitalist Turkey wishes to expand its interests in the area. Yes, Dudayev worked closely with his former Russian masters. True, there is a sinister Chechen mafia. But all these considerations, as Lenin also insisted, are secondary to the main principle: "We **must** support **every** revolt against our chief enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states, provided it is not the revolt of a reactionary class."

Lenin continued: "To imagine that social revolution is **conceivable** without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie **with all its prejudices**, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. - to imagine all this is to **repudiate social revolution**...Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is."

World politics today, however chaotic and uncontrolled they may appear, are shaped by the interaction of profound economic processes at the base of society. Today's dramatic global changes - whether in Britain, Russia, Mexico, South Africa or China - have a socialist revolutionary content. The task of today's revolutionaries is to give that content its true form.

1 P.156, *The Permanent Revolution*, by Leon Trotsky. Published by New Park, 1973.

2 Marx's address to the members of the Communist League in Germany. *Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*. Lawrence and Wishart 1969. Quoted in the 6th Congress Documents of the Workers Revolutionary Party 1983.

By Neil Charlton

Employment and the contemporary labour process

The state of employment in contemporary capitalist economies is increasingly generating concerns from a number of quarters, not least the employed themselves. Unlike previous recessions, the present one seems to have undermined the prospect of an eventual end to mass unemployment and many people now seem to be reluctant adherents to economic fatalism.

For many full employment is now an unobtainable objective. It is proposed in this article that conventional notions of *permanent full-time, life-time* employment are indeed at an end for the majority of the population in capitalist economies and that changes in the international division of labour, technology and forms of work organisation have rendered such concepts obsolete.

We are now entering a period of *jobless growth* in which the conventional assumptions of orthodox bourgeois economists are becoming increasingly unreliable as a description of events. To be young and entertain expectations of full-time, permanent, life-time employment will, in the future, be akin to stone age totem worship. The forces of production are incompatible with the existing relations of production. The next two or three decades will throw this contradiction into stark relief. It is further argued that only socialist organisation of society can provide full employment in the future.

The UK, unsurprisingly, is experiencing such change at a more rapid rate than many of its OECD partners. Of a total workforce of some 25 million in the UK, there are some six million people employed on a part-time basis and another four million or so who are unemployed. Thus around 40% of the UK's workforce, arguably, are either unemployed or underemployed. At the same time, those in work are subject to new forms of workplace subordination and

ever longer working hours. The large pool of unemployed, a reserve army of labour, serves to undermine any attempt at workplace resistance by those in employment. The consequences of this are legion in both civil society and the economy.

In order to understand fully what is going, we need to identify a number of different factors that are responsible for the current state of affairs. First of all, employment in Western Europe and the United States is perceived to be increasingly under threat from the low-wage, high-productivity area of the Pacific rim. Japan is undoubtedly the pre-eminent economic power of the present age and is increasingly exercising its hegemony in this region. The locus of global economic power has undoubtedly shifted to the East.

● *Economic conflict* ●

In the past, in the age of imperialism proper, such rivalry might well have generated international tension and war. With the globalisation of the firm, the internationalisation of the technical division of labour within multi-national enterprise and the transnationalisation of finance, it might appear that capitalism has experienced a Damascene conversion from "barbarism" to peaceful and global economic transition. Rather the role of the nation state has been over-determined. Economic conflict may erupt on the scale of regional trading blocs rather than on a national scale. Protectionism in the future will undoubtedly operate at this level rather than that of the nation state. Change and uneven development now occur on a world scale, but the sinews of the modern world economy are tied ever more tightly together. The internationalisation of the division of labour is thus a contradictory process.

Whereas the destruction of the previous political

structures has made war in Eastern Europe possible, the widening and deepening of commodity trade in Western Europe and the subsequent moves towards political confederation within the European Union have made war there unthinkable. The old imperialism and militarism of nation states are gradually giving way to a neo-imperialism of global firms. War is not now predominantly that of "nation against nation" but more the Hobbesian dictum of "all against all" within the market. The global market is one of "winners against losers" on both a sub and supra national scale. The centripetal forces of global markets are undermining the material basis of the nation state as never before. The creation of a "Fourth World" is apparent on a regional as much as an international basis. The politics of reaction and opportunism will lay claim, as ever, to the flag of nationalism and can never be discounted, especially in those areas and regions left behind by the market, or those suffering from terminal late development.

● *Regionalisation* ●

Secession and supra-nationalisation are potent forces to be reckoned with in the near future. Capitalism, nevertheless, is historically progressive in laying the foundations for a truly international economy. But it should be remembered that this can only ever be achieved in an uneven and exploitative way. As the speed of changes accelerates, the new millennia will see the supra-nationalisation of states as an attempt to regulate the globalisation of economic forces more successfully. This in turn may set in motion the desire for the "regionalisation" of control as political and economic decision makers become ever more remote from local communities. Our notion of community as a spatial category will be increasingly riven with contradiction.

The consequences for employment are thus clear. The globalisation of markets and production offers huge rewards to multinational enterprises in terms of market domination and the growth of world trade. But it is by no means clear that this growth can provide employment opportunities as in previous periods, such as in the long boom after 1945. It seems to be more a case of employment being a zero sum game in which jobs can be created in one area of the world economy only at the expense of another. New technology allows rapid productivity growth, more often than not at the expense of employment. Jobless growth is undoubtedly a feature of the modern, late 20th century capitalist economy.

Indeed, the realm of technology has opened up a veritable Pandora's Box of possibilities. The development of information technology, fibre optics

and computers is opening the way for a major restructuring of the labour process in contemporary economies. If we deal with manual labour first, it is quite clear that new technology has dramatically changed the parameters of the debate. If we look at the industries of the old Triple Alliance in the UK - steel, coal and rail - their ranks have been thinned as much by rationalisation as automation. The first two have been affected by the new international division of labour, whereas the third remains fundamentally a national concern given its necessarily national spatial structure and organisation, despite attempts to privatise and regionalise its structure.

With commodities that are traded internationally, however, the dynamics of change are clearer to see and the implications for work organisation more overtly global. In the print and motor industries, for example, fundamental changes in workplace organisation have been facilitated by new technology. The print industry has seen major restructuring both on a sub-national and international basis, in both workplace relations and ownership boundaries.

With regard to the motor industry, invariably at the cutting edge of new capitalist working practices, conventional economics first tried to describe change in this sector by reference to "flexible manufacturing systems" before moving to concepts of "lean production". Much of the innovation in this sector has come from Japanese practice, although much of this in turn was influenced in the post-war period by the ideas of the American statistician and business consultant J.E. Denning.

● *Mass production* ●

The history of the 20th century car industry was, of course heavily influenced by the ideas and managerial practice of Henry Ford. Mass production and the assembly line were pioneered by Ford with great success. The machine-pacing of work, in combination with the continuing sub-division of jobs into discrete tasks and de-skilling of craft into unskilled and semi-skilled labour marked a final decisive shift in the labour process towards capital. On the down side, mass production increased workplace alienation and de-skilling prompted possible industrial conflict and counter-reaction. It became difficult to assign individual responsibility for work done by specific workers; shop floor sabotage was not unknown at times when industrial relations deteriorated. Strikes could disrupt production immediately and cost a company millions in a short time. In addition, the research and development costs of launching a new model range

rose to billions rather than millions. The costs of fixed investment accelerated the concentration and centralisation of capital as the age of national car producers gave way to multinational and global players.

In this context, the new philosophy of flexible production preached the gospel of the survival of medium-sized producers, mass customisation rather than mass production and flexible specialisation. Yet the decade since has seen the concentration of capital increase to new heights: Rover and BMW, Saab and GM, etc. Joint ventures between the largest US and Japanese producers signify how vast are the expenditures necessary to be successful in the modern car industry.

Flexible specialisation does not seem to have ensured the survival of medium-sized producers in the motor industry. Recent reports on the possible rationalisation of Jaguar and the export of its production activities to the Far East may be a good example of things to come. After abortive attempts in the 1970s and 1980s, Ford seem to have finally made a decision to fully internationalise its activities in line with the expectations of a truly global producer.

Indeed, in terms of the labour process, there has been a convergence of managerial practices in most car firms in a desire to replicate Japanese practice. Talk of re-skilling is, however, a misleading starting point. The growth of mechatronics and computer control has required the development of sophisticated service and software engineers. But these only compose a small percentage of the overall workforce, and hardly compensates for the number of unskilled jobs lost through technological change. Moreover, the form of labour carried out by the vast majority of operatives in a modern car plant could hardly be described as skilled, though it is undoubtedly demanding.

● *Task rotation* ●

Car firms have learned from the attempts at job enrichment at Kalmar and the like that repetitive one-task jobs are exceptionally demotivating. Hence modern practice involves task rotation. Teams of four or five workers headed by a team leader can rotate tasks between themselves in order to make life a little more interesting. The tasks themselves are nevertheless de-skilled by any standards. "Empowerment" is more a doctrine for assigning responsibility to individual teams and thereby enhancing managerial control. The cycle times for jobs invariably reduce as team leaders zealous to justify their positions try to reduce the time for jobs

and tasks to ever lower levels. The "just-in-time" philosophy extends out towards relations with suppliers, accentuating the dualism of the assembler-supplier relation. As supplies arrive just in time, so too employees possess just enough time to perform their tasks! Anyone who feels assembly line operatives are being "re-skilled" and "empowered" should try working as an assembly line operative for the car firms!

It can be seen, however, that change is being implemented for contradictory reasons. The firm needs to exploit the available labour time of its own workforce. In the motor industry, the contradictory nature of this change is clear. The early infancy of the industry was based on craft production by skilled artisans and idiosyncratic owners. The contemporary industry is one in which de-skilled manual operatives and expensive and hierarchical scientific management coexist uneasily.

● *Team working* ●

The early problems of capitalist work organisation - alienation, demotivation and the difficulty of assigning individual responsibility for discrete tasks - have led capitalism at a systemic level to attempt to flatten out the hierarchical nature of the modern corporation in an attempt to reduce the salariat as much as the proletariat. Fixed and bureaucratic work practices are by their very nature inflexible. Firms need to diagnose production problems early on in the production cycle and they need to obtain the consent of their employees in order to streamline production and raise productivity.

Modern business practice has almost realised that hierarchy is inimical to rapid change. Team working is an attempt to decentralise direct responsibility to small teams and thereby make redundant the older patterns of "tall" hierarchies. It is as much a tacit recognition of the importance of labour as a strategy for control. The modern corporation has removed the direct role of the entrepreneur within the plant and is attempting, in a contradictory fashion, to obtain the consent of its employees by direct involvement in production decisions whilst raising the technical subordination of labour. In different hands, this offers the possibilities and potential for workers' self-management. In the current climate, however, it only operates behind the coercion of the assembly line and the ever-present fear of unemployment.

Modern technology offers the potential for reducing the working week and involving workers not only in the peripheral decisions but also in corporate strategy and direct election on a regular basis. Modern capitalism is employing a partial

democratisation of the workplace in order to de-layer and raise productivity. Modern socialism could extend these objectives and broaden practices to fully democratise the firm itself. The sharing of surplus labour would then be the prerogative of the workers themselves, as worker directors, rather than the legal right of a parasitic class of rentiers.

Indeed, the genesis of the team leader is a microcosm of change in the modern corporate hierarchy. Modern business practice extols the virtues of "flat hierarchies"; middle management is, at the end of the day, an unnecessary expense for the modern capitalist corporation. "De-layering" thus becomes the order of the day. Modern scientific management has taken account of the growth of intermediate strata and is increasingly applying techniques of scientific management to management itself. The personalised entrepreneurial role of "Old Wilfred Workmaster" is as far from the modern corporation as could be imagined. The management/ownership revolution is itself historicised. Ownership is now entirely depersonalised by the creation of global financial capital and markets that operate at the speed of a microchip. Fictitious capital par excellence. Management is itself overturned in the new technological age. The decentralisation of management authority to the lowest production unit, combined with the ever-present machine; computer pacing of work; the ability to employ computer technology as a managerial tool for the precise timing of tasks and cycle times every moment of the working day, mark a qualitative change in the subordination of labour. Behind the manufactured hegemony of the workplace lies the coercion of the ever-present fear of unemployment.

● *Structural change* ●

In the realm of white collar work, long the focus of the "embourgeoisement" versus "proletarianisation" debate, technological change beckons forth structural change in the labour process. In the public services, for example, older notions of professionalism and public service are being replaced by new market-based criteria. The professional autonomy of doctors, teachers and nurses is slowly being undermined by the "new managerialism". In secondary education, the creation of the national curriculum and in further education a vocational national curriculum, sets the stage for the universalisation of competition between schools and colleges.

Performance funding forces institutions to compile performance indicators. The teacher is progressively

de-skilled as tasks and attainment become routinised and the role of the teacher becomes an assessor and facilitator. The pressure to remove any professional perks – long holidays and the short working day – becomes immense. Schools become exam factories; relationships between teachers and students become alienated and depersonalised.

White collar proletarianisation is the order of the day. Managerial structures within the public services take on the jargon of the new managerialism. The new managerial élites see the destruction of the structural supports of the skills of professional groups – "producer power" – as an antithesis of the interests of consumers. Quality assurance becomes a recipe for extending managerial authority rather than a feature designed to enhance the skills of health and education practitioners.

In the longer term, developments in new technology will reinforce managerial authority in the white collar workplace. In education, the development of CD-ROM packages is still in its infancy. Once voice programmable computers are linked to professionally-produced interactive software tutorials, the days of the teaching profession as we know it will be numbered. Sophisticated video presentations by the experts of the day will be available too. The Joint Academic Network – JANET – is a first step on the road towards the farming out of academic staff outside their host institutions. The "semesterisation" of higher education is surely to be achieved soon. The possible future commercialisation of the Internet may well be interconnected with such developments. In many areas of white collar work, then, new technology will facilitate the rapid proletarianisation of "professionalism" and make rapid inroads on the numbers employed in such occupations. Many functions of the accountancy profession will no doubt be replaced by sophisticated interactive software and expert systems. The legal profession will no doubt be resistant to having legal case history freely accessible on interactive computers. Secretaries will be watching the development of the automated paperless office with some apprehension. To be a middle manager in private industry is already akin to having a walk-on part in Jurassic Park!

The world is then on the edge of a technological revolution: jobless growth in the labour process of most semi and unskilled manual work and the de-skilling and computer pacing of mental work. Virtual graphics can already simulate very basic environments, albeit in a rather crude way. In time, with increases in available processing power, computer simulations will change the nature of many careers with a visual component. Architecture

would be a ready candidate. Similarly, some fashion designers are using virtual images of catwalk models to simulate the real thing.

Nevertheless, the potential of the new technologies for the progressive democratisation of involvement and the removal of existing work-based and social hierarchies cannot be ignored. It can hardly be argued that the ranks of the professions have been conducive to collective ideals or socialist struggle. More often than not, professional organisations take action in order to protect professional standards, which many might see as indicative of petit-bourgeois ideology and the politics of reaction. The de-skilling and de-professionalisation of such groups may well have significant benefits for the wider public. Legal fees are set for lawyer' benefits and not public service. Justice cannot be afforded by the vast majority of the public. Accountants' fees are themselves hardly indicative of a civic responsibility. Dentists, trained out of the public purse, seem to opt out of the state sector with remarkable ease. Some head teachers and health service professionals, in opt out schools and trust hospitals, have been willing converts to the ideologies of the "market" on offer.

● *Collective struggle* ●

Others at best had only a contradictory consciousness, which was often inimical to a wider socialist philosophy. Where professions are being proletarianised faster than they are being privatised and commercialised, then there exists the seeds for collective struggle over public service aims. Where the privatisation and commercialisation fits in nicely with the prevalent aims and ideology of their professional groupings then their resistance is hardly motivated by public altruism *per se*!

All in all, change in such professions again illustrates the contradictions of the professional ethos. Artificial entry standards designed to keep salaries high, and restricting service to only a wealthy élite, are hostile to socialism. The fiscal crisis of the modern British state has set in motion a partial attack on public service professionals. In these areas, socialism needs to define and protect clear standards of quality of service for the public/consumer. It also needs to recognise that the freeing up of certain practices in health and education are important. Consultants' interests are not always those of the patient. Rather, they need to be managed by those with a background in the sector and feel involved in decisions for positive change rather than by the narrow dictates of rationalisation and closure.

Indeed, the socialist state needs to recognise that

left to their own devices, such professions themselves constitute a barrier to equality of opportunity. The democratisation of real access to law and financial services would be a worthy first step. The onslaught by the many on the professional privileges of the few cannot be indefinitely delayed under both capitalism as well socialism.

Future developments in computer technology, assisted by the vast data transfer potential of modern fibre optic communications systems, enable a worldwide machine pacing of both manual and conceptual labour. The present age will witness the creation of a global conceptual assembly line. Already computer-aided design has changed the nature of draughtsmanship in that attendant tasks can be processed in parallel rather than in series as before. The internal flight bookings of British Airways in the UK are increasingly carried out by personnel in India connected by satellite link. A vast amount of secretarial and administrative work could follow.

The development of intelligent fifth generation computers will allow complex conceptual skills to be recorded and encrypted in the same way today that complex manual operations, such as paint spraying in car factories, can be copied and replicated by computers and the skill in effect transferred to the companies' data memory banks.

This will not happen overnight but the generation of more powerful micro-processors will facilitate this. So too the computer marks a decisive shift in the managerial control of such operations. The time for jobs can be accurately measured and stored. Comparisons can be made immediately between different operatives. Complex mental processes and operations will be broken up into a series of de-skilled tasks. The computer can then direct work at pre-specified pace or speed involving the mental labourer in the dynamics of a conceptual assembly line. In this way, the labour time needed for different jobs will be scientifically managed on an unprecedented scale. The question is not if but when.

In all this it is easy to paint a dystopian picture of the future. Under capitalist social relations, this will almost certainly be an accurate representation. Capitalism is rapidly becoming incompatible with the full life-time employment of the majority of the population and produces inevitable structural unemployment for a significant minority of the workforce. This contradiction can only be exacerbated in the future. It is also increasingly incompatible with the maintenance of creative and rewarding employment for the majority.

Many "professional" and seemingly creative white collar jobs will either disappear or, more likely in the short term, become routinised de-skilled and

computer paced. The tyranny of the conceptual assembly line awaits the white collar professional of today. The tyranny of the dole queue awaits the unskilled labourer of yesterday.

● *European identity* ●

On the other hand, such new technologies and the progressive internationalisation of production are laying the basis for a new politics. The utopians should remember that whilst a basis is being forged for a new internationalism, public consciousness lags behind economic change. The predominant levels of civic consciousness will remain fundamentally national, although in Western Europe an embryonic pan-European consciousness is slowly being formed. In 50 years a forged European identity would be likely.

Whilst the managerial and ownership élites will forge a truly international self-interest, a shared global awareness and identity of the masses is, although closer, still far away from the realm of practical politics. The politics of the trading bloc will become increasingly pre-eminent in the early part of the next century. As capital flows over increasingly meaningless national borders at the speed of a

microcircuit, the ever-growing pools of unemployed will remain trapped within their self-imposed national boundaries. The age of 19th century imperialism began when the division of the world prevented the export of the surplus working population. The "enemy within" will be increasingly composed of the dispossessed. A global capitalist system will be unable to rid itself of such a surplus population. The reserve army is now a permanent feature of modern capitalism. One of the main tasks of the left is to involve and politically enfranchise this group. A national organisation of the unemployed is a fundamental prerequisite to the successful renaissance of the left. The unity of the left is in turn an obvious precondition for this to happen.

Only in socialist hands where property is owned by the whole community, work organised according to social need, and gains in productivity translated into reductions in the working day and week rather than unemployment for the minority, can the new forces of production be accommodated with satisfactory relations of production. In the long term, a Socialist Future is inevitable. The only questions are how and when.

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By Ray Harrington

From technological to social revolution

If any one thing characterises the world in which we live today, it is the breathtaking rate of technological development. The power and sophistication of machines in use in modern industry was inconceivable even a quarter of a century ago. Industrialists and financiers are reaping the benefits of their investment in research and development, and now this technology is producing huge savings in labour costs throughout every type of industry.

At the centre of these technological developments is the communications revolution, and in particular the ability of computers to talk to each other over large distances. Central to achieving this objective was the development of optical fibre transmission. This technology is an important breakthrough in the field of telecommunications, but it only provides us with a part of the overall picture; optical fibres are simply a medium for the transmission of data.

At the present time, all of the machines that are connected to transmission networks are electrical, and it is therefore necessary to convert electrical signals into optical signals before a transmission can take place. Without the advances in data transmission and switching technologies, optical fibres would be almost worthless. Optical fibre, as a transmission medium, was developed in the 1960s by Charles Kao and George Hockham, then working for Standard Telephones and Cables at their Harlow laboratories. But it was not until the 1990s that the manufacturing process was sufficiently refined, and parallel developments in transmission equipment had taken place, that these new technologies could be exploited in the market place.

As a transmission medium, optical fibre has a tremendous advantage over copper cables. This is because the bandwidth (capacity) that can be transmitted over a copper wire is limited to about 2 million "bits" of data (information) per second. This might sound like a lot of information, but it does not

take long to use up this bandwidth when you consider the current proliferation of fax machines and computers in industry, not to mention all the other services, such as video-conferencing, now coming on stream. By using light signals the bandwidth that can be transmitted via an optical fibre cable is, for all practical purposes, limitless. Products are currently being marketed which offer transmission rates of gigabits (10 thousand million) of information per second and transmission rates of 2 terabits (2 million million) per second have been achieved under laboratory conditions. This means that a single glass fibre, about the thickness of a human hair, is capable of replacing thousands of copper wires in a telecommunications network.

● *Piecemeal development* ●

The result is that the cost of transmission is dropping dramatically and more and more optical fibre networks are being installed around the world. The political changes that have precipitated this development are the deregulation of national telephone companies. Because the cost of setting up and operating a network has been greatly reduced, both smaller companies and foreign operators have been able to move in on the one-time monopoly markets of the national telephone companies. In the UK, North American cable television operators have taken full advantage of the legislative restrictions placed on BT to be able to offer similar leisure services, for example. But this has led to a piecemeal development of individually-owned optical fibre networks; and as BT is not able to compete with the new operators until 1998 in the new leisure communications markets, it has no economic incentive to invest in the so called "information super-highway" which is essential to develop the full potential of this new technology.

Many national PTTs (Post, Telephone and

Telegraph organisations) are still using outdated telecommunications infrastructures and they badly need upgrading on a national level. This has not proved to be an easy process: vast amounts of capital are required to upgrade the networks – far more than can be generated from general taxation. The solution, therefore, is seen as following the UK model of privatisation and raising investment capital on the world's stock exchanges. This has led to an unprecedented growth in deregulation of telecoms operators in almost every country in the world. The prospect for the telecommunications industry is mouth-watering. With some countries in the world having telephone densities as low as 8 in 100 people, the dynamic for growth in these markets is irresistible. These developments are set to suck in a large part of the available investment capital in the world, starving other areas of badly-needed investment. One estimate puts the capital investment required to finance the telecommunications industry to the end of the decade at US\$1 trillion (*Global Finance*, October 1994).

● *Processing power* ●

These new developments in communications allow the transmission of video, computer data, fax, electronic mail and voice, all at the speed of light. The benefits to corporations are many. Communications between offices on opposite sides of the globe are almost instantaneous, almost as if the people using them are working in the same building. Travel between sites, both nationally and globally, is therefore greatly reduced. Essential core personnel, such as design engineers and software engineers, do not have to be located at the point of production. Once prototypes have been developed and production processes have been established, manufacturing can be carried out anywhere in the world.

But the really important developments in technology have surely been in digital electronics and in particular the conversion of data in an analogue world into a digital form, i.e. data can be represented by the presence, or not, of a small electrical voltage. Therefore, all analogue information (telemetry, voice, video, etc.) can be represented digitally (e.g. 11110001) and transmitted over telephone cables or via wireless transmission - it is all reduced to the same thing, i.e. electrical pulses. This in turn has led to a development in the enormous processing power of the electrical devices that handle digital information (data) and in particular the microprocessor. In addition, the miniaturisation of electrical devices has

allowed many more integrated circuits to be packed into a very small area. At the same time, the amount of electrical power that these devices consume has been dramatically reduced. This means that the amount of data storage (memory) and processing power on a small machine, such as a personal computer, has been greatly increased, allowing larger and more sophisticated software programs to be written for them.

● *Convergence* ●

The development of computers, and computer software, has developed side-by-side with data transmission technology. This has been quite deliberate, and was evident in the 1980s when telecommunications equipment manufacturers were launching take-over bids for computer companies to gain expertise in those technologies; for example STC bought ICL and AT&T bought Olivetti. This convergence of technologies has led to the development of powerful network management centres that monitor the condition of equipment and can provide, remove and upgrade services to customers in minutes. These centres manage vast networks and are often located hundreds of miles away from the local telephone exchanges. They are staffed by a mere handful of personnel and the need for armies of engineers, administrators and managers to process and install customer services is eliminated. Digital electronics have no moving parts and are more reliable than mechanical devices; therefore the replacement of mechanical switches with digital switches in the telephone exchanges means large numbers of maintenance staff are no longer required.

These advances in the telecommunications industry epitomise the huge increase in the productivity of labour throughout every other industry, brought about by developments in digital electronics. We now have entire factory production lines staffed by microprocessor-controlled robots, eliminating thousands of semi-skilled jobs. Traditional crafts in the printing and publishing industry have disappeared. Even professional middle-class jobs, such as in banking and finance, have been affected. Corporations are now reaping the rewards of their investment in digital electronics that they have long been waiting for.

These advances in digital electronics represent the biggest development in the capitalist mode of production since the division of labour in early manufacturing industry and are nothing less than a modern industrial revolution, but on a much larger, global scale and more far-reaching than the last.

Whereas the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century fulfilled a social and economic need, to develop the productive forces and exploit new world markets, the modern Industrial Revolution leads to massive over-production, as the process of economic globalisation is already complete. The contradiction within this global development is the fact that the productivity of capital is increased enormously, but markets cannot be infinitely expanded to absorb the excess capacity created in the world economy. No amount of governmental intervention can overcome this fundamental contradiction of the capitalist economic system.

● *Eliminate labour* ●

The mode of production has irreversibly come into conflict with the needs of the vast majority of the world's population and is, historically speaking, an outmoded economic system. No capitalist economic recovery can create jobs at the same rate as they are being destroyed. The whole point of this new technology is to reduce the cost of human labour, or to eliminate it altogether. These developments are not limited to western economies; technology, in the process of wealth creation, is a phenomena growing in parallel throughout the world, in Europe, North and South America, Asia and the Pacific rim countries, even China and Vietnam. Singapore, for example, has one of the most modern telecommunications systems in the world.

Electronics Weekly (October 19, 1994) carried the following report on the 4th Annual European Microelectronics Forum, held in Munich. Marco Landi, President of Texas Instruments Europe, said "European semi-conductor companies have improved but they are still lagging. Not one is in the top ten...even in telecommunications, Europe's traditional stronghold, we have been losing market share...The old European strategy of supporting national champions has to end...this is a failed strategy and we must abandon it." He warned that in the most successful high-tech markets, the "tigers" of Asia, "they don't write reports about industrial problems, they tackle them". And again, in an argument for joining the EMU, quoted by Jonathan Steele in *The Guardian* (October 11, 1994), John Stevens, a Conservative MEP says "Inflation died...not because of monetarist policies but...mass computerisation, which cut industrial costs in the developed world, the collapse of carbon prices, and the deflationary impact of the new Asian economies with their cut-price exports of clothes and consumer goods."

Therefore, whilst this shows that the Asia-Pacific

rim countries can compete very effectively with the west, this is by no means a reciprocal deal. All the economic indicators show that these newly industrialised countries are a growing dynamic force in the global economy: not contributing to an overall expansion of world trade as such, but successfully competing for market share with the west. The economic development in these countries is also inequitable – on the one hand there is rapid growth in the economy, creating a relatively prosperous section of society, but on the other hand the majority of the population remains in a state of economic backwardness and they are generally excluded from the wealth creation process and derive little or no benefit from it.

They certainly do not have the spending capacity to contribute to a general increase in demand for consumer products, even if western consumer goods were available to them. The tendency of these national economies is also slanted in favour of protectionism, as in Japan, and it is difficult for western manufacturers to penetrate and exploit significant markets in these areas. We therefore have a situation of more and more consumer products entering the market place and competing with western manufactured goods on price and quality.

International finance capital is attracted to these newly industrialised countries because the return on capital investment is greater than that of the developed economies, largely because of the low level of wages and welfare benefits in comparison to the west – hence the Tories' opposition to even mildly progressive social legislation such as the EEC social contract and a minimum wage.

● *Jobs destroyed* ●

Investment capital flows out of the west to finance these developing economies, giving them greater leverage in gaining market share. This means that investment, and therefore the productivity of labour, is also growing faster than in the developed western economies, compounding and intensifying the contradictions within the world economic process.

Uninhibited by old production methods and restrictive practices, such as democratic rights, the rate of growth in these newly industrialised countries easily outstrips the great western economies. In an effort to remain competitive, companies in the west are forced to drive up the rate of exploitation and destroy jobs at an unprecedented rate – each corporation is obliged to embrace these new technologies as they cannot afford to be disadvantaged in the global marketplace.

The following quote is from *Time* magazine (October 24, 1994) which carried an article by George J. Church about the economic "recovery" in the USA: "The price of beating overseas competition has been bitterly high: wave after wave of downsizing lay-offs, wage increases limited or forgone, replacement of full-time workers by part-time or temporary hired hands. Even those who have hung on to regular jobs are often too exhausted by long hours of overtime and weekend work to enjoy the extra money they are earning."

The same story is being echoed throughout the world and is beginning to provoke a reaction from the working class. Let me quote a warning from Will Hutton of *The Guardian* (November 14, 1994): "Those who defend the current [economic] position should reflect on the likely impact on western labour markets of 10 years of Chinese and Indian exports growing in double figures on top of the existing exports from the newly industrialised countries

(NICs) if the present emphasis on deficit-cutting, high real interest rates and roll-back of the welfare state remains. It will be a murderous cocktail — and heading off protection in the US and Europe will be very difficult. These conditions are the recruiting sergeants for political extremism from both left and right."

Thus, the technological (read industrial) revolution has upset the social balance of world trade by intensifying competition between trading nations. And the fact that western capital is attracted into these new economies has profound implications for the west. The results of this ongoing economic process are mass unemployment, social deprivation, poverty, starvation and misery hitherto unseen in the history of humanity. The social forces this process unleashes leads us inexorably to an epoch of wars and revolutions in which political leadership will be a decisive factor in the eventual outcome.

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By Dr Anatoly Pavlovich Butenko

Trotsky and the alternatives for the development of post-Leninist society

Socialist Future is pleased to publish the following paper by Anatoly Butenko. It was presented by Dr Butenko to a symposium in Moscow organised by the Economics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in November 1994 on the contemporary significance of Trotsky. Dr Butenko, a professor of Political Science at Moscow State University, is a long and active opponent of Stalinism. He was the very first member of the Soviet scientific intelligentsia to say publicly, in 1987, that the Stalinist regime had not established socialism.

Trotsky was the most outstanding opponents of Stalin's bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR. His writings were totally suppressed and his name either cut out of Soviet history or vilified and distorted for seven decades. It is difficult for people in the West to grasp the continuing legacy of the demonisation of Trotsky's personality and historic struggle in the former Soviet Union. Only towards the end of perestroika and glasnost did Trotsky's writings begin to be published in his own homeland, that is to say, 1989-1990. Socialist Future believes that Dr Butenko's presentation is extremely valuable as a broadside against the new falsification of Soviet and Russian history, which followed Boris Yeltsin's takeover in 1991. In crude depictions made by writers such as Dimitry Volkogonov and Richard Pipes, Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks are held responsible for all the evils which befell Russia and the Soviet Union. As Butenko notes, such "fatalistic primitivism" has nothing to do with historical science.

We should like to add to Dr. Butenko's remarks the following points. The Stalinist bureaucracy's victory over the Left Opposition's was not just the result of a "lack of skill and support in society". The defeat of the German revolution in 1923 and the Chinese revolution in 1927 were crucial in tipping the balance of forces within the young Soviet Union towards Stalinism. We would disagree with Dr. Butenko when he suggests that Trotsky anticipated Milovan Djilas' concept of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a "new class". But we believe that this view is due to the lack of familiarity of Russian historians and economists with Trotsky's arguments against Socialist Workers Party leaders James Burnham and Max Shachtman during the 1930s.

This controversy appeared in English under the title In Defence of Marxism (New Park, 1966), but so far as the editors are aware, it has not yet been published in Russia. In a chapter entitled The ABC of materialist dialectics, Trotsky shows the inadequacy of formal logic in grasping the contradictions of processes in movement and change. Trotsky developed his analysis of the Soviet Union as living contradictory history, containing the opposites of the workers' state and the Stalinist bureaucracy. Dr. Butenko pays tribute to the decisive nature of Trotsky's concept of the Thermidorean character of the Stalin regime and how it debunks all those historical falsifiers, Stalinist and bourgeois, who lump together the Leninist period of Soviet development with the monstrosity that replaced it with the triumph of the Stalin regime.

Lev Davidovich Trotsky was above all a many-sided thinker and politician, and therefore his life and historic role must be considered in various perspectives and aspects. I have settled on one only: on the role of Trotsky in the choice of development of society after the death of V. Lenin, and on Trotsky's evaluation, connected with this, of the development of our society, as it was brought into being under the leadership of J. Stalin.

The first part of the question: on the choice in practice from the alternatives for the development of our society after the death of Lenin. I am not revealing any secret if I say that some historians, politicians and political scientists, who believe in the well-known formula "history does not know of the subjunctive case", have up until now not understood its meaning, or mistakenly consider that thinking about the alternatives for development which existed in the past, is not a subject for historical science. Precisely such a strange belief, you see, lies at the foundation of those contemporary official conceptions of Soviet history, according to which October 1917 and the coming to power of Lenin and the Bolsheviks were already predestinations of the power of Stalin, and the barbarous collectivisation combined with de-kulakisation of the early 1930s and the "Great Terror" of 1937.

Recall the well-known article by I. Klyamkin, *Which road leads to the temple?*¹ Continuing with the same fatalistic primitivism, they even contend that it was precisely October 1917 which was to be blamed for our present-day economic difficulties (and this after the successes of the NEP in the 1920s!), and that in October is to be found the first cause of the "brainless", even (in A. Solzhenitsyn's evaluation), economic reforms of those now in power.

I do not have time to analyse the sources of this widespread delusion; I only say that these sources are to be found in an elementary confusion, in identifying historical impossibility with fatal predestination, and this, to speak as they do in Odessa, is "two big differences"! And in this connection I recall that all American Sovietologists, as opposed to our historians, are well-informed about the arguments of the great American Sovietologist Robert Tucker and his talented student Stephen Cohen, to the effect that, according to Tucker, two alternatives for development fought with each other after the death of Lenin in the Soviet Union: that of Stalin or that of Trotsky. But it was precisely Cohen who, despite the opinion of his teacher, proved, that this dilemma was incomplete, that a third way was still possible - that of Bukharin.

The fact that the Stalinist way was put into effect, turning our country not into a socialist, but into a totalitarian society, was not at all a fatal predestination, but, what is more, was not without its causes! It is Stalin and his circle who must answer before history and before the people for this choice; they were the organisers and realisers of this road, and they must answer all the more because it was precisely they who stood in the way of other alternatives for development. Trotsky and Bukharin were also partly involved in this responsibility in the sense that they did not succeed and could not stand in the way of the realisation of the Stalinist road.

● *Lenin's testament* ●

I do not intend here to read the tea-leaves and decide whether it would have been better or worse for Soviet society if at its head had stood not Josef Stalin, who was defined by Trotsky as the "mediocrity of genius" of our party, but Trotsky himself. As is well known, Lenin's Testament on the "replacement" of Stalin from the post of general secretary, was not carried out, and the skill and social support both of Trotsky and (later) of Bukharin turned out to be inadequate, and therefore Soviet society, where all these alternatives collided, at the end of the day had to live through everything which was mapped out for it by that "genius of mediocrity", Stalin, and from the point of view of what happened, was just as it had to be. And to try to work out now what would have been, if..., is senseless, and this is not because it could not have been otherwise, but, much more, because the alternatives did not succeed in gathering more powerful social forces than those which supported the alternative realised by Stalin. It is not so important for the interpretation of historians, but for what has already happened, which alternatives happened earlier. For it is precisely history as it really turned out which does not know the subjunctive mood.

However, once Stalin had died, new real alternatives once more arose for Soviet society, represented by Beria, Malenkov and Khrushchev, just as after the death of Chernenko there were alternatives, such as the beginning offered by history to M. Gorbachev, and then to B. Yeltsin - this is far from fatal predestination, and only the selection, with a greater or lesser degree of probability - of concrete alternatives.

The second part of the question: how did Trotsky, having met with defeat in the competition with Stalin in determining the direction of development of Soviet society, evaluate the essence of our social and

economic change under Stalin?

As is well known, Trotsky unequivocally named the achievement of full power by Stalin a counter-revolutionary coup, Thermidor. How is that to be understood? Trotsky wrote: "Thermidor is a special form of counter-revolution, completed by installments, as it were in a few movements, and using for the first step elements of the ruling party itself – by way of regrouping it and dividing it against itself." You see, in the same way, the pushing aside from political power, after Lenin's death, of the working class and its allies, the usurpation of power by the nomenklatura, was the method of the Thermidor coup, step by step, gradually, and with the use of elements of the ruling party itself. The VKP(b) [Communist Party] continued to rule, you see, headed by Stalin, who counterposed his own nominees to the Leninist guard.

● *Results of Thermidor* ●

Even though he recognised that the political power of the working class and the toilers, established in October, had been lost as a result of the Thermidor coup, Trotsky vacillated, and was inconsistent in answering the question: which power, what class was making its appearance with the Stalinist regime?

Believing, despite everything, in the consistently socialist development of Soviet society, and seeing the growth of the socialisation of the means of production, and accepting it as socialist, Trotsky mostly argued that the actual power in the USSR under Stalin was that of the immature working class. As one of our contemporary politicians, coming to a similar conclusion to mine, V. Lipitsky, writes: "It is absolutely characteristic that L.D. Trotsky, being the implacable enemy of Stalin, and unable to say a single good word about him, savagely refuted the thesis of the class degeneration of Soviet power, which was making headway in the West in the 1930s. Protesting against the mass repressions, against the pact with Hitler, he continued to consider the USSR to be a workers' and peasants' state, and clung onto this thesis, despite even the incredulity of his closest collaborators." ² Lipitsky himself does not agree that the political system of the time of the cult of personality (and its mass repressions) was of a different social nature than in October 1917.³ He writes: "The regime of Stalin's personal power expressed the interests of precisely such a degenerated, weakly organised proletariat, which did not recognise its own possibilities. Expressed those interests decisively, and therefore enjoyed its support."⁴

However, we shall return to Trotsky. In contrast

with that position, Trotsky at least saw the change of power being brought about, even if then not completely, as precisely the establishment of the power of a new social force – the party-state bureaucracy. As early as the beginning of the 1930s, in the light of the systematisation of the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin, of the experience of the revolutionary struggles initiated by Stalinist "Marxism-Leninism", of the falsification of the views of the classics in the interests of Stalin and of his nomenklatura tendency, Trotsky stressed that this was done on a grand scale and with intentional political goals: "It is due to the workings of a profound political process," wrote Trotsky in the foreword to his book *The Stalinist School of Falsification*, "with social roots of its own. Members of the American bourgeoisie, many of whom are the descendants of British convicts, having acquired the requisite numbers of millions, feel the urge to equip themselves with a respectable genealogy, drawn preferably from the kings of Scotland. The Soviet bureaucracy, likewise, after raising itself from the revolutionary class, could not help experiencing the need, in proportion as it entrenched its independent positions, for such an ideology as would justify its exceptional position and insure it against dissatisfaction from below."⁵

● *Established rule* ●

In this judgement of Trotsky it is not only important that the "Marxism-Leninism" stuck together by Stalin was created as the ideology of the bureaucracy; this ideology vindicated "its exceptional position and insured it against dissatisfaction from below". It is much more important that Trotsky conducts a discussion of a "profound political process", and focuses precisely on the bureaucracy which had already "raised itself from the revolutionary class", that is, on its already established rule.

In brief, Trotsky, developing F. Engels, who had written about the bureaucracy as a third class alongside the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and anticipating Milovan Djilas' "new class", here writes about the bureaucracy as a new social force coming to power, ready to "entrench its independent position". In this connection I come to the following conclusion: for Trotsky, there was no special contradiction between his argument that a degenerated working class was in power in the USSR, and his conclusions about the "bureaucracy which had raised itself from the revolutionary class".

It was precisely from the backwardness of the Russian working class that the rise from it of the

bureaucracy, and the usurpation of political power by the party-state bureaucracy, became possible. It is precisely this approach of Trotsky which, in my opinion, allows us to understand better the mechanism by which the Stalinist political regime established itself, and its social nature. Above all, his idea of the Thermidorean character of the establishment of the Stalinist political regime clarifies the question why, to this day, many people do not perceive the qualitative break in the transition from Lenin to Stalin, and therefore do not detect the most important secret of Stalinism – the fact that Soviet society was deprived of the socialist direction of development.

● *Historical trap* ●

The following conclusion also follows. If Trotsky made an essential contribution to the understanding of the establishment and nature of the Stalinist political regime, it is impossible to say the same about his understanding of the nature of the social and economic system in the Soviet Union at that time. It is true that Trotsky saw that Stalin was here following the principle “the end justifies the means” (Trotsky wrote a special article on the history of this principle), but, to the extent that (this is my personal opinion) Trotsky in his own activities himself followed this principle, he could not understand its incompatibility with socialism and the fateful consequences of its employment.

Here lies the historical trap: to achieve a particular goal by any means is impossible, because for each concrete goal there is its own clearly defined aggregate of means, with which alone can the desired result be achieved. Any deviation from the limits of the means connected with the desired end, signifies the loss of the goal, and finding oneself in another, unanticipated direction of development. This is particularly important for the construction of socialism – the most humanitarian social system. Here the worthy end is only to be achieved by worthy means. To the extent that the organisers of socialist development transgressed the limits set by the humanitarian nature of socialism, and tried to construct a new society by means of force, and all

the more by turning the human being, who should be the very goal of socialism, into a means of development, and making his physical and spiritual perfection into a victim of the multiplication of productive forces, such a society had inevitably to depart from the socialist road, so that it found itself in an area without roads, as happened with us in the 1930s.

Concluding the exposition of my considerations, I want to stress that in my opinion, it was precisely Trotsky who assisted the understanding of the nature of Stalinism, and the recognition of what neither Nikita Khrushchev nor Mikhail Gorbachev wanted to recognise: that the social system which existed in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1930s was not at all deformed socialism, that is, not a system of the toilers, still less a system perverted, unstitched, distorted by the mistakes and pressure of alien class forces. No! This was an independent system of new independent forces, a new class – the party-state bureaucracy, a system which it created and does not want to lose even today! It was precisely with this system that barracks pseudo-socialism or, what is the same thing, totalitarianism of a communist colour, was created in the USSR and then repeated in other countries. Its destruction began with the “Khrushchev thaw”, continued with the “Gorbachev perestroika”, but Yeltsin’s reforms can in no way conclude its destruction and this is quite understandable: it is impossible to do it without the people and without taking into account their interests!

Translated by Bill Bowring

- 1 I. Klyamkin, *Which road leads to the temple?* *Novy Mir*, 1987, No.11, and its criticism.
- 2 V.Lipitsky. *Socialism, the promised land*. 1994, p.32. He refers to Trotsky’s USSR and war. *Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1939, No.79-80, and Trotsky’s *The twin star: Hitler:Stalin*. *Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1940, No.81.
- 3 *Ibid*, p.25
- 4 *Ibid*, p.27
- 5 Trotsky, *The Stalin school of falsification*. Nauka, Moscow, 1990, p.74

GERRY GOLD reviews *Lenin's Will: Falsified and Forbidden*
by Yuri Buranov, published by Prometheus Books, price £28.00

Filling in the blank spots in history

Amongst the most significant and enduring acts of the six-year period of perestroika and glasnost in the former Soviet Union was the opening of the secret archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to scientific historical study and to public inspection.

On November 2, 1987, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev presented a report in which he talked about the enormous theoretical potential of Lenin's last works known collectively as his political testament. Many Soviet periodicals had either already begun, tentatively, or subsequently followed Gorbachev's invitation, to examine both the content of these materials – the roots and essence of Lenin's plan for socialist construction – and the circumstances which kept them hidden from public view.

Lenin's "political testament" consists of his last letters and articles, dictated between late December, 1922, and early March, 1923. In one of the most important of these, known as his "will", Lenin gives brief character descriptions of his closest political associates and calls on the party to remove Stalin as general secretary. Although published in America in 1926, this and other documents were suppressed by the Stalinists in their struggle with the opposition led by Leon Trotsky. They were not published in the Soviet Union until 1956, and even then initially only in a magazine. It was the year of the 20th party congress, and Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in his secret speech to delegates. Khrushchev included many of Lenin's last letters in the documents for the congress.

Lenin's articles and letters were part of his preparations for the 12th party congress which took place in April 1923. They reveal his determined struggle to overcome all obstacles and propose political changes for the party and the country. During this period Lenin suffered several severe strokes leaving him physically – but by no means mentally – paralysed to a large extent.

In 1988, Evgeni Plimak's 175-page book, simply

entitled *Lenin's Political Testament*, contrasted the historical development of the Soviet Union under Stalin's direction with Lenin's proposals. Plimak's book was published by Progress and printed in the then USSR. The opening sentences of its wide-ranging assessment have today taken on an even greater urgency:

"Vladimir Lenin's last letters and articles written between December 23, 1922, and March 2, 1923 are of particular significance. This is not only because they are the last works he wrote before his death under exceptionally difficult circumstances. They are of interest also because in them Lenin expressed his opinions of the issues to which he attached 'most importance' – on the future of our revolution, the Party and its leadership, the tasks of building socialism in the country, and prospects for the world revolutionary movement."

● Access to archives ●

Since 1991, enormous resources worldwide have been devoted to suppressing further work, to declaring the Bolshevik revolution "an experiment that failed", and to discrediting anything and everything concerned with socialism. The investigation into the blank spots of history, encouraged by Gorbachev, which was intended to reveal the truth of the period for so long falsified under Stalin's direction has all but come to an end.

Access to the archives has been severely restricted, Progress Publishers has ceased to exist, and study of any kind has been subject to approval by Soros and other representatives of the interests of international finance capital. Typical of the misuse of the archives is the exhibition in the Library of Congress in Washington. It selectively juxtaposes a series of documents to "prove" that Lenin and Stalin were of the same mould, and that one was responsible for the other.

Fortunately, some historians are more scrupulous and continue to make a contribution to the work on the struggle inside the Bolshevik Party from the

early 1920s. In the USA, Prometheus Books has just published *Lenin's Will, Falsified and Forbidden, From the Secret Archives of the Former Soviet Union*. The author, Yuri A. Buranov is a professor of history and head of the Department of Research and Publication at the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Modern History Documents (the former Central Party Archives) in Moscow. Buranov's book presents a detailed analysis of the political, inner-party struggle over the dissemination of the content of these documents, from the period of their dictation by Lenin, through to the decision by the 15th Congress in 1927 to issue a limited secret edition of "the will". The same congress expelled Trotsky from the party.

● *Stalin's methods* ●

With access to the archives, Buranov's book provides a valuable contribution to our understanding of the methods used by Stalin not only to suppress Lenin's dictations over a long period, but actually to falsify some of them from the outset. It shows how Stalin from 1922 began to cut Lenin off from political activity and to isolate Lenin from Trotsky. The "will", written in late December 1922, was seen by Stalin immediately; Trotsky did not know of its existence until the spring of 1924, after Lenin's death, according to the author.

The book also uses previously unpublished material from the Left Opposition and gives an account of Trotsky's final speech in 1927 to the party's Central Committee. It also shows how at one point even Trotsky himself succumbed to Stalin's manoeuvres and intrigues. He allowed his name to go on an article written by Stalin which attacked an article published abroad covering the subject of Lenin's "will".

Whilst there has been much speculation that Stalin edited and altered Lenin's documents of the period, Buranov presents proof, from original manuscripts, that "changes were made so skilfully that, for example, to the end of his life, Lev D. Trotsky never knew he dealt with the edited, not the original, text of the first and most important of Lenin's dictations, that of December 23, 1922". The changes made were designed to weaken Trotsky's – and thereby strengthen Stalin's – standing in the party.

Buranov concludes that Stalin altered the text of the letter in a number of respects, sometime between December 24-29. The fourth paragraph of the official published version reads: "Then I intend to propose that the congress should on certain conditions invest the decisions of the State Planning Commission with legislative force, meeting, in this

respect, the wishes of Comrade Trotsky – to a certain extent and on certain conditions."

The phrase, "to a certain extent and on certain conditions", which qualifies Lenin's support for Trotsky, is, in fact, not present in the original text. The original was handwritten by Nadezhda Alliluyeva, an official of Lenin's secretariat, and Stalin's wife. Stalin had the typed version amended to qualify Lenin's support for Trotsky.

Buranov's detailed and gripping account of the ensuing four-year struggle includes an analysis of a document discovered in the archives which was circulated by the Opposition against Stalin and the policies of the Central Committee. This document was written following the reading of Lenin's "will" at the July 1926 Plenum, and Stalin's interpretation of it. The document, which is untitled, was printed on rice paper, because the opposition was obliged to use pre-revolutionary methods of underground struggle for distribution of its materials so as to avoid the attention of Stalin's secret police.

Found among the papers stolen from Trotsky in Paris, the document is based on an analysis of all the letters and articles Lenin dictated from the end of December 1922 to the spring of 1923. The Opposition drew up a programme of measures by which Lenin had planned to prevent a split brought about by the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky. These measures were: "1. To increase the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred people; 2. to think about a way of removing Comrade Stalin from his post [of general secretary]; 3. to appoint another person in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc."

● *Collective leadership* ●

Since by then the party had decided not to take Lenin's advice, and supported Stalin over Trotsky, the Opposition put forward further conclusions from its analysis of the testament. "All of Lenin's will," the document reads, "is directed against the theory of the 'individual leader' that Comrade Stalin and his faction so diligently propagandise to the party." Further, it is stated that Lenin did not wish to promote any of the "six" he described [Stalin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, or Pyatakov] to the post of general secretary. The Opposition's document emphasised that Lenin was proposing to establish conditions for a *collective* leadership.

The main text of Buranov's book culminates, in 1927 with the submission to the Politburo of "The

Project of the Platform of Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) to the Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b) [All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]. The Party Crisis and Ways of Overcoming It". This document set out the detailed Platform of the Left Opposition. It was followed by a meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission held on October 22-23, 1927 which expelled Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee, but not from the party. That took place at the congress in December.

At the Plenum, Trotsky delivered his last speech within the ranks of the Central Committee. Trotsky bravely defied Stalin's cronies and spoke out against the bureaucratic regime that was betraying the revolution of 1917. Here are some extracts from the shorthand note of the proceedings:

TROTSKY: The rudeness and disloyalty that Lenin wrote about [Stalin's] are now not just personal qualities; they have become the attributes of the ruling faction, its politics, its regime. It is not just a matter of style. The main feature of the present course is that we believe in the omnipotence of violence, even with respect to our own party (Noise).

BABUSHKIN: He reads the *Socialist Bulletin*. A petit-bourgeois in the proletarian state.

SKRYPNIK: One more article from the *Socialist Bulletin*.

VOICES: Menshevik.

TROTSKY: Through the October Revolution, our party has obtained a powerful structure for compulsion indispensable to proletarian dictatorship. The core of the dictatorship is the Central Committee of our party (Noise). Under Lenin, under Lenin's Central Committee, the organising apparatus of the party was guided by revolutionary class policy on an international scale. From the very beginning, Lenin had misgivings about Stalin becoming general secretary. "This cook will prepare only spicy dishes," Lenin once said, being in a close circle during the Tenth Party Congress. One such spicy dish has been served today under the pretext of a report about the military plot (Noise).

VOICES: Menshevik, enough!

TROTSKY: But under Lenin's leadership, under the Leninist body of the Politburo, the general secretariat played an entirely subordinate role. (Noise). The situation started to change during the time of Lenin's illness. By the selection of people through the secretariat, the apparatus

group of Stalinists acquired a self-contained character, independent of the political line. That's why Lenin, taking into account his departure from his work, gave his last piece of advice: "Dismiss Stalin, who may bring the party to a split and downfall." (Noise).

STEPANOV-SKVORTSOV: Old slander!

TALBERG: Hey, you chatterbox, boaster!

VOICES: Shame!

VOICE: Martov!

TROTSKY: (incomprehensible due to the noise and exclamations of protest) ... The party did not learn that advice in due time. The selected apparatus concealed it. And now we are facing the consequences. (Noise).

VOICE: This is from the *Socialist Bulletin*.

VOICES: Down with Trotsky! Stop talking rubbish! Such things can no longer be tolerated!

TROTSKY: That was a glaring mistake.

Violence can play a great revolutionary role, but only on one condition: if it is subordinated to the correct class policy. (Noise). Under specific historical conditions, the violence used by the Bolsheviks against the bourgeoisie, against Mensheviks, against socialist-revolutionaries, produced gigantic results. The violence of Kerensky and Tsereteli against Bolsheviks only facilitated the defeat of the conciliatory regime. Driving away those people who disagree with their course, depriving them of work, and arresting them, the ruling faction acts against its own party by every available means. (Noise).

VOICES: Down with him! What a foulness! Menshevik! A traitor! Stop listening to him! He makes a mockery of the Central Committee!

TROTSKY: A workers' party member fears to say in his own cell what he thinks; fears to vote according to his conscience. The apparatus dictatorship (noise) frightens the party, which should be representative of the proletariat dictatorship. Scaring the party, the ruling faction...

VOICES: Lie! Down with him!

Without doubt, Buranov's careful and detailed study provides important insights into the struggle within the Bolshevik Party. His book gives a powerful understanding of one of the crucial moments in the history of the 20th century. Through the documents of the time, the political struggle of real human personalities of the Bolshevik leadership emerges. The book is also a timely blow against those in Yeltsin's camp who once again try to obscure and bury historical truth.

PENNY COLE reviews *The Enemy Within: MI5, Maxwell and the Scargill Affair* by Seumas Milne, published by Verso, price £16.95 hardback

Exposed! The state plot against the miners

This important book provides powerful evidence of the nature of the British state today. Far from being a parliamentary democracy, it is rather an institutionalised and organised conspiracy against basic democratic rights, determined to crush all opposition and dissent. Nor is it confined to the Conservative establishment, its secret services and media, but also involves senior figures in the Labour Party and the TUC.

Milne has painstakingly unravelled the background to the state's secret plot against the National Union of Mineworkers and its leaders. It began before the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, reached a frenzy during the miners' strike of 1984/85, and culminated in 1990 with a campaign of lies and slanders aimed at destroying NUM president Arthur Scargill and general secretary Peter Heathfield.

He has compiled evidence of unprecedented international electronic surveillance of the movement of funds and people. Milne shows that the state placed a top level agent in the leadership of the NUM, and that even the police became disturbed by the actions of MI5 *agents provocateurs* during the course of the strike. He shows how in 1990, five years after the strike had ended, the state set out to finish the miners' union by destroying its leaders. The government wanted Scargill and Heathfield out of the way, as it finalised its plan to close a further 33 pits, on the road to privatising the remnants of the mining industry.

Milne deals comprehensively with the central allegations made against Scargill and Heathfield in Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror*. The first was that they had taken money donated to the strike fund to pay off mortgages on their homes. Since neither had a mortgage at the time, this was proved to be false within hours of being published.

Fuel was added to the flames with fresh allegations that money donated to strikers by Soviet miners,

being held in an account in Dublin had been diverted by Scargill to fund the International Miners Organisation.

Leaders of new "independent" miners' unions from the USSR at first backed this version of events. But Milne shows that the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party under Mikhail Gorbachev, had in fact decided that the money should be placed in a fund for all miners. East German and Hungarian trade union leaders from that time have confirmed this.

Milne, the labour correspondent of *The Guardian*, also lays to rest the further allegations about "Libyan gold". He shows that a trip to Libya by NUM chief executive Roger Windsor, subsequently named in parliament as an MI5 agent, was his own idea. Windsor made the initial contact through Pakistani businessman Mohammed Abassi, a close contact of at least one secret service, and volunteered to make the trip himself. Libyan officials confirm that it was Windsor who insisted on meeting with the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, and requested that their warm embrace be shown on Libyan television. *The Sunday Times* was tipped off in advance about the trip and was waiting for Windsor when he returned to Britain.

The Libyans make no secret of the fact that their industrial workers' union made a substantial donation to the strike fund. They would like to know where the money is, for Milne proves that it never reached the NUM. Windsor claimed he brought it through Heathrow in suitcases and stashed it in his home. He claims that out of this money, Scargill and Heathfield paid the fictional mortgages. Windsor did bring cash into the country in October 1984, but this is shown to have been a donation from the French trade union, the CGT.

The whole *Daily Mirror* story, echoed in Central Television's Cook Report, was a fabrication. And yet Labour leader Neil Kinnock was happy to present the three journalists who wrote it, Terry Pattinson,

Frank Thorne and Ted Oliver, with awards as "Reporters of the Year" in June 1991. In fact, the attacks on the miners and their leaders from inside the Labour and trade union bureaucracy were in the end more poisonous and damaging than those of the Tory state and its operatives.

● *Opposition to Scargill* ●

Milne explains that when the strike ended, an internal opposition to Scargill's leadership was mobilised. Foremost amongst its leaders were NUM-sponsored Labour MP Kevin Barron, along with Kim Howells, an adviser to the Welsh NUM and now also a Labour MP. The ideology of the anti-Scargill opposition was provided by the Communist Party. Industrial organiser Peter Carter wrote a pamphlet about the conduct of the strike that was so vicious that it was never published, but circulated privately.

Windsor joined this opposition, poisoning the atmosphere at the NUM's Sheffield headquarters and setting staff against Scargill and Heathfield. Then in 1989 he resigned, giving a range of conflicting reasons for his departure. By that time his activities were unravelling and the union was preparing a disciplinary case against him with a view to dismissal. Windsor knew exactly where to go next: not to the Tory *Daily Express* or *Daily Mail*, but to the Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror*, owned by corrupt tycoon Robert Maxwell. He sought out the *Mirror's* industrial correspondent Terry Pattinson, and sold him his "inside story" of the NUM for £80,000.

At the same time Scargill's former driver and friend, Jim Parker, had also sold his story to the *Mirror*, for £50,000. He backed up Windsor, as far as he could, and added some titbits of a more personally damaging kind. For example, he said Scargill had lied when he claimed to have been hit by a policeman during picketing at the Orgreave coking plant, at the height of the pitched battles there. He had just fallen down a bank, Parker said. However, at least five witnesses saw Scargill hit by a policeman's shield.

Who were these two former colleagues who now took Maxwell's ill-gotten riches? Parker's role was important, because whilst Windsor was a faceless bureaucrat to most miners, Scargill's boyhood friend commanded some respect in the union. He was seen as a physical man, not afraid to mix it on the picket line, but also as a bit of a blow-hard with an easily bruised ego. At the end of the strike the union's financial difficulties meant he was asked to take on additional duties, and it appears he was unhappy

with his situation. He claims a main reason he turned on Scargill was because he was shocked that he had taken money to pay off his mortgage. But since Scargill never had a mortgage, and since Parker was in a better position than almost anyone to know this, it seems an unlikely explanation.

Windsor joined the NUM in February 1983 as finance officer, and was rapidly promoted to chief executive officer. For the previous ten years he had worked for Public Service International, an organisation representing civil service unions from a number of countries. It had well-documented connections with both the Central Intelligence Agency and British intelligence.

Windsor and his wife Angie joined the Labour Party. He became a councillor in Hounslow, and she became active in the women's section. They posed as left-wingers and courted people with left-wing credentials, like Tony Benn MP and Rodney Bickerstaffe of the National Union of Public Employees. As soon as Windsor landed the NUM job, his wife's political activity ceased forthwith. From the first day he arrived at the NUM's Sheffield headquarters, Windsor was at the centre of a series of astonishing events, which undermined the union's finances, its legal position, and its industrial struggles. Milne catalogues these fully; a naive person might describe them as a series of mistakes and misjudgements. Others suggested they were the actions of an agent.

● *Lightman inquiry* ●

When the *Mirror* witch-hunt was launched, the anti-Scargill lobby inside the union leapt on it with glee. In parliament, Barron called for the fraud squad to investigate Scargill. And instead of rejecting the slanders out of hand, the executive of the miners' union set up a commission of inquiry, headed by Gavin Lightman QC, chairman of the Haldane Society of socialist lawyers.

Though Lightman was a long-time friend of Scargill, he soon joined in the attack. Rather than focusing on the central allegations against the miners' leaders, as he had been commissioned to do, Lightman demanded his terms of reference should include the whole financial conduct of the strike.

The conclusions he reached "amounted to an invitation to all and sundry to take legal action", Milne says. The NUM had set up a complex series of financial arrangements to protect their funds from being seized by the government's sequestrator during the strike. Windsor had been involved in this process, which was closely monitored by GCHQ.

But ignoring the fact that these arrangements were,

of necessity, made in secret, and were kept as far away from the NUM as possible, Lightman concluded any funds sent for the conduct of the strike were the property of the NUM. Scargill told Milne: "I am convinced that the security services supplied Lightman with so-called 'evidence', either directly or indirectly via a third party."

The executive set up a four-man commission to sue Scargill and Heathfield for the return of the Soviet money. As one of its members, Idwal Morgan later admitted, they were "railroaded" into it. But the legal floodgates were now opened. The fraud squad, the Inland Revenue, and the trade union certification officer, all launched investigations and legal actions against the miners' leaders.

Every one of these legal actions, including that of the executive, was dropped. Neither Scargill nor Heathfield had done anything illegal. When the last action collapsed in 1992, Heathfield retired from the miners' union. In his retirement speech at the union's 1992 conference, he said: "I had no difficulty coming to terms with the attacks of the Maxwells and the tabloid media – my class awareness and the knowledge that it was a load of codswallop meant I was able to come to terms with that. But I have to say to you, comrades, I have not come to terms with being sued by colleagues on the national executive committee – I'm sure in the course of the next few years you will learn in some detail how Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the NUM were stitched up." Stitched up indeed, so that at a crucial time for the future of the miners, their jobs and communities, the union was fighting for its life, tangled in the complex web of the conspiracy.

● *Parallel experience* ●

The revelations in *The Enemy Within* may be shocking for many readers. But for one group of socialists, the moment in July 1990 when Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* launched its witchhunt with accusations of financial corruption made by former close colleagues and co-workers of the accused, was one of immediate recognition. They had already lived through a parallel and connected experience.

In 1985, well-placed state agents mounted an operation aimed at destroying the Workers Revolutionary Party, the British section of the Trotskyist International Committee of the Fourth International. The WRP was a large party, with a daily paper, bookshops and youth training centres in all Britain's major cities, a modern printing plant in Runcorn in Cheshire, and a headquarters in Clapham, south London.

In July 1985, it emerged that in spite of its

considerable assets, the WRP had debts of £250,000 and could not pay its creditors. A commission of inquiry was set up to investigate the reasons for this crisis, under the leadership of Corin Redgrave, a member of the party's Central Committee.

It concluded that a group of leading party members had systematically and deliberately destroyed the party's financial structures and systems over a period of years. They had illegally sold and mortgaged properties, falsified figures and bank statements and lied to all the leading committees of the WRP.

● *Attacks on leaders* ●

The conspirators in the WRP claimed their actions were motivated by a combination of altruism, and fear of an unreasonable leader. This was Gerry Healy, a leader of the Trotskyist movement internationally for 40 years at that time. This was exactly the same justification used against Scargill by Windsor and Parker. Windsor wrote: "Scargill operates within the NUM through fear, intimidation and oppression. He has created enemies for his followers to spit upon and abuse ...like any dictator, he demands unswerving obedience, obscene flattery, unquestioned power and immunity from criticism."

As a smokescreen for their financial asset-stripping, the WRP conspirators smeared the 71-year-old Healy with exactly the same accusations, which they then handed to the tabloid press.

Parker had been Scargill's closest friend and confidante, but had turned, as had Healy's secretary for many years, Aileen Jennings, who disappeared without trace.

The timing of the operation against the WRP was not accidental, either. In July 1985, the party was in a unique position in relation to the miners. It had consistently supported the strike, but not from the standpoint of tail-ending the miners' militancy. It fought for its own political line, that the strike could only be won by a general strike to bring down the government, not to elect Labour under Kinnock, but as the first step in a struggle against the state.

The experience of the strike had brought many miners into agreement with this position, either wholly or partly. When the strike ended, a mood of pessimism and despair affected those who had relied on militancy. But the WRP launched a campaign of national marches, demanding the release from prison of miners jailed during the strike, and the reinstatement of all sacked miners. These won massive support, and culminated on June 30, 1985 with a rally at Alexandra Palace which was attended by 4,000 workers and young people. No European

Trotskyist party had ever been in such a strong position in relation to a key trade union. On the platform at the rally were Jack Collins, Kent NUM Secretary, Notts NUM Secretary Henry Richardson, Ann Lilburn, chair of Women Against Pit Closures, Ted Knight, leader of rate-capped Lambeth Council, Marsha Marshall, of Barnsley Womens Action Group, Mick Power, leader of the printworkers union at the *Daily Mail*, and Mark Jones, father of Gareth Jones, a young miner killed during the strike. Also on the platform was Anne Scargill, leading member of Women Against Pit Closures and the wife of the NUM President. The conspirators struck the very next day.

Those members of the WRP who drew from this the conclusion that the party had been subjected to a state attack were laughed at and denounced as paranoid by every so-called left-winger in Britain. This book shows that there is a pattern to the state's activities, and provides further proof that the miners got what the WRP had already had.

What is most remarkable is that none of these parallels have been noted by Corin Redgrave, who played such an important role in exposing the conspiracy. In reviewing Milne's book in the *Marxist Monthly*, magazine of the pro-Yeltsin Marxist Party, he makes absolutely no mention of the split in the WRP. Either he has a poor memory, or he prefers not to call attention to his past.

Redgrave would not want it known that under his direction, a court action aimed at exposing the conspiracy was abandoned; or that in secret Redgrave sanctioned the sale of the major remaining asset of the old WRP, an education centre in Derbyshire.

● *Rimington's rise* ●

What the book describes should not be dismissed simply as the history of a one-off action. Those who carried out Thatcher's instructions continue to prosper under John Major. Stella Rimington was head of F-Branch, which ran the MI5 operation against the NUM, and under Major has risen to director of the agency. Lightman is a judge. Windsor is living in some comfort in France. Barron was expelled from the NUM, but still has his comfortable MP's salary. Neil Kinnock is a European Commissioner and his wife a Euro-MP, earning nearly a quarter of a million pounds a year between them.

In Arthur Scargill's position, one would certainly be asking not only who was Windsor, but more importantly, who is his replacement. Before Windsor joined the NUM he applied for a job with the Civil

and Public Services Association. Ray Alderson, a veteran left-winger on the CPSA executive found his connections suspect and blocked his appointment. When he heard the NUM was about to take him on, he rang Scargill to warn him. But Windsor had given Benn and Bickerstaffe as his references, so Scargill said he "checked out".

Warnings that there was a highly-placed agent in the NUM continued to reach Scargill. A retired senior CIA operative, Miles Copeland, contacted him in 1990 saying that whilst he did not agree with Scargill on anything, he did not approve of what was being done to him. The Soviet spy Michael Bettany, who was caught by the British, asked his solicitor to pass a warning to Scargill that one of the union's top people was working for MI5.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the conclusion to be drawn from Milne's investigations is that the state was able to fulfill its plan to destroy the nationalised mining industry and privatise the remainder because of its secret activities alone.

Even though the state had at its disposal an unprecedented commitment of money and personnel, the miners were able to continue the fight for their jobs, right up to the announcement by Michael Heseltine of 33 pit closures at the end of 1992. In spite of the campaign against him, Scargill was able to lead two marches through London in one week, with a quarter of a million people on each.

But the NUM was consistently left isolated by the rest of the trade union movement. The most effective part of the state's conspiracy in the final analysis was the ideological control it has of the senior representatives of the working class, the trade union leaders and the TUC. In Arthur Scargill the NUM was fortunate in having a class-conscious leader who had always kept these forces at arms length. But in the end, the miners could not defeat the capitalist state on their own.

The handful of surviving pits were handed over to private owners at midnight on New Year's Eve, an event symbolising the end of the post-war period of reforms. Tony Blair's New Labour has made it clear it will not renationalise the pits. The simple truth is that the only way the mining industry in Britain can be revived is by the miners taking it back from the private owners and running it themselves.

But to do this would first require the defeat of the state conspiracy in all its forms and replacing it with a workers' socialist government. The miners, with all their militancy, could not do it alone. With a conscious revolutionary leadership, completely independent of all the Labour and TUC bureaucracies, the working class can achieve it.

JOHN EDEN reviews *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century: 1914-1991*
by Eric Hobsbawm, published by Michael Joseph, price £20

Hobsbawm's age of Stalinism

Historian Eric Hobsbawm, who spent many decades in the British Communist Party, seeks to show, in these 585 pages, the crisis facing humanity as it approaches the new millennium. He traces the development of society from the assassination on June 28, 1914 of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, which was the catalyst for World War I, to the present day.

This book may increase the reader's knowledge of many facts and events, but not his or her understanding of the historical process itself. The eclectic can say many things about events in history, and Hobsbawm does, but he cannot come to a conclusion about what should be done about them. It is from this standpoint that the book should be understood. Hobsbawm as an apologist for Stalinism and as a practising eclectic cannot be formally separated: one interpenetrates the other. However, this review will divide Hobsbawm's contribution into these two tendencies, to help understand his method.

Hobsbawm's politics become clear in his support for the Stalinist line on the unreadiness of certain countries for the taking of power by the working class. The case in question here is the Chinese Revolution of 1927. The line of the Comintern under Stalin's direction was that the Chinese Communist Party should enter an alliance under the leadership of the pro-bourgeois Kuomintang. This was the "stages" theory of socialism: first capitalism (a Kuomintang government), and then the struggle for socialism. Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union opposed this.

Trotsky warned that this political line would be disastrous for the Chinese and the world revolution. The Communists, although fighting alongside the Kuomintang, should nevertheless remain independent of them, and turn the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution. Hobsbawm never mentions Trotsky's position, although he clearly knows it well. The Kuomintang duly turned on the Communists in 1927 and murdered many hundreds of thousands of its members and supporters. What does Hobsbawm say about this period after the failure of the revolution in the west to come to the aid of Soviet Russia? Hobsbawm writes in his chapter *The World Revolution*: "Indeed from 1920 to 1927, the hopes of world revolution seemed to rest on the Chinese revolution, advancing under the Kuomintang..." (p70)

Here Hobsbawm deliberately confuses the reader by equating the world revolution espoused by Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolsheviks with the bourgeois revolution of the Kuomintang, then the party of national liberation. Hobsbawm goes on to try and prove that the slaughter of the Communists by the leader of the Kuomintang, General Chiang Kai-shek, proved that the time for socialist revolution in China and the East was not yet ripe, rather than in practice the result of Stalin's wrong policy: "Yet even this proof [the slaughter of the Communists] that even the East was not ripe for October [the world revolution], the promise of Asia could not conceal the failure of revolution in the West." (p70).

The Spanish Revolution of 1931-1939 also reveals Hobsbawm's cringing support for Stalinism and liberal-bourgeois democracy. Hobsbawm defends

the crushing of the revolution. He does not state his own opposition to the defeat of the Spanish revolution, because he supported the Stalinist line. In his chapter *Against the Common Enemy* (i.e. Fascism) p.162, he writes: "Both the Spanish government and, more to the point, the Communists who were increasingly influential in its affairs, insisted that the Social Revolution was not their object, and indeed, visibly did what they could to control and reverse it, to the horror of revolutionary enthusiasts. Revolution, both insisted was not the issue: the defence of democracy was."

There is no mention by Hobsbawm that the Stalinists controlled and reversed it, by murdering countless revolutionaries, using the Stalinist secret police, the NKVD. Hobsbawm knows this, but keeps quiet, so as not to offend some of his "liberal" readers. He does not want people to know that he supported the strangulation of the Spanish Revolution.

● *Stalin's terror* ●

On the Moscow trials and the frame-up and murder of the Old Bolsheviks, Lenin's closest collaborators, by Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy, Hobsbawm writes: "Indeed it has been seriously suggested that the Great Terror of the later 1930s was Stalin's desperate method to 'overcome the bureaucratic maze and its skilful dodging of most government controls and injunctions', or at least to prevent it from taking over as an ossified ruling class, as was eventually to happen under Brezhnev." (p.384).

Again, Hobsbawm does not state his own position here on these murderous trials, but in the 1930s his party in Britain, the CPGB, enthusiastically supported the executions of the Bolshevik leaders. In fact, the Stalinist point of view, which Hobsbawm repeats, was the complete opposite: Stalin was made into a "socialist hero". Stalin carried out these frame-ups to consolidate his position and that of the bureaucracy, of which he was the spokesman, against the leaders of October, to try and crush the working class which opposed the bureaucracy and its privileges.

Now let us take Hobsbawm, the eclectic academic. Eclecticism is the combining of given facts without drawing a conclusion. Gerry Healy, the leader of the Trotskyist movement internationally for over 40 years, described the effects of such a method: "The conscious practice of eclecticism as a method has been responsible for considerable disorientation within the international workers movement: it consists in the co-ordination of left words and

phrases as a subjective presentation of policies with a pre-selected bourgeois ideological content." (The paupers' broth of eclecticism, *Marxist Monthly*, Vol 2 No.6, June 1989)

These sentences adequately portray Hobsbawm's life and his present book: according to him there simply is no future for the working class and the prospect of social revolution.

There are two further problems confronting the world working class today, which Hobsbawm formally describes, but does not answer. They are at present burning issues and interlinked: the right of self-determination of nations and whether there was an alternative to the Stalinist system of "really existing socialism".

On the first question, Hobsbawm writing about the rise of xenophobia, particularly in Europe, says: "To reject an unacceptable present [xenophobia] is not necessarily to formulate, let alone to provide a solution to its problems. Indeed, the closest thing to a political programme reflecting such an approach, the Wilsonian-Leninist 'right to national self-determination' for supposedly homogeneous ethnic-linguistic cultural 'nations', was patently being reduced to a savage and tragic absurdity as the new millennium approached. In the early 1990s, perhaps for the first time, rational observers irrespective of politics (other than those of some specific group of nationalist activism) began publicly to propose the abandonment of the 'right of self-determination'."

What is Hobsbawm's view on the "right to self-determination of nations"? He does not give one. He simply comments as a "participant observer", in his own words. He lets other "rational observers" put across their own point of view, which is really his own. For Hobsbawm, the right to self-determination is no longer valid. For Hobsbawm, the right to self-determination is the one proposed by Stalin: you have this right in words but not in practice. This view has led to war in the Balkans and the present conflict in Chechnya.

● *Was there an alternative?* ●

On the second question – was there an alternative to the regime in the USSR under Stalin? – Hobsbawm alludes to the barbaric way that Stalinism created "really existing socialism", where millions died of hunger and in forced labour camps. His conclusion is that socialism cannot be built. This is the content of the last two paragraphs of the chapter, *The end of socialism* (page 498-499): "The tragedy of the October Revolution was precisely that it could only produce its kind of ruthless, brutal, command socialism."

Oskar Lange, a Polish Socialist economist, from his death bed spoke to Hobsbawm during the 1930s. This is Hobsbawm's description of what he said: "If I had been in Russia in the 1920s, I would have been a Bukharinite gradualist. If I had advised on Soviet industrialisation, I would have recommended a more flexible and limited set of targets, as indeed the able Russian planners did. And yet, as I think back, I ask myself, again and again: was there an alternative to the indiscriminate, brutal, basically unplanned rush forward of the first Five-Year Plan? I wish I could say there was, but I cannot. I cannot find an answer." (pages 498-499)

Hobsbawm remains silent on any alternative. He lets a second person transmit his thoughts. He supported the "brutal" Stalinist method because he was a Stalinist. It was in fact Stalin's support for

Bukharin's economic policies of the late 1920s that led directly to the brutal implementation of the first five-year plan. Bukharin's policy of letting the kulak peasant get rich as a way of stimulating the economy was opposed by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Trotsky saw the danger from a widening of the gap between country and cities, at the expense of the urban workers. It could, he warned, lead to the reintroduction of capitalism.

Hobsbawm faithfully served Stalinism as an apologist for all the crimes against the working class and oppressed peoples. This book's purpose is to continue that role in another guise, to "prove" that Marxism is "flawed", socialism is impossible and that bourgeois liberal democracy is the only alternative. That is why this book was received with acclaim in the bourgeois press and by ex-Marxists

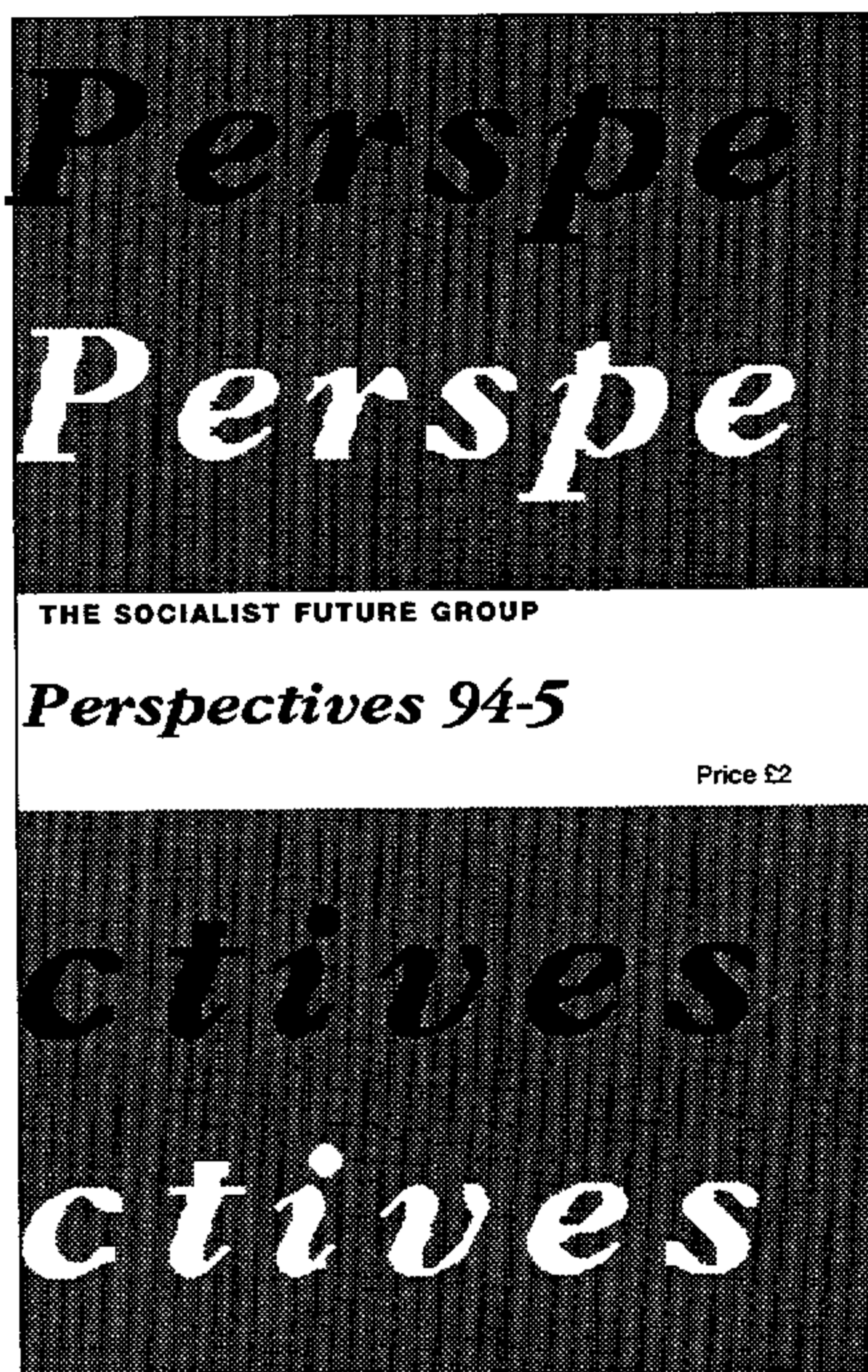
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