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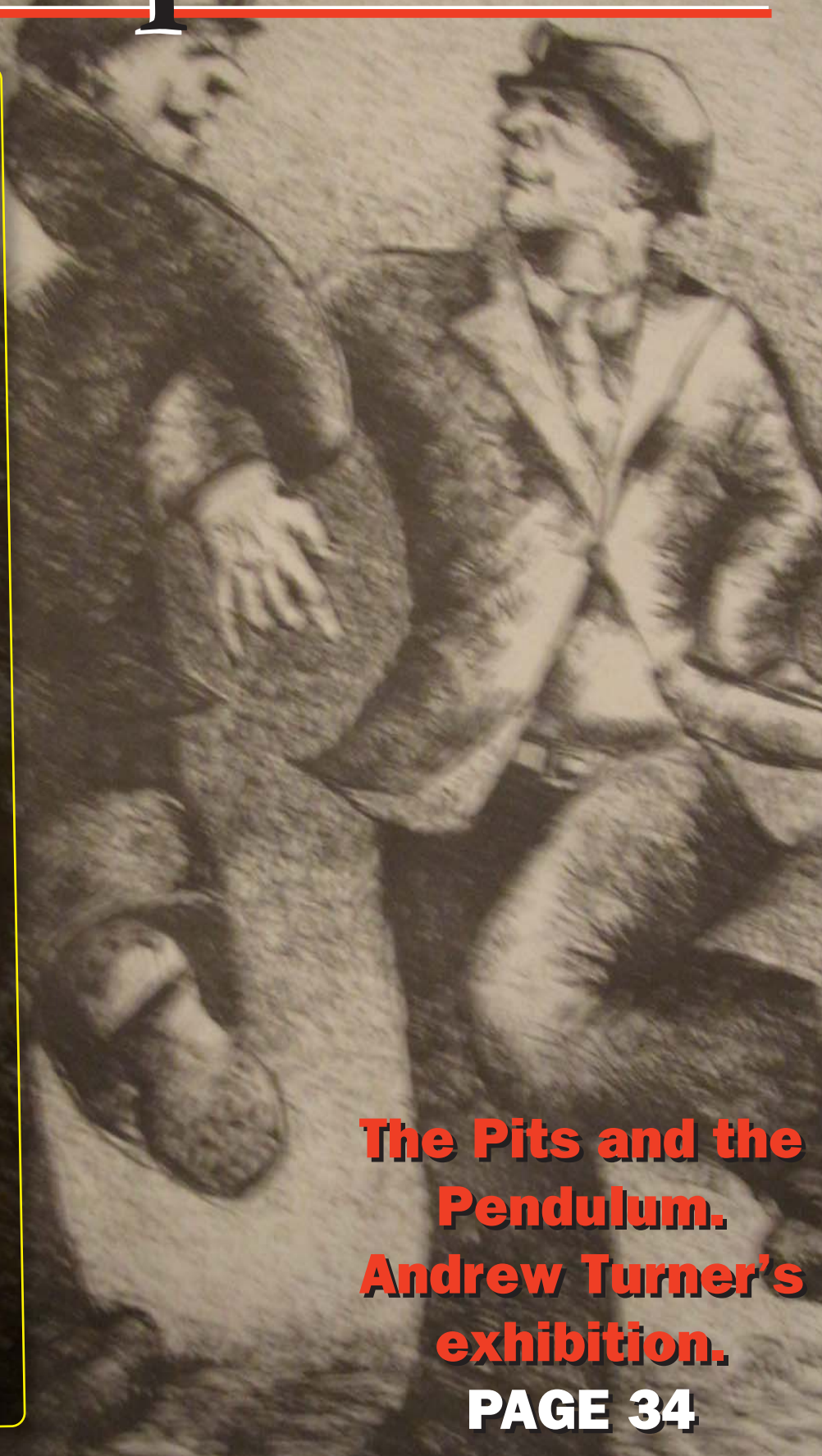
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The Socialist Correspondent

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Arab struggles

As Alex Davidson writes, "It was wonderful to see the peoples of the Arab world rise up against their dictatorial rulers/monarchs and their military machines. With great bravery they showed that they were unwilling to be ruled in the way they have suffered for decades."

However, as the West is dependent on Middle Eastern oil for consumption and huge profits and, the Suez Canal is a crucial trade and military route then Imperialism will do everything, including military action, to maintain control of the region.

The question Alex Davidson poses: "Will Imperialism retain its stranglehold on the region albeit with new puppets or will the people manage to break the centuries old exploitative grip?" has a considerable bearing for the rest of the world, not least the Palestinian people.

US-China Tensions

As China increasingly becomes a world power, challenging the power of the USA, the tensions between the two countries grow.

Alex Davidson, in the context of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation's negotiations, examines some of the points of tension including the US pressure on China to revalue the yuan and issues between China and Japan in which the US takes a very keen interest.

Austerity in Britain

In Britain the Coalition government's austerity programme is beginning to bite. Matthew D'Ancona in the London Evening Standard (10 January 2011) wrote, "the Prime Minister has already delivered an eye-wateringly tight plan for fiscal recovery, a dramatic blueprint for welfare reform and radical strategies for schools, higher education and the NHS."

There is plenty for true Conserva-



Former workhouse

Commentary

tives to celebrate. Indeed, partnership with the Lib-Dems has arguably given the Tory party political cover to be much more ambitious and robust than if it were governing alone.

Deserving and Undeserving

As Tom Burden notes in his article, "The "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor", the Coalition government's campaign is "part of a general ideological attack on the Welfare State."

Burden explores the notion of a distinction between two types of recipients of state benefits and services, the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' and traces the origins of the distinction back to the Tudors and the 16th century. His argument is that these distinctions are used to assist in the conditions required for the maintenance of capitalism: keeping wages down; maintaining order; and, supporting capitalist values and ideas.

Housing

Part of the attack on the Welfare State is the continuing attack on social housing, which has been unrelenting since Mrs Thatcher's introduction of the 'Right-to-Buy' council housing. As Pat Turnbull reports in her article, "Housing Benefit: the baleful truth", there is a dire shortage of social housing.

The changes to Housing Benefit and security of tenure now being introduced by the Tory-Lib Dem government will make matters worse. As Pat points out, it is not the poor who do well out of housing benefit but private landlords. Private landlords pocketed £8.5 billion in 2010 through housing benefit.

Israel and Apartheid

Ronnie Kasrils writing on the parallels between today's Israel and the apartheid regime of South Africa reminds us of 1948, an annus horribilis for both black South Africans and Palestinians.

In that year, in South Africa the election of an Afrikaner government, with an uncompromising and militant programme, introduced full-blooded apartheid. "For Palestinians, 1948 ushered in a truly catastrophic era (the Nakba)...resulting in expulsion from a

land they had inhabited for centuries, and their replacement by an exclusivist Jewish state." Kasrils examines the parallels between the two states and their collaboration during the years of apartheid.

He charges that, "Israel is as guilty in international and humanitarian law as the apartheid regime once was. Israel's illegal conquest and occupation...represented by its monstrous apartheid wall and the relentless expansion of its illegal settlement...has reduced the West Bank...to a mere 12% of the land that formerly constituted Palestine." The infamous Bantustan system under apartheid allocated 13% of the land to its indigenous people. Kasrils argues that, the CST (Colonialism of a Special Type) thesis provides the Palestinian national liberation movement with an inspirational analogy as well as potential strategy and tactics.

Turner Exhibition

It was most appropriate that Andrew Turner's retrospective exhibition, "The Pits and the Pendulum", should be hosted by the National Coal Mining Museum.



Turner's work covering a history of miners' lives and struggles is unsurpassed as a visual comment and history of the 20th century. His banners for many unions, representing their history of struggle, are also great works of art.

His "Ballads Moribundus", is a wonderful series depicting the beginning and, postulating, the end of capitalism. The drawing of two miners jiggling to the caption, "The Nation Mourns the Death of Churchill", sums up Turner's art.

Arab struggles will affect the world

The Arab uprisings have taken many by surprise. It was wonderful to see the peoples of the Arab world rise up against their dictatorial rulers and monarchs and their military machines.

ALEX DAVIDSON reflects on the recent struggles across the Middle East and on the region's strategic importance for US and British imperialism.

With great bravery they showed that they were unwilling to be ruled in the way they have suffered for decades.

First Tunisia, then Egypt and then across the Arab world. The West was deeply concerned and, initially, reacted ambivalently. They were much happier when they they could unequivocally take the side of the rebels in Libya. That

country, led by Gadaafi, had for too long been independently minded. They prefer tame autocrats.

The outcome of this human earthquake in the Middle East will take some time to play out.

Will Imperialism retain its stranglehold on the region albeit with new puppets or will the people manage to break

the centuries old exploitative grip?

If some of the countries break the grip of their American (and UK) backed rulers then as well as it being better for the people of those countries it could open up new prospects for the Palestinian people.

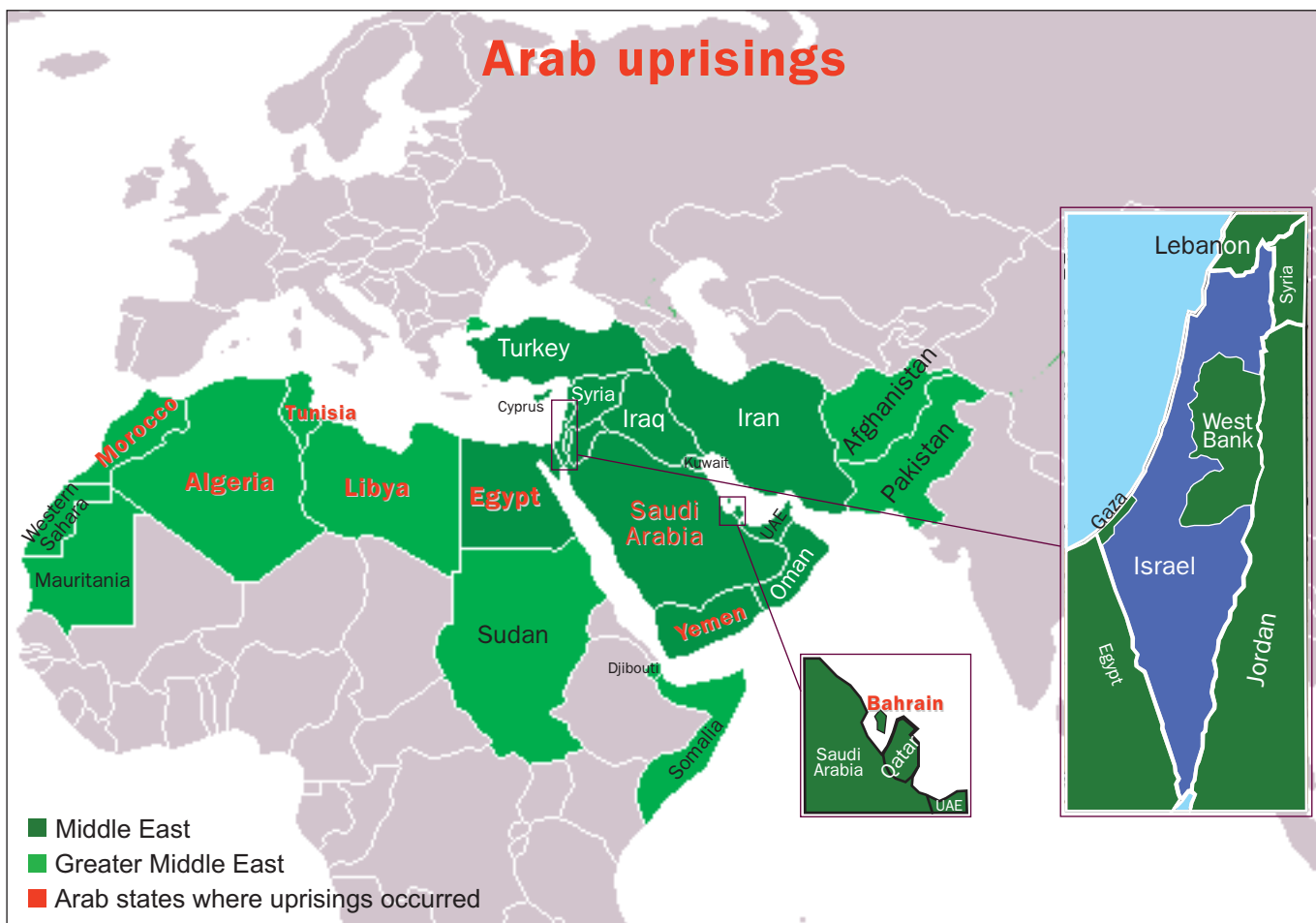
On the other hand, some powerful elements in the Imperialist countries are itching to intervene and possibly occupy other countries in the Middle East.

The outcome of this struggle has a considerable bearing for the rest of the world.

Key strategic importance

The Middle East is of key strategic importance. The US regards the region as of "vital national interest" to the US.

The Suez Canal is a crucial trade and





1969: The leader of the Libyan revolution, Muammar Gaddafi with President Nasser of Egypt.

military route and the West is dependent on the region's oil. The US, Britain and western capitalism for these reasons have a great interest in developments in the Middle East.

The West would have preferred the Arab dictators, who were friendly to the West and who had been tamed into accepting Israel, to have remained in power. However, when that proved impossible, they quickly moved to welcoming the peoples' demands for democracy. The capitalist west may have lost some of their best friends (Ben Ali and Mubarak) but they do not intend to lose control of the region.

Since the Palestinians were driven out of their homeland by the Zionists in the Nakba of 1948 the Middle East has been increasingly unstable.

When Egypt's President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in 1956 it led to an invasion by Israel, France and Britain. However, without the support of the USA it collapsed and saw the end of

Britain's position as the pre-eminent colonial power in the Middle East. The US took on that mantle and has, in the decades since, particularly after the oil crisis of 1974, worked hard to retain hegemony over the whole region. The US uses Israel and Israel uses the US.

For 30 years Mubarak ruled Egypt autocratically, kept a 'cold peace' with Israel (ie a sell-out of the Palestinians) and remained firmly in the American pocket.

The Egyptian military are US trained and, at a senior level, have very close connections with the US top brass. When protests first broke out, the Army Chief of Staff, Lt General Sami Enan, was called twice by the US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen to discuss the unrest and help manage the crisis.

The army was first thrust into play when the country's 1.8 million police force in effect collapsed. For a period the Egyptian army's High Command

was divided over how to deal with the burgeoning protest movement following the disastrous intervention by the police, and the army acted ambivalently.

Finally, however, when it did become clear that Mubarak had to depart they took control. Promising a new constitution and elections within six months they called for a return to work and an end to the occupation of Tahrir Square.

The next period will be crucial in determining which way Egypt goes. There will be many agencies involved including external agencies.

The protest movement having achieved one of its goals (the removal of Mubarak and some of his loyalists in senior positions in newspapers, universities, unions; even the police have returned to the streets, striking to demand the removal of the senior officers they blame for their disgrace) will now be faced with huge pressures on its unity as to the way ahead.

External intervention

And, there will be considerable external intervention. David Cameron, representing British Imperialism, was the first world leader on the scene, promising support to the military and the interim government.

Despite Britain's special relationship with the US, Cameron's visit indicates Britain's long term aim to regain some of its position in the Middle East. And, the embarrassingly Cameron-Hague botched mission to meet the rebels, further indicated Britain's very serious interest in Libya. However, the United States will not be standing idly by waiting to see what happens. Given the US closeness to the Egyptian military and their numerous agents on the ground they will be intervening every step of the way.

President Obama's handling of the situation received much criticism from right-wing sources. Senior Republicans, some harbouring presidential ambitions, like Newt Gingrich, said the administration had been "amateurish"; John Bolton (former US Ambassador to the UN) called the White House "hesitant, inconsistent, confused and just plain wrong".

Others have also been critical, Newsweek's front page headline (21 February 2011) was "Egypt: how Obama blew it" and in the lead article, Niall Ferguson, the British historian, declared, that the president had presided over "a foreign policy debacle". Michael Schuer, the former head of CIA operations against al-Qaeda, claimed that Osama bin Laden would be doing a "happy dance" at the spectacle of

America pulling down a loyal ally. The Israelis took the same view.

On the other hand, as the Economist (18 February 2011), in its Lexington column, concluded, "What counts is the result, and this has been no disaster. America remains on good terms with Egypt's military masters without having alienated its youthful pro-democracy demonstrators – a neat balancing act whether by luck or design."

The US (like the UK) is constantly playing a wider balancing act between support for Israel on the one hand, and maintaining positive relations with the Arab world on the other.

Israel

US and British support for Israel is very deep. As the British Governor of Jerusalem said in 1937, what was required was "a little loyal Jewish Ulster amidst a sea of potentially hostile Arabism." Israel became a bridgehead for Imperialism in the Middle East as the west became increasingly dependent on the region's oil for profits as well as consumption. And, of course Israel is totally dependent on the US.

Israel's reaction to events in Egypt is instructive. During the early days of unrest the recurrent refrain was that 'Egypt is not Tunisia'. Israeli commentators assured their readers that the security apparatus in Egypt was loyal to the regime and that consequently there was little if any chance that Hosni Mubarak's government would fall.

Once it became clear that this line of analysis was erroneous most of these commentators followed Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's lead and criticised President Barack Obama's Administration for not supporting Mubarak. The Foreign News editor of one TV channel noted: "The fact that the White House is permitting the protests is reason for worry." The prominent political analyst Ben Kaspi expressed his longing for President George W Bush:

"We remember 2003 when George

Bush invaded and took over Iraq with a sense of yearning. Libya immediately changed course and allied itself with the West. Iran suspended its military nuclear program. Arafat was harnessed. Syria shook with fear. Not that the invasion of Iraq was a wise move (not at all, Iran is the real problem, not Iraq), but in the Middle East whoever does not walk around with a big bat in his hand receives the bat on his head."

The peace between Israel and Egypt was made between leaders, not peoples. That hardly mattered (to Israel) when the people of Egypt, like other Arabs, had no voice. But it could well matter once they find one.

Bahrain

Bahrain is also seeing protests against the dictatorial rule of pro-US King Hamed bin Isa al-Khalifa. The demands by a grouping of seven parties, backed by the trade union confederation, include the freeing of all political prisoners, constitutional changes and electoral reform.

Bahrain's king declared a "State of Emergency" a day after a Saudi Arabian-led 1000 strong military force arrived to help prop up the US-backed regime.

The US and Britain are also concerned about these pro-democracy developments. Bahrain is the home for the US Fifth Fleet. It is also the command centre for British operations in the Middle East.

Yemen

The right wing Center for a New American Security (CNAS) stated, "The consequences of instability in Yemen reach far beyond this troubled land, and pose serious challenges to vital US interests...A destabilised Arabian Peninsula would shatter regional security, disrupt trade routes and obstruct access to fossil fuels...Yemen...is strategically positioned adjacent to the vital sea lanes from the Middle East to Europe via the Suez Canal."

The Bab el-Mandab seaway between Yemen, Djibouti and Eritrea connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. According to the US Government Energy Information Agency: "closure of the Bab el Mandab could keep tankers from the Persian Gulf from reaching the Suez Canal/Sumed pipeline complex, diverting them around the southern tip of Africa.

The Strait of Bab el-Mandab is a choke point between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, and a strategic link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean." Britain has long recognised the strategic importance of Yemen, and its port of Aden. It was under British colonial rule from 1839 until 1967.i

Military intervention ?

Since the US intervention in Yemen following the attempted blowing up of a US airliner on Christmas Day 2009 pressure has been growing for full-scale military intervention. Democratic senator Joe Lieberman called on the administration "to pre-emptively curb terrorism in Yemen", Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, has demanded the option of air and missile attacks and Hillary Clinton has described the instability in Yemen as a "global threat."

The recent pro-democracy protests in Yemen has further worried the White House. US neo-cons have also urged US intervention in Libya. On 25 February 2011 in an Appeal, in the form of a letter signed by 40 policy analysts, including more than a dozen former senior officials who served under George W Bush, organised and released by the Foreign Policy Initiative, called for a "no-fly zone" and additional military intervention.

The neo-cons have been joined by some US liberals and "human rights activists" in the call for military action against Gadaafi. This call for military intervention has been echoed in Britain.

The Arab Uprising, which has threatened the dictatorial regimes in many countries in the Middle East, is seen by the US, Britain and the other western capitalist countries as potentially a threat to their "vital interests". Israel is also worried that a democratic Arab world would lend more support to the Palestinian people's struggle.

So, the Arab peoples have a considerable array of powerful forces against them. However, it is also clear that the vast mass of the peoples in the Arab world are no longer willing to live in the old way. The outcome of this unfolding mammoth struggle will affect the whole world.



Former US President, George W Bush; former Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak; and Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Middle East and the supply of oil

The capitalist west is very dependent on oil. European Union states, with the exception of Britain, import all their oil as does Japan. Most of the oil imports come from the Middle East. America is overwhelmingly the largest consumer of oil and some 30% is imported from the Middle East.

ALEX DAVIDSON examines the west's past and present dependency on oil from the Middle East.

Is it any wonder that there is so much concern in the west about the Arab uprisings? Huge profits are at stake.

Oil and history

The modern history of the Middle East is dominated by oil.

British Imperialism has a very long connection with the Middle East and its oil. T.E. Lawrence, known as "Lawrence of Arabia", commented in October 1913: "When England launched the Queen Elizabeth, first of the cruisers to burn crude oil, I knew then that it was up to me to concern myself with the supply of oil for my country and not with archaeology."

Prior, even to Lawrence's comments, Britain had gained the first oil concern in Iran in 1901, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had been formed in 1908. In 1914, Churchill on behalf of the British Government had bought £2 million of Anglo Persian shares, which became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and later British Petroleum (BP).

BP had complete control of Iranian oil. By 1923, BP did not need to raise any more outside capital and it had a world wide market which it serviced with a fleet of tankers.

Another individual with a deep interest in Iranian oil was a Scotsman, Sir William Fraser. Sir William had been born into oil. He had inherited from his father the biggest company in the then prosperous Scottish oil-shale industry and later merged it with 6 other companies into BP.

He became a Director of BP in 1923. In 1933 he helped to negotiate the new agreement drawn up with Iran that year. He became deputy Chairman of BP in 1928 and Chairman in 1941.

Oil is very big business

Big Five Oil Company Profits (\$billions) 2001-2008

Company	2001-2008
BP	125.2
Chevron	98.9
Conoco Phillips	38.2
ExxonMobil	235.2
Shell	158.3
Total for period	655.8

The 2008 Big Oil profits brought the grand total under the two terms of the Bush administration to \$656 billion, that is nearly two-thirds of a trillion dollars.

How do the big oil companies compare to the biggest financial institutions (see tables below for US companies below):

Company	2007 Net Income
JPMorgan Chase	\$15.4 billion
Bank of America	\$14.8 billion
Goldman Sachs	\$11.4 billion
AIG	\$6.2 billion
Citigroup	\$3.6 billion
Total	\$51.4 billion

How about Big Oil? Here's the net income of the largest five American-based oil companies for 2007:

Company	2007 Net Income
ExxonMobil	\$40.6 billion
Chevron	\$18.7 billion
ConocoPhillips	\$11.9 billion
Valero	\$5.2 billion
Marathon Oil	\$4.0 billion
Total	\$80.4 billion

British Petroleum emerged after the war at the centre of Middle Eastern oil and of immense importance to Britain. It had spread from its original territories in Iran and Iraq down the Persian Gulf to Kuwait. Iran, however, remained the jewel in BP's crown. After the war, BP regularly declared dividends of 30%, much of it coming from Iran, for which it held the single concession, a unique feature among all the oil-producing countries.

CIA overthrow of Mossadeq

In April 1951 the Iranian Parliament elected Dr Mossadeq as Prime Minister and voted for the seizure of BP's oilfields. This act was a challenge to British Imperialism's world authority.

The British Labour government considered whether to intervene militarily. HMS Mauritius was despatched to patrol off the coast and a parachute brigade was prepared. In September the cabinet meeting ruled out overt military force.

The Foreign Office was rather bitter about the problem blaming BP and particularly Sir William Fraser for mishandling the issue. As Kenneth Younger in a memorandum to the Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, wrote: "Sir William Fraser is no doubt a very good businessman in the narrow sense but on every occasion when I have seen him, either at Ministerial meetings or elsewhere during these months, he has struck me as a thoroughly second-rate intellect and personality. He has on many occasions explicitly stated in my presence that he does not think politics concerns him at all. He appears to have all the contempt of a Glasgow accountant for anything which cannot be shown on a balance sheet."

Early in the crisis (May 1951) BP had enlisted the support of the other 6 "Sisters" to make sure that they would not buy oil from Iran. The so-called Seven Sisters were the 7 biggest oil companies (BP, Exxon, Royal Dutch Shell, Mobil, Texaco, Gulf and Socal).

The US State Department announced that the American companies "would not in the face of unilateral action by

Iran against the British company be willing to undertake operations in that country.” BP was soon able to enforce a boycott and Iranian oil did not get out of Iran for two years.

In October 1951, a Tory government replaced the Labour government in Britain and shortly afterwards Eisenhower replaced President Truman in the US. Britain remained hesitant about sanctioning a coup against Dr Mossadeq and the project was passed to the CIA but they were equally hesitant about acting without Britain’s support.

Eventually the CIA plan was sanctioned not by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden but by Churchill, who happened to be in temporary control; of the Foreign Office during Eden’s illness in April 1953.

So Churchill’s personal and negative association with Iran spanned some 40 years.

The successful CIA covert operation,

which brought down Dr Mossadeq, cost some \$700,000 – cheap at the price!

At a meeting in London, January 1954, Sir William Fraser with representatives of the six other “Sisters” and the French Compagnie Francaise des Petrol (CFP) along with Herbert Hoover, son of the ex-US President, who was petroleum adviser, drew up a plan to put to the Shah of Iran.

The Agreement was signed with Iran in August 1954. The carve-up gave BP 40%, Shell 14%, the five American Sisters got 8% each and the CFP 6%. (One year later, after pressure in the US, the 5 American “Sisters” dropped 1% each and this 5% was divided among 9 smaller US oil companies)

The National Iranian Oil Company, which Dr Mossadeq had created, would remain the owner of the oilfields and the refinery, and the Consortium would buy oil from them. But through their exclusive control of the market, the Consor-

tium was now the effective master of the oil production.

BP was compensated by the Iranians and the other members of the Consortium; and its shares went from £5 in 1951 to £18 after the Agreement and £80 million as a bonus was distributed to shareholders. The only losers were the Iranian people.

There was also a secret agreement between the oil companies – a “participant’s agreement” – which was kept secret from the Iranians for at least 20 years. This secret agreement described not only the terms under which they would buy oil but also how they would resist production to avoid an oil glut.

The all-British monopoly was gone. The transition to the Consortium reflected the new realities of American power and the relative decline of British Imperialism. This new reality was expressed rather more dramatically over the Suez Crisis in 1956.

Suez handles 8% of maritime trade

The Suez Canal enables ships to travel from Asia to Europe by way of the Red and Mediterranean Seas, bypassing a journey around the Cape of Good Hope at the tip of Africa that would take more than a week.

The Canal handled 559 million tons of cargo in 2009, nearly three times the tonnage handled by the Port of Los Angeles, the busiest port in the US. The canal handles cargo amounting to about 8% of global maritime trade.

It also transits up to 25 million barrels of crude oil each day with oil exporting countries using the canal to move their crude to market and to import refined petroleum products. The canal is of further importance for US military interests; the US navy counts on it for rapid deployment of vessels from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

The Suez Canal opened in 1869 after ten years of building and some thousands of Egyptian workers deaths. The French held the majority of shares in the Canal company.

External debts forced Isma’il Pasha to sell his country’s share in the canal for £4 million to Britain in 1875, but French shareholders still held the majority. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was accused of undermining Britain’s constitutional system due to his lack of reference to Parliament when purchasing the shares with funding from the Rothschilds.



Sept. 2008: US warship USS San Antonio sails through the Suez Canal.

The Convention of Constantinople in 1888 declared the canal a neutral zone under the protection of the British. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, Britain retained control over the canal. In 1951 Egypt repudiated the treaty and in 1954 Britain agreed to remove its troops and withdrawal was completed in 1956.

President Nasser’s government nationalised the canal in 1956. Britain, France and Israel in a secretly organised conspiracy invaded Egypt. Israel invaded on the ground and France and Britain gave air support and landed paratroopers.

As far as we know, the US had not been informed of the action. At the instigation of the Canadians a United Nations peacekeeping force was sent to the Sinai Peninsula. The US put pressure on Britain by selling Pounds sterling and thus depreciating the currency and at the same time refusing to back an IMF loan. Britain was forced to withdraw.

This is widely regarded as the turning point for Britain as a world power. The US was now unquestionably the predominant Imperialist power.

ALEX DAVIDSON

US-China tensions and the Doha round

As the Doha Round negotiations continue at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) there is growing scepticism that a single global undertaking on trade liberalisation is likely to be agreed.

ALEX DAVIDSON examines the mounting tensions and the prospects for increased global instability.

WTO Director General Pascal Lamy told the body's members in December that they needed to ensure that their national representatives were mandated to negotiate and that they would have to leave their "comfort zones" and be willing to make compromises.

However, things have changed since the Doha Round negotiations began over a decade ago. Since the near collapse of the global financial system in 2008 doubts have grown over free markets and capitalism.

New economic and strategic thinking has emerged as a result of the continuing rise of China, the relative decline of the USA and the inclusion in the G20 of developing nations such as Brazil and India. There are also uncertainties about Russia and growing tensions between the US and China.

Yuan

The United States has for some time been pressurising China to re-value its currency, the yuan. This would help the US to reduce its huge trade deficit with China. The US had a trade deficit with China of \$263 billion in 2009 alone which represented about two-thirds of its total trade deficit that year.

By buying so many Chinese goods, the US is literally sending millions of dollars abroad. The Chinese then use these dollars to buy US bonds. While that allows the US to continue borrowing, it pays interest on the loans. The US wants China to raise the yuan rate arguing that it is undervalued.

If the rate were to be raised then Chinese exports to the US would become more expensive and the US trade deficit would be lowered. China has long resisted the pressure to re-value the yuan.

The small window of opportunity to

finalise the Doha Round before the US Presidential election in 2012 may well be missed. The prospect of an all-embracing trade deal would appear to be some way away and it is becoming clearer that bi-lateral and bi-regional trade negotiations will accelerate.

There is an implication that G20 nations will find ways to strengthen their domestic industries by resorting to new forms of subsidy and quasi-protectionist measures.

The invitation to, and acceptance by, South Africa to join the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) grouping is a further indication of the emerging countries developing their links. Moves in the US of a protectionist nature are another indication of the trend.

Tensions between the USA and China are growing, much as both countries talk about their partnership. The tensions exist over a number of matters besides the yuan, and include Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

The return of Taiwan remains a core aim of Chinese policy. China has been encouraging tourism and investment. China opposes any moves towards international recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign nation. At the same time the USA has a long-held policy of the commitment of US forces to Taiwan in the face of threats or invasion.

So, Taiwan has long been a bone of contention between China and the USA. However, in 2010 the Obama Administration announced the sale of US\$6.4 million worth of military equipment. The Chinese regarded this as a serious provocation.

Japan

Underlying the recent row between China and Japan over the arrest of a

Chinese trawler by Japan in waters near the disputed Diayo islands is the potential of major oil and gas fields in the East China Sea. It is estimated that there is a potential 100 billion barrels of oil and seven trillion cubic feet of gas.

China is soon to start drilling there, while Japan regards the waters as belonging to her. Japan has also threatened to send troops to Korea, an action which China has strongly condemned, reminding Japan of "historical reasons" why Japan should consider its neighbours feelings carefully.

US Interference

China sees what it calls US "smart power" at work in all this. That is, deliberate interference to set China and Japan against one another.

For instance, Hillary Clinton proposed a three-way meeting over the trawler dispute, claiming the US was neutral over the issue and over the disputed sovereignty of the islands, yet at the same time making it clear that the islands fall under its defence treaty with Japan, which means it would defend them from any foreign attack. Robert Gates, US Defence Secretary, said quite explicitly: "Washington would honour its commitment to intervene."

And, referring to the China Sea dispute, again while claiming neutrality, Clinton was quite direct, "The US has a national interest in the freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce."

China has now overtaken Japan as the world's second largest economy and it has increased its military capability, having quadrupled its military spending in 10 years. The USA retains a huge military presence in the region with 60,000 troops, an airbase in Okinawa and a carrier fleet. The USA's military spending is six times that of China.

As Paul Sutton concluded, ("China and the USA: partners or rivals?", The Socialist Correspondent, Issue 9, Summer 2010), "The rivalry of great capitalist powers is an established fact and as the US slowly loses its economic pre-eminence and 'Super-power status' the prospect of global instability increases."

Greece: Wall Street rubs its hands

He who defies the Gods, warned Aeschylus, the father of Greek drama, cannot escape his fate: Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, will punish such temerity.

Dr. VERA BUTLER asks if the fall of Greece's capitalist economy will drag the Euro with it into the depths? (Translated from the German journal ROTFUCHS by Pat Turnbull).

Modern Greece fell to the temptations of capitalism, the ruling deity: the credit economy, the untrammelled greed for profit as a bottomless pit and the unscrupulousness of the ruling class raised the nemesis of bankruptcy.

The neo-liberal watchword of the world-wide "free market economy" opened all the barriers to the investors from concerns and banks.

Globalisation, however, means that capital flows to where the yields are

most advantageous.

Economically underdeveloped countries like Greece could afford unlimited luxury goods "on tick". But Greece has only limited sources of income: tourism, export of certain agricultural products like olive oil and sheep's cheese, plus transit trade.

Today the southern European state can no longer free itself from the morass of debt under its own steam. It calls for help from those who would like in fact

to push it in even deeper. But the European common currency is in danger. Greece's state bankruptcy would lead to the collapse of the euro. This alone is what the leading circles of the EU mean when they speak of "rescue".

The northern industrial states of Europe had failed to raise the southern and eastern agrarian countries of the continent step by step to their level of development. German big capital showed no interest in investments of a long-term nature, as long as quick mega-profits in the developing countries of Africa and Asia beckoned.

France, Great Britain and Scandinavia behaved similarly. Before the financial crisis of 1997/98 European banks had invested a total of 250,000 million US dollars in certain countries of southern Asia. Germany was in the first place

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A vote for AV is a vote for cuts

Far from bringing in a fairer electoral system, a victory for the Yes campaign in the Alternative Voting (AV) referendum will embolden the Tory -Liberal government to make deeper cuts and further privatisations, with less fear that their unpopular policies would result in defeat at the next and subsequent elections.

CALVIN TUCKER presents the case against AV.

The supporters of Alternative Voting claim that it is more democratic than our present First Past the Post system (FPTP), because the winner in an election gets the votes of a larger number of the constituents.

According to the Electoral Reform Society, a main proponent of AV: "AV makes this happen with 'preference voting'. All that means for voters is swapping the 'X' on the ballot paper for numbers, so voters can rank the candidates in order of preference 1,2,3..."

Thus if no candidate receives more than 50% of first preference votes- as will be the case in the vast majority of constituencies- it will be the second, third, or even fifth or sixth preference votes, that decide the result.

This is more democratic only on paper. It adds nothing whatsoever to the actual level of agreement among the population with the policies proclaimed- or those eventually put into practice- by the winning candidate.

Much of the case against AV is made plain by the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) itself, by a consideration of the arguments they use in its favour.

According to the ERS pamphlet 'What is AV?', Alternative Voting gives "voters a stronger say and eliminating forever the need to vote tactically".

But AV institutionalises tactical voting, making every voter into a tactical voter, and ensuring that the majority of votes- all except the first preference votes- are tactical votes. Even worse, almost every candidate who has the will or possibility to win must become a tactical candidate.

As the ERS pamphlet emphasises: "AV preserves the constituency link of FPTP and makes it stronger - by forcing MPs to reach out to the majority of

"Shutting Down Extremism. AV means divisive or extremist candidates who are unwilling to appeal to a wider electorate have little to no chance of success."

The Electoral Reform Society

voters ... AV encourages candidates to actively appeal to supporters of other parties, reducing the need for negative campaigning."

So Labour Party candidates will be forced to 'reach out' to Liberal voters, or in some constituencies to racist BNP voters, thus abandoning the opinions and interests of Labour's core working class and progressive supporters.

Tory and Liberal candidates will of course 'reach out' to each other's support base, the AV system giving them by this means a much better chance of defeating the Labour candidate.

Is there any possibility that changing to AV would facilitate a party to the left of Labour to arise and gain Parliamentary representation?

No. The Alternative Voting System closes down any such potential, and furthermore, its effects would reduce the possibility of left wing candidates within

the Labour Party being elected. From their point of view, the Electoral Reform Society tells it like it is: "Shutting down Extremism. AV means divisive or extremist candidates who are unwilling to appeal to a wider electorate have little to no chance of success."

In the real conditions of politics in Britain, this is only effective against the left wing 'extremists' (ie, those who despite that label embody the opinions of the majority, against cuts and privatisation, and voice the interests of the majority, against capitalism and for an expansion of public ownership) - because left wing votes, with few exceptions, go to the Labour Party. The right wing extremists of the BNP and UKIP will, like most of the Liberals, give their second or third preference votes to the Tories.

Given the power of the right wing press, it is a certainty that AV will offer Murdoch and the other media barons the opportunity to deploy 'decapitation' strategies, based on telling their readers how to use their non-first preference votes.

These could not merely be focussed only against explicitly left-wing candidates, but also against other MPs or potential MPs who they see as obstacles or can be vilified as convenient hate figures.

Advocates of Alternative Voting in Parliamentary elections refer to its use within the Labour Party, some Trade Unions, and other voluntary societies, for leadership elections, with no ill effects.

This, as the saying goes, is comparing apples with oranges. These organisations, irrespective of whatever factional rivalries exist within them, are largely composed of members who share a common interest and, by joining, adopt the common purpose of the group. A whole country, such as Britain, is nothing like that.

The interests of the rich and the ideology of the capitalist market are fundamentally opposed to the welfare of the poor and the working class, and this division is expressed in the political landscape.

Tory lifeline

The Conservative Party officially, and in particular its wing of dissidents on the issues of Britain's relationship with the European Union and some cultural issues, are opposed to AV.

This is because they note, correctly, that the Liberals will gain- at most, a significant number of extra seats in Parliament as a result of the change in the voting system, or at least, avoid a wipe-out at the next general election. Most Tories would hope, if that were possible, to govern alone rather than as the dominant partner in a coalition.

That, however, is a faint hope. Even last June, facing a Labour leader lacking in popular appeal, tainted by the Iraq disaster and scapegoated for the worst economic crisis since the 1930s and its effects on the public finances, the Tories could not muster enough Parliamentary seats to form a government without Liberal involvement.

In ministerial office, the Liberals have provided no restraint on the radical right wing programme ...

In ministerial office, the Liberals have provided no restraint on the radical right wing programme to reconfigure the balance of wealth and power in Britain, a programme with which only a minority of the people agree.

The Liberals had nothing to do with the campaigns which have inflicted the policy reverses which the government has so far suffered, on the selling off of the forests and the specific reduction of Housing Benefit for the long-term unemployed.

Hopefully there will be more such reverses- yet overall, there will be massive cuts and further privatisations, and the next election will be fought in the con-

text of the appalling consequences.

In order to have a likely prospect of staying in power beyond the next general election, and quite conceivably the one after that, the Conservatives need their Liberal collaborators.

The possibility of a Liberal wipeout- particularly an obliteration of the Liberal MPs in urban constituencies (where, under FPTP, a Liberal loss means a Labour gain) poses a potentially deadly threat to the survival of the Tory-dominated government.

Conversely, the adoption of the Alternative Voting system, by boosting or maintaining Liberal representation in Parliament, and by making UK politics even more of a marketplace, devoid of principle, than it is already; would throw a lifeline- quite likely a long-term lifeline- to Cameron & Co, and their successors.

Unless that is what you want, vote no to AV.

Greece: Wall Street rubs its hands

Continued from page 10

with 103,000 million, followed by Great Britain (64,000 million), France (59,000 million) and the Netherlands (23,000 million). According to the investment bank Morgan Stanley roughly 18 of the biggest European companies made yields of more than 20 per cent in Asia. Among them were British Airways, Royal Dutch Shell and Ericsson.

To date the lack of an agreed economic and political concept has left parts of Europe in a state of industrial underdevelopment, which has a disastrous effect on the stability of the Euro.

Economically weak member states of the EU like Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland had to bow to the dictates of NATO and contribute considerable amounts to the various armament plans and military extravaganzas like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thus Greece's deficit in the years 2000 to 2003 was 1.9 per cent greater than originally given with 2 per cent, if military outgoings in a volume of 1.6 thousand million Euros are added in.

Between 1998 and 2000 investment broker Goldman Sachs - a leading Wall Street luminary - arranged 12 of the so-called currency swaps with Greece, by which the member of the Euro Club had to commit itself to exchange Japanese yen and American dollars into its own currency at an artificially low rate of exchange.

This manoeuvre allowed the Greek deficit to appear more than 2,000 million Euros lower. Goldman Sachs profited not only from the stable rate of exchange for its currency speculations, but over and above received hefty percentages as the broker. However, so as not to burden Greek book-keeping, the investment house lent this sum initially with a long term of repayment to the customer, who registered it as income. In so doing, Greece placed itself in bondage to Wall Street.

In the last quarter of 2009 Federal German banks were saddled with 43,000 million dollars of Greek debts - commercial and private loans -, French banks with much more at 75,000 million dollars. A Greek bankruptcy would affect these creditors severely. On this ground alone Athens could count on bridging advances.

Was Goldman Sachs only considering its own profits, or were its Greek manoeuvres part of a much more comprehensive plan with the aim of undermining the European currency and even perhaps allowing it to blow up?

After all the Euro, despite the decline in the rate of exchange, still has a solid reputation on the international currency market in comparison with the dollar, eroded by inflation.

The ageing currency speculator George Soros not long ago foretold the collapse of the Euro if the EU proved itself unable to put its finances in order

and control the deficits of the member states.

People listen to the opinion of this "expert", who in 1992 succeeded by means of speculative pressure in keeping the British pound out of the European currency union. In 1997/98 he saw to the currency crash in South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Valuable industrial objects were bought up there by speculators for a song. The countries affected experienced mass unemployment; inflation destroyed all savings.

At an "Ideas Dinner" in Manhattan on the 8th February, attended by the most important hedge fund managers, the collapse of the Euro was directly discussed; the Euro had in the meantime sunk in relation to the dollar from 1.51 in December 2009 to 1.35. Some even said in advance that at some time parity with the dollar would be reached. Were the wolves already circling round the victim?

Washington's Ministry of Justice, by the way, instructed the hedge fund managers who were present at the Dinner in writing not to destroy any transactions or e-mails relating to the Euro, but to have them ready for examination if necessary.

Globalism - the world rule of the free marketers - has proved only one thing: free markets mean unfettered profit according to the motto: after us the deluge!

The “deserving” and “undeserving” poor

In recent months the coalition government and some of its key representatives, as well as many conservative commentators in the press, in right wing think-tanks, such as the *Centre for Social Justice* and elsewhere, have resurrected the notion of a distinction between two types of recipient of state benefits and services; the “deserving” and the “undeserving”.

TOM BURDEN looks at the terms’ origins in 16th century Tudor England and how they are used today.

This has taken place in the context of a campaign to reduce public expenditure on “welfare”, the term now being used as a broad shorthand for the welfare state as a whole. This campaign is part of a general ideological attack on the welfare state which is taking place as part of the programme to “reduce the deficit”.

This attack on state-run social services repeats the events of the early 1930s and mid-1970s when orthodox economic opinion promoted similar policies as solutions to financial crises. The purpose of this piece is to examine the meaning and origins of “deserving” and “undeserving” and the role this distinction plays in the maintenance of the dominant ideology.

“Deserving” and “undeserving” are not new ideas or new categories, and their origins lie far back in British history as we shall show. However, they have played a key role since the early emergence of capitalist relations of production. Their significance is that they are used to assist in the conditions required for maintenance of capitalism. Broadly speaking there are three important issues here:

1. Maintaining key features of the capitalist economy, especially keeping wages down. The ideal situation for a capitalist economy would be that wages were held at the currently prevailing level of subsistence.

This would allow the labour force to be maintained at the lowest possible cost to capital. At the same time it would maintain the incentive to work for those at the bottom of the economic scale and protect those with substantial wealth from attempts to confiscate this and re-

distribute it to the poor.

2. Maintaining social and political order, or at least helping to prevent the conditions in which there are widespread outbreaks of disorder and protest.

3. Maintaining cultural values and an ideology which supports capitalism.

We shall not attempt to give a comprehensive chronological account here. Instead we will focus on the changes made in five key periods in which central and long lasting features of the state provision were established and show what they contributed to the establishment and the maintenance of the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving.

The five key periods are:

1. The Tudor Poor Law which was consolidated in a systematic form at the end of the sixteenth century.

2. The reform of the Poor Law in 1834.

3. The ‘new liberal’ reforms undertaken early in the twentieth century.

4. The radical social policy reforms of the Second World War.

5. The Keynesian welfare state consolidated in the long post-war boom.

The Tudor Poor Law

The Tudor Poor Law was established in a period in which the early transition to capitalist relations of production was taking place. State policy towards the mass of the people was normally based on local gentry control.

A range of economic, social and political changes were affecting the position of the poor. The Reformation of the 1530s had involved the closure of monastic houses and hospitals that con-

siderably reduced the charitable resources devoted to the vagrant population. During the sixteenth century the treatment of the poor was changed as the older feudal traditions of charity and hospitality increasingly broke down. Workhouses and ‘houses of correction’ began to be set up to deal with vagrants in a punitive fashion. The laws dealing with the poor were eventually consolidated in the Poor Law Act 1601.

The major concerns of this Act were to secure order and to reinforce the obligation to work. The Act was a response to the periodic disorders resulting from the existence of a substantial mobile, destitute population. This resulted from agricultural enclosures, the threat of starvation arising from food shortages caused by bad harvests, the lack of work, population growth and inflation. Poor relief was to be the responsibility of individual parishes, controlled by the local Justices of the Peace, who were usually local landowners and other owners of substantial property, and financed by the poor rates paid by local property owners.

Vagrancy was considered a crime and it attracted severe penalties. Periodic round-ups of vagrants took place and they could be required to undertake labour services for a period of a year. They could also be drafted into the services in times of war.

They were subject to severe bodily punishments such as branding and whipping. The settled poor were not considered to be such a threat though there were very many of them. They normally numbered around a quarter to a third of the population though their numbers could be swelled by bad harvests or local economic dislocation.

Many features of the present system of state income support can be traced back to the Poor Law Act 1601. This set up a national system of social regulation. The legislation provided for separate treatment for each of three categories. The able-bodied were to be set to work with materials provided by the parish, possibly in a workhouse. Those who were viewed as unwilling to



Former workhouse at Nantwich, Cheshire, constructed in 1780.

support themselves would be subject to a disciplinary regime in a house of correction. Those in this category formed the original "undeserving poor". They were widely viewed as a threat, especially if they acted in a group as shown in the old nursery rhyme,

"Hark hark the dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town."

The impotent poor, those unable to maintain themselves, would be maintained by income support and/or the provision of almshouses. Those in this category formed the original "deserving poor".

The whole scheme rested on the classification of the poor according to their adjudged ability to perform wage labour. A key principle was the denial of any relief to those in work.

Since control of poor relief was highly localised, enormous variations existed in the levels and forms of relief provided, and the provision of separate poor-houses, workhouses and houses of correction was far from universal. However, the framework provided by the 1601 legislation continued to govern the administration of poor relief at least until the end of the eighteenth century.

A major development occurred in the 1790s. Poor relief in cash or kind was given whenever the price of bread reached a threshold level. This early form of index-linked benefit was known as the 'Speenhamland system' after the place where magistrates first met to establish it.

The relief was paid whether or not the applicants were in paid work. This was a clear breach of the principle that benefits should not be paid to those in work. This system was established at a time when wages in many areas were falling below subsistence level due to the infla-

tion caused by the Napoleonic War and to a series of bad harvests.

The authorities were also concerned to minimise the growth of radicalism in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In addition, the powerful were concerned with the threats posed by trade unionism, and political movements against some of the more oppressive aspects of industrialisation such as child labour, cyclical unemployment, and unemployment due to the rapid introduction of new technologies expressed in such social movements as Luddism and the 'Captain Swing' movement.

The Speenhamland system was an attempt to re-establish a degree of economic security for the rural working class, based on gentry paternalism rather than purely capitalist values.

The system led to increases in expenditure on poor relief, and thus to higher rates, that provoked the opposition of the ratepayers. It also led to low wages, since employers could pay them in the knowledge that they would be supplemented from the parish rates.

The system also offended the tenets of classical political economy, (which by now had become a key element in the dominant ideology), by interfering with the free determination of wages and by failing to impose the sole responsibility for paying for child care on parents.

Reform of the Poor Law 1834

The Industrial Revolution had a major impact on the provision of state benefits. In a few decades from around 1760 there was a massive growth of factory production along with mechanisation. There was also a very rapid growth of industrial towns and cities and a considerable change in the living conditions of members of the working class. Those

working for wages were now subject to the periodic fluctuations of the trade cycle.

Thousands of workers now found themselves drawn to the expanding industrial towns and cities where there might be work to be found as the cottage industries characteristic of the pre-industrial period went into a rapid decline.

The end of the relatively settled conditions of life of pre-industrial Britain undermined the ideological basis of the existing organisation of society and led to new pressures to reconstruct the state apparatus.

From 1820 major changes took place. These changes were the culmination of a reforming campaign that had been taking place over several decades. The reformers wished to establish a modern state apparatus run on bureaucratic lines that would support the consolidation of the capitalist free market economy.

Many of the reformers felt that these new conditions required a more disciplined and orderly society – people needed to be made to adjust to the new demands of a competitive market economy based on factory production.

In line with the principles of classical liberal political economy, it was generally assumed that everyone should take complete responsibility for maintaining themselves without relying on the state. If there were people unable to fend for themselves, however, it was the job of the state to help, or even force, them to do this.

The reformers accepted the arguments of classical political economy that the removal of restrictions on private property and the market would normally secure efficiency in the economic sphere.

These notions developed out of the thinking of such commentators as Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, who were all advocates of a minimal role for the state. State intervention was only desirable to protect individual freedom and to support free markets in labour, capital and goods through law and order measures, or the removal of nuisances, or where markets failed to provide (such as the provision of parks, museums, or docks). The emphasis was on the laws of the market.

Victorian ideology emphasised individualism and personal freedom so long as people were self-reliant. While the state should have a minimal role its power could be used to reinforce the disciplines of the market and to encourage people to take their responsibilities seriously. Various social problems and



Adam Smith (1723-1790)

conditions that had previously been treated with a degree of tolerance were now to be dealt with by the state.

New residential institutions including prisons, lunatic asylums and reformatories were set up, specifically designed to reform or remoralise their inmates. And to turn them into the kind of citizens required by a dynamic industrial capitalist society.

The Poor Law (Amendment) Act 1834 was based on the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Poor Laws. This embodied the ethos of the reformers. Its two main authors were Chadwick, a leading Benthamite, and the economist Nassau Senior.

The Act transferred the responsibility for the poor to some 600 Poor Law Unions, run by Guardians elected by the ratepayers, from whom the necessary rates were collected. Central control was undertaken by a Poor Law Board using circulars and instructions to local Guardians, and through an Inspectorate.

The basic principle of the amended or ‘new’ Poor Law was that as far as possible no cash payments (‘outdoor relief’) would be made and the only assistance for the poor would be the offer of a place in the workhouse. Conditions in this highly disciplined institution were designed to deter any but the most desperate from accepting the offer.

The lives provided for workhouse inmates were designed deliberately to humiliate them so as to deter them from seeking relief. Those who did become inmates were stigmatised by association with the unpleasant conditions in which they were made to live. The reinforcement of the idea that those in receipt of state relief were not entitled to anything better than the worst possible conditions

in which they would barely be kept alive, did a great deal to establish potential recipients as members of a class of the “undeserving”.

The policies and institutions that the 1834 Act incorporated remained central to British social policy until well into the second half of the twentieth century. The punitive approach towards the poor was reinforced as the basis of policy.

The emphasis on providing incentives to work was maintained. The concern to minimise state expenditure on the poor, and to provide benefits at a level of bare subsistence, became key principles of policy. The Victorian Poor Law also emphasised the degraded status of recipients of poor relief by removing their right to vote (if they possessed it) and by requiring them to live in an institution run on authoritarian lines.

Other aspects of state provision for the poor reinforced the idea that recipients of poor relief were undeserving. Social work originated in procedures based on the precepts of nineteenth century liberalism and conventional morality.

The punitive treatment of single mothers was a strong component of the Victorian poor law and the stigmatisation of the long-term unemployed also has a long history. The origins of social work lie in the activities of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) founded in 1869 to regulate the disposition of charitable funds to the poor.

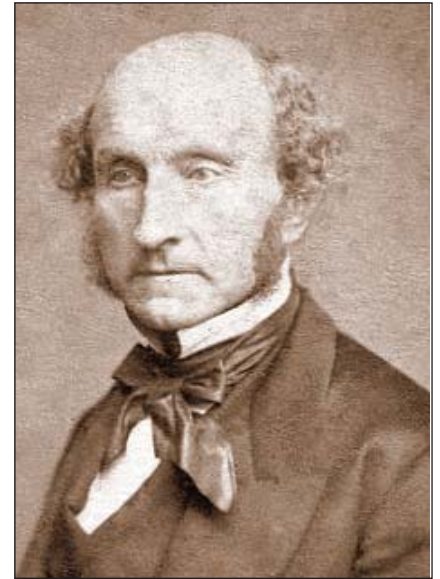
The COS originated the scientific assessment of applicants for charitable support. Those who applied to the COS were interviewed in order to assess how they should be treated. The assessment was designed to allow the classification of the applicant as either deserving or undeserving.

The undeserving were recommended for the workhouse while the deserving were assisted through advice and occasional dispensations of cash. This individualised diagnosis became the basic approach of casework.

The COS was subsequently involved in establishing social work training using a syllabus which reflected a strong attachment to a liberal laissez-faire ideology emphasising personal deficiencies as a cause of poverty. In this way the new profession of social work helped to sustain the idea of the undeserving.

The ‘new liberalism’

The ‘new liberalism’, while not a coherent political theory, was a reforming tendency within the British Liberal Party that developed in the early part of the twentieth century and exercised an influence over policy in the Liberal governments of 1906-14.



John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

Some leading Liberals felt the party could no longer continue to provide whole-hearted support to Victorian laissez faire principles. There was growing evidence of deep-seated poverty and other social problems that seemed to result from an uncontrolled market.

Seebohm Rowntree, a progressive industrialist demonstrated that wage levels were so low that they were insufficient to maintain a level of health needed for working efficiency for many workers. He established the modern study of poverty using a ‘scientifically’ calculated poverty line.

However, this change in liberal thought was inspired as much by a desire to bring about moral and spiritual betterment and to generate a sense of solidarity between the middle and working classes as it was to improve the material conditions of the poor.

Another factor influencing the evolving philosophy of liberalism was imperialism resulting from the rapid growth of foreign competition through the development of industrial capitalism in such countries as Germany, France and the US. In particular, Germany’s industrial base and trading markets, and subsequently its international political influence, were expanding during the late nineteenth century.

This not only posed a threat to the British Empire but also drew attention to the ‘state of the nation’. Social problems – such as illiteracy and sickness – came to be perceived by more progressive elements of the ruling class, not just as individual problems but as the nation’s problems. The capacity of the nation-state to compete in an aggressively imperialist world was seen in part to depend on the ‘fitness’ and ‘develop-

ment’ of its human and technical resources.

While the new liberalism is the ideological current most closely associated with reform in this period, other organisations and currents of opinion, such as the national efficiency movement, the Fabian Society and the Eugenics Society also played important parts in the shifts in policy that took place at this time.

The new liberalism began the replacement of the Victorian Poor Law. This had largely rested on a system in which eligibility for benefits was based on the ‘workhouse test’. Applicants had to agree to enter the workhouse and accept its rules before being given relief.

The Liberal government developed new forms of income support. Its first move in this direction was the Pensions Act 1908. The Act provided a small non-contributory pension at the age of 70 to those with very low incomes. This scheme failed to become a model for the subsequent growth of cash benefits because of Treasury opposition to the non-contributory principle, i.e. ‘something for nothing’.

The major innovation introduced by the new liberals was National Insurance. This employs compulsory personal saving to provide a fund to supplement income when it is interrupted. It was first used in Germany in the late nineteenth century.

It was introduced there as part of a strategy to undermine support for the German Social Democratic Party by providing some state assistance for workers. It was then introduced in various other countries early in the twentieth century. In Britain the National Insurance Act 1911 introduced means-tested health insurance and a scheme of unemployment insurance.

The scheme was paid for by a fixed weekly contribution (“the stamp”) from employees and their employers with the fund being topped up by a contribution from the Treasury.

This provided compulsory sickness insurance for those paid below £3 per week and insurance against unemployment for around 2.5m workers employed in specified industries that were subject to seasonal fluctuations in employment. It worked by redistributing income within an income group – healthy workers supported the sick, those in work support the unemployed.

The working class was becoming enmeshed in a range of schemes of state income support separate from the provisions of the Poor Law. By 1913 60% of the over 70s received a state pension under the 1908 Pensions Act. Around 13 million workers were covered for

... during the economic crisis of the early 1930s, substantial cuts to benefits were made and important attempts to decrease entitlements to benefit were made.

health insurance and about 2.5 million for unemployment insurance. These schemes proved inadequate as a means of financing benefits for the long-term unemployed because of their ‘contributions rules’.

However, they represented a considerable shift in the direction of ameliorating the impact of the operation of the capitalist labour market on the working class. They also reduced the punitive character of state policy by reducing the likelihood of destitution and of families being forced into the workhouse.

The establishment of the system of National Insurance was a major innovation that gave the state a new means of integrating and regulating the working class. The system of insurance for sickness began the use of ‘means tests’. With a means test, eligibility for a benefit depends on having an income and/or wealth below a specified level.

Means testing is designed to keep public expenditure down, to encourage thrift and to support the private provision of services. Subsequently those subject to means tests became stigmatised by association with them.

The procedure often involved very intrusive investigations into family finances and circumstances. If the application for benefit was successful, the recipient was often viewed as occupying a somewhat degraded status below that of those who received benefits as of right. This helped

to reinforce ideas about the recipients of means tested benefits being “undeserving”. The new pensions and insurance schemes represented a move away from the deterrent approach of the Poor Law. However, considerable elements of continuity were maintained.

The schemes were designed to restrict benefits to a category of ‘deserving’ individuals. Pensions could be refused to those who were unable to show that they had not habitually failed to work. The insurance schemes used an alternative approach of restricting the duration of benefit so as to exclude malingers.

The low level of benefits was designed to provide a continuing market for private insurance schemes. The division between recipients of insurance benefits, and those only given assistance subject to means tests or other conditions, has continued. The structure of the National Insurance scheme was retained as the scheme was progressively extended over the next four decades. It enabled the state to enforce the ethic and practice of self-help at little cost.

Generally speaking over the 1920s and 1930s state benefit provision was improved through the extension of national insurance provision. However, during the economic crisis of the early 1930s, substantial cuts to benefits were made and important attempts to decrease entitlements to benefit were made.

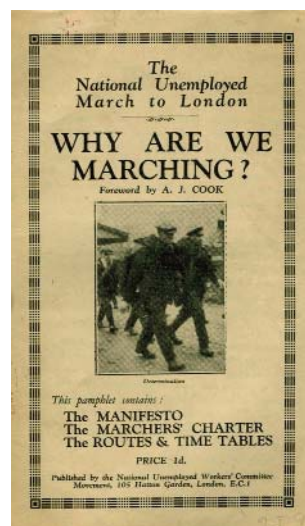
Because the system was decentralised the level of benefits provided and the methods used to determine who was eligible for them varied substantially between local authorities. Where the central government felt that some local authorities were being too generous, conflicts arose.

Some local authorities which provided generous benefits to the unemployed became known as “little Moscows”. There was considerable public opposition to cuts in benefits and to the use of the means test by which benefit was denied to a family on the grounds that an adequate family income was available if children were earning.

Serious disorders were common in the 1930s. In 1931 wage cuts in the state sector were used to decrease public expenditure. One result was a naval mutiny at Invergordon against pay cuts.

Wages also fell due to the high levels of unemployment and many in public sector employment or dependent on state benefits had their incomes cut. Other aspects of state policy such as the family means test instituted by the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1934 also provoked considerable anger and opposition.

This Act was designed to centralise the



administration and standardise the rates of benefit paid to the unemployed. It removed control from local authority Public Assistance Committees and vested it in the hands of the Unemployment Assistance Board, the chair of which was Beveridge.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement was very active at this time and in 1934 organised opposition to the provisions of the Act.

The unemployed in order to receive benefit had to prove that they were "genuinely seeking work".

Widespread unemployment in some of the traditional industrial areas was associated with protest demonstrations of the unemployed and "hunger marches". The new uniform rates had to be phased in over two years because of violent opposition in areas where Labour Councils had paid relatively generous benefits which were reduced as a result of the new Act.

The establishment of the welfare state

During the Second World War there were major shifts in ideology and policy. The dominant class, under pressure of war and of the growth of popular radicalism, adopted the rhetoric of moderate reformism. There was a considerable increase in the power and influence of the working class and its industrial and political organisations.

A number of factors contributed to the growth of working-class radicalism. The experience of the 'blitz' increased social solidarity. The mass involvement in voluntary duties associated with the war effort such as air-raid precautions, fire-fighting, and home defence, gave many ordinary people an important social role for the first time.

The experience of army life, particularly the involvement in education and discussion of social and political issues organised by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, increased political consciousness. The presence of large

numbers of affluent US troops highlighted the low living standards of working-class Britain.

Many professionals, such as doctors, were required to undertake work in working-class areas and were brought face-to-face with working-class standards of life for the first time. The evacuation of children from urban areas also confronted many middle-class people with the evidence of the extreme poverty of urban working class life. Other families had soldiers 'billeted' in their homes with similar effects.

Some radical changes to social provision were made during the war. Rationing involved a system of food and clothing distribution based on need rather than income. An Emergency Hospital Service, was set up. Various other groups were given entitlement to receive treatment, which was normally free, under the scheme.

By 1941 it incorporated over 80 per cent of all hospital beds and formed in effect a free national hospital service. The Education Act 1944 abolished charges for secondary education. The wartime coalition government passed the Family Allowances Act 1945. Under this Act, an allowance of five shillings per week was paid to the mother for each child after the first.

A key role was played by the Beveridge Report of 1942. This proposed a comprehensive system of National Insurance based on a single weekly contribution that would finance a broad range of benefits set at subsistence level. The benefits and contributions were set at a single rate applying to everyone. It excluded those unable to work, such as the disabled, and offered lesser benefits to women.

Key features of the scheme were consistent with and deliberately designed to reinforce the values of capitalism. The insurance principle would reinforce self-help. Rules on the number of contributions necessary before benefits could be drawn would prevent abuse by malingerers. Contributions from the employer and the state would symbolise a concern for employee welfare and contribute to a sense of citizenship. Benefits set at subsistence level would keep the cost low, maintain work incentives and encourage the private provision of insurance.

While the Beveridge report is extremely important for establishing the principles and details of the National Insurance scheme, it has a wider importance in that it laid down the broad basis for the post-war welfare state. Beveridge argued that the success for the National Insurance scheme required three preconditions: a National Health Service,

full employment and a scheme of family allowances.

The Beveridge proposals had considerable popular support. In 1944, a White Paper on social insurance was produced which accepted many of the details of the Beveridge scheme. Other detailed proposals for reform were published in a series of White Papers in 1943 and 1944.

These included Educational Reconstruction, A National Health Service and Employment Policy that proposed to commit the government to an interventionist policy to secure full employment, against all the traditions of the Treasury and the doctrines of orthodox economic thinking.

During the war social work, especially through the work of the Family Welfare Association developed a new focus on what came to be called "problem families". Some of these ideas later became incorporated into some of the imagery associated with the undeserving, and later, the "underclass".

A key radical feature of the wartime reforms was universalism. This was the name given to the principle that social benefits be made available to everyone in an eligible category. Family allowances were paid to all families with two or more children, regardless of income.

The proposed health service available free to all in need was another universal benefit. In the National Insurance scheme benefits were also universal, although they had to be 'earned' by contributions.

The wartime reforms involved a shift towards a radical social policy that met needs, or distributed essential goods and services to those who needed them, rather than on the basis of willingness and ability to pay.

The post-war Keynesian welfare state

The term 'Keynesian welfare state' refers to the kind of policies established in many western capitalist countries after



Lord Beveridge (1879-1963)



John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946)

the Second World War.

It involved a system of managed capitalism in which limits were placed on the rights of private property owners. The adoption of these policies has been seen as part of a ‘post-war settlement’ which was able to resolve social antagonisms and form the basis for a period of social harmony.

The two key thinkers whose ideas under-pinned the post-war settlement were Keynes and Beveridge. Both were associated with the new liberalism and both worked within the Liberal Party.

Keynes’ theories involved a system of government intervention to increase spending in order to create jobs, whilst preserving the capitalist market and individual economic and political freedom.

He argued that the free market is not entirely self-regulating – guided, as Adam Smith suggested, by the ‘hidden hand’ of market forces – and that national economies are subject to uncertainty and produce periodic crises. Keynes, therefore, emphasised the ability of governments to manage economic forces.

The state should act to regulate cycles of investment, production and consumption by investing in public programmes in times of economic downturn. The key was to maintain full employment and aggregate demand for goods, measures that would provide opportunity for economic growth.

Beveridge’s proposals for the welfare state were contained in his report of 1942. Much of the legislation for the British welfare state was brought in by the Labour government of 1945-50. However, when the Conservatives were re-elected in 1951 they maintained the commitment to Keynesian full employment policies and the welfare state.

During the long post-war boom, the Keynesian welfare state became viewed as an established and essential feature of society. The existence of a wide-ranging system of social services had considerable support across the political spectrum.

The current crisis of capitalism

From the mid-1970s the economic crisis triggered by the substantial rises in the price of oil led to a major reassertion of traditional capitalist values and principles.

Key international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund played a part in this process especially where they were called upon to provide support for assistance for States attempting to cope with crisis conditions such as high inflation and rising unemployment.

The political right enjoyed a resurgence in these conditions as exemplified

by the election of both Reagan and Thatcher. A key feature of Thatcherism was the attempt to apply the values of the market (such as competition) on to the public sector through privatisation and requiring individual operating units such as schools and hospitals to compete in a State contrived “market” with other units.

These capitalist values along with a reassertion of traditional Conservative morality became a major influence on political ideologies in this period. These ideas were adopted wholesale by New Labour which became the custodian of Thatcherite values and policies. They are still characteristic of the existing ideological consensus in the UK as exemplified by the current coalition government.

These ideas were adopted wholesale by New Labour which became the custodian of Thatcherite values and policies.



Some of the ideas associated with the “undeserving” played a major role in the approach of New Labour. This was certainly evident in the approach taken to single parents.

This traditionally stigmatised group was subject to special provisions to require them to seek work in order to retain eligibility for state benefits. The tone of proposals like these also strengthened traditional ideas of deserving and undeserving groups.

The New Right approach was incorporated in New Labour, which combined enthusiasm for technical solutions to social problems, expressed as modernisation. The moralism is represented by the recurring theme of deserving/undeserving.

The impact of neo-liberal income maintenance policies has meant an inexorable move towards more means-tested benefits. This was justified as a way of ensuring that public money was only given to those who need it and, so, those most in need were targeted.

Conclusion

Returning to the three themes as identified at the start of this article. State expenditure has been effectively kept down by providing strong incentives to individuals to ac-

cept the existing structure of wages.

Throughout the period covered, the value of state benefits has generally been held at or close to prevailing standards of subsistence.

State provision has been employed to ameliorate the extent and intensity of opposition to the existing order of society especially on the part of those at the bottom of the income scale.

The demonisation of the undeserving has been used to enhance support for capitalist values such as individualism and self reliance.

Over several centuries the notion of the undeserving has become deeply embedded in British culture. This idea and the negative images of state support which it entails plays a key role as a sentinel on the ideological ramparts of capitalism. It helps to render any attempt to organise the distribution of the social product on the basis of need, very hard to contemplate.

Once more we find ourselves a long way from the relatively progressive principles established for the welfare state during and immediately after the second world war. The undeserving poor continue to be used in ideological campaigns to depict any social provision as over-generous.

The challenge for the left is to shift the label of “the undeserving” onto those groups which really do benefit unjustifiably from the actions of the state affecting the distribution of social resources. This implies a continued focus on class inequality and social injustice.

The response of the state to the recent financial and credit crisis provides ample opportunity for raising these issues in terms of which groups should be supported by state assistance.

The issue of the undeserving poor was a key theme of the recent speech made by David Cameron at the Conservative Party conference on October 6th, 2010.

The repetition of the theme that there are people who are unjustly and unjustifiably maintained at state expense at a level above that of subsistence has been a continual feature of depictions of the poor over the last four centuries.

This continuing ideological campaign is designed to channel antagonism towards the “undeserving”. It also serves to give the idea of using the power of the state to ensure a decent standard of living for all, a bad name.

This reinforces the existing inequalities in society from which the wealthy and powerful are the greatest beneficiaries. It also helps to create divisions within the working class which make collective action for social improvement more difficult.

Housing Benefit: the baleful truth

When the Coalition Government proposed to cap housing benefit at £400 rent per week, they might have thought there wouldn't be much trouble. The press had long been softening people up with stories of scrounging families living in mansions funded by housing benefit.

PAT TURNBULL explains how private landlords benefit at the expense of millions of tenants.

However, it proved not quite so straightforward. On the BBC Politics Show, Boris Johnson, Conservative Mayor of London, said: "There are huge numbers living in private rented accommodation who simply can't afford any other system.

If you put in this cap in this way – in a very draconian way – instantly it will have a damaging effect on many households in London."

A dozen Conservative MPs in London seats begged Iain Duncan Smith (pictured), the Work and Pensions Secretary, for exemptions. In the words of the Daily Telegraph: 'A planned cap could severely affect London and the MPs fear they will suffer from the fallout.

It has been estimated that some 200,000 people could be forced to move out of London because they would no longer be able to afford their rents if housing benefit was capped.'

On 2.11.10 Mary Riddell wrote, also in the Daily Telegraph: "Despite the Government's spin, the housing scandal is not about the tiny minority, the idle poor of Mayfair. It concerns the dire shortage of social housing."

She cited the case of a woman, married with two daughters, aged seven and three, who works for 16 hours a week for a charity earning £706.42 a month, and for eight years has lived in a one-bedroom flat high in a tower block in the Outer London borough of Enfield.

She has been told she does not have enough points for a two-bedroom property. Private rental costs a minimum of £850 a month. Her husband has recently been made redundant.

This is one of the parts of London to which tenants on housing benefit will be

sent, in the words of Mary Riddell "when an inner-city exodus will soon seek non-existent homes". She continues: "Shelter [the housing charity] says that a million British children are living in overcrowded conditions, making them twice as likely to have bad health and leave school without any GCSEs.

"Labour also has hard truths to face. The number of households on waiting lists has increased by over 70% since 1997, and exorbitant prices have affected all but the super-rich."



As a result of objections like these this policy is due to be introduced not in April 2011 but in January 2012, according to Iain Duncan Smith to give people more time to look for new homes.

Criticism continues. A December report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, claims that cuts to housing benefit will force another 100,000 children into poverty over the next three to four years.

Another of the Government's policies is to dock housing benefit payments by ten per cent from unemployed claimants who have been out of work for more

than a year. That is, people on £65 per week Jobseekers' Allowance. Douglas Alexander, formerly shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, has responded: "How can this approach be fair when there are presently five claimants chasing every vacancy in the British labour market?"

Private Landlords

Poverty and the shortage of housing have led to the growth in housing benefit costs. And it is not tenants who have been benefiting. October figures from the Department for Work and Pensions showed that in 2010 private landlords were due to pocket almost £8.5 billion through housing benefit, more than a third of the total £21.5 billion housing benefit bill.

In the past decade, the cost of providing housing to people on housing benefit through the private rented sector has soared by 36% above the rate of inflation. The Department's study 'Low Income Working Households in the Private Rented Sector' found that, on average, private landlords charge higher rents to housing benefit claimants than working adults in equivalent accommodation, but provide worse conditions. No surprise there, then.

Council and housing association rents are certainly less than rents at market rate. But how low are they really? The London Tenants' Federation in its autumn newsletter highlights the true situation: 'Nationally around 70% of social-rented housing tenants are unable to meet the cost of their rent without claiming housing benefit.'

There are two million less council and housing association homes now than thirty years ago. But another Coalition Government policy is to cancel the already inadequate house building targets set by the previous government.

In September, in a submission to the Communities and Local Government Committee, the Home Builders' Federation warned that as a result of the abandonment of the targets, councils were scrapping plans for thousands of homes. This is in a situation where, as the Federation also pointed out, only

142,000 new properties were built in 2009, the smallest number since 1923, excluding the Second World War.

End of Security of Tenure

The government's answer to the shortage of social-rented housing is a proposal to reduce the security of tenure of future council tenants under the pretext that this will free up council homes.

Every two years or so a council tenancy will be reviewed and the tenant given six months notice 'if an assessment reveals they no longer need the house'.

As David Cameron has said, "Maybe in five or ten years you will be doing a different job and be better paid and you won't need that home, you will be able to go into the private sector." He doesn't say, maybe five years later you will be jobless, unable to pay your market rent or mortgage and therefore homeless – or a pensioner and therefore much poorer. Homes should be for life.

Another Government policy will reduce the number of social-rented homes still further. Ministers have announced that 'right-to-buy' rules will be extended to housing association tenants, so that they can buy their homes after five years.

Grant Shapps, the housing minister, says: "This Government is determined to find ways to support the hopes and dreams of hard-working people who want to own their own home."

In fact, people seeking to buy a home for the first time are finding it nigh on impossible unless their family can finance a hefty deposit. The Council of Mortgage Lenders reported that in October 2010 the number fell 19 per cent compared with a year previously.

Figures calculated in October by De-facto, a financial statistics group, for the Daily Telegraph showed that first-time buyers were paying £57,500 more to borrow the same amount of money as other home owners.

This discrepancy has arisen in the past three years. Before that, a borrower with a 25% deposit (who therefore generally already owns a house) paid almost the same interest rate for their mortgage as one with a ten per cent deposit. Now someone with a ten per cent deposit with a five-year fixed rate mortgage will pay £1,727 a year more; someone with a lifetime tracker will pay nearly £2000 a year more.

In August 2010 the average deposit for a first-time buyer was reported to be £34,000 compared with £13,000 in August 2007. The Council of Mortgage Lenders said 84% of first-time buyers would need parental help, compared with 37% in 2005. First-time buyers were only 34% of mortgages granted.

Banks are employing tougher rules because of fears that higher unemployment will result in more home-owners defaulting on loans. The Home Builders' Federation cited the average age of a first-time buyer who does not receive help from their family as 37. Almost a third of men and a fifth of women aged between 20 and 34 still live with their parents.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders also said interest-only mortgages would 'effectively vanish'. Thousands took out interest-only mortgages as house prices rose.

There are 3.57 million outstanding interest-only mortgages, where the buyer must pay off the entire loan in one lump sum at the end of a typical 25 year term.

In August it was reported that unemployment had pushed the number of families being evicted from their homes to more than 100 a day.

Meanwhile, in September Paragon, the buy-to-let mortgage provider, had secured £200 million from Macquarie Bank to start lending to landlords again. They told analysts to expect full-year profits of £65 million. A housing shortage is very good news for some.

The Labour government's solution to the severe shortage of housing at rents people can afford was to tell housing associations to build homes for sale to finance building social rented homes. This policy failed.

The Coalition Government's proposal is that rents for new housing association and council tenants should be 80 per cent of market rent – so-called 'intermediate rent'. The money raised should be used to build 150,000 'affordable' homes over the next four years – presumably also to be rented out at 80% of market rent in the unlikely event that they are built at all.

The National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations in England, says the average rent for a three-bedroom home would have to rise from £85 a week to £250 a week – only payable by those on housing benefit.

Housing Budget Cuts

The Federation also criticises the Government's cuts to the housing budget, which will drop from £8.4 billion during the previous three years to £4.5 billion in the coming four. David Orr, its chief executive, says: "Because of these cuts, the new social homes this country so desperately needs can now only be built by dramatically increasing rents for some of the most vulnerable."

Taken as a whole these policies, if they are allowed to go ahead, mean that council/housing association type rents will be

phased out altogether and people will be abandoned to the mercies of the market.

The Coalition Government's plan to cut funding for legal aid will make it harder for people hit by these policies to defend themselves. Hackney Law Centre's 12 lawyers see more than 1000 people a year, giving free advice and representation. Government cuts, both directly and through cuts to council budgets, threaten the centre, which deals mainly with cases of evictions, homelessness, debt and immigration.

In December, the Hackney Gazette cited one of the Law Centre's cases: 'A year ago, the law centre helped six eastern European migrant workers who caught tuberculosis and pneumonia after living in an underground car park.

'They had all worked in Britain legally paying tax, but lost their jobs, and were not able to claim benefits. One pneumonia sufferer died.'

A paper published on 17 December by 'The Lancet' calls London the 'tuberculosis capital of Europe'. Britain is the only western European country with rising rates of tuberculosis, with more than 9,000 cases now diagnosed annually. Professor Alimuddin Zumla, of University College London, said, "Poor housing, inadequate ventilation, and overcrowding, conditions prevalent in Victorian Britain, are causes of the higher tuberculosis incidence rates in certain London boroughs."

These policies of the Coalition Government are exceedingly baleful and deserve a vigorous campaign of opposition. Currently a lead on this from the Labour Party is wanting.

This is probably because of the unhelpful housing policies of the previous, Labour, governments. Instead of Labour taking a different approach from Conservative governments of 1979 to 1997, general housing spending continued to shrink.

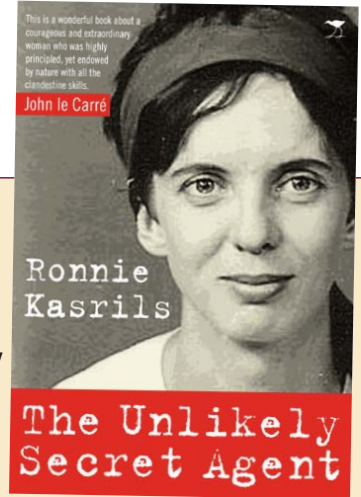
As a result, to take an example, between 2002 and 2009 housing waiting lists in London rose by 55% (from 228,789 to 354,389) and overcrowding by 47% (150,000 to 220,000). As the London Tenants' Federation says: 'Few other than buy-to-let investors have benefited.'

Without tackling the wider housing issues, Labour MPs have opposed the proposals to cap housing benefit.

Meg Hillier MP, a shadow minister, wrote on 22 July in the Hackney Gazette: "The banking crisis and a world recession meant that there were always going to be cutbacks in spending by the government. Not so much so quickly would be a better approach."

She criticized the government's cuts in ➔

An inspiration to all who struggle for freedom



Ronnie Kasrils: The Unlikely Secret Agent. Published by Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd., 10 Orange Street, Sunnyside Auckland Park 2092, South Africa. www.jacana.co.za

An escape story? A political story? Or a love story? All three and more. However you read this new book by Ronnie Kasrils -- Eleanor's book as he calls it -- you will be gripped from beginning to end.

JANE COKER reviews Ronnie Kasrils' book - *The Unlikely Secret Agent* - about his late wife Eleanor.

It tells the story of a young white woman's increasing involvement in the liberation struggle for South Africa. Initially her liberal views and sense of fair play draw her into contact with revolutionaries.

The work in her parents' bookshop enables her to obtain and distribute political materials that are subsequently banned by the oppressive regime of South Africa in the early 1960s. She meets Ronnie and their love blossoms alongside her increasingly revolutionary politics.

But she brings a practicality to planned acts of sabotage - with a steady hand she primes explosives; she considers blowing off the door of an ammunition dump rather too risky and instead obtains the key to the padlock.

When eventually she is captured - one of the first whites to be detained under the notorious 90 day law - she is vigorously and violently interrogated. The



Eleanor and Ronnie at a social event in the liberated South Africa for which they fought.

subsequent escape seemed so simple it is almost unbelievable yet escape she does, eventually to London where she continues her revolutionary activities. She remains in London until white rule in South Africa ceased.

But this account also describes her despair at leaving behind in South Africa a daughter aged seven whom she did not see for another 11 years - the

tragedy in her life which reverberates throughout the book.

Ronnie's account of Eleanor's heart-break is deeply touching and moving. His love and devotion for her and their two sons, both born in London, shines through. Their political motivation through the dark days of imprisonment and separation, which eventually helped bring about a new South Africa is inspirational. Although the events described in "Eleanor's book" cover only the period 1960 to 1963 they resonate in many ways with struggles for liberation and freedom today.

The personal consequences for individuals involved in political struggle set against the consequences for the liberation of the country. But today many of the activities and acts of sabotage undertaken by Eleanor and others would not go undetected - CCTV covers thousands of streets and buildings; mobile phones can be tracked and individual movements traced worldwide.

The level of personal information held on individuals is vast now compared to then. Yet the risks that Eleanor took at that time were risks that led to her incarceration, escape and exile.

Ronnie's account of those three years in her life is an inspiration to those who struggle against oppressive regimes now and confirmation that individual activity in the context of mass political struggle can and does make a real difference to the lives of thousands and thousands of people.

Without women like Eleanor the world would be a poorer place. She is an inspiration to all women who struggle for freedom and democracy at great personal cost but to the ultimate benefit of many.

→ housing benefit, saying they would hit the 61% of Hackney claimants who are out of work. "I suspect it will also see a step back to the days when private landlords would not accept tenants in receipt of benefits."

But she continued lamely: "There will always be a tough rationing of homes built with public money and let at lower,

affordable rents because however many homes are built, there will always be demand." This is a poor excuse.

As well as wholeheartedly opposing the Coalition Government's policies, now is the time to press Labour MPs to support a housing policy of direct government grant for a mass programme of council house building at low rents.

Israel and Apartheid: abundant similarities

Victory over fascism in 1945 raised the hope for freedom throughout the world; the stage was set for the decolonisation of Africa and Asia. Yet 1948 proved to be an *annus horribilis* for both black South Africans and native Palestinians.

RONNIE KASRILS exposes how apartheid South Africa and the Zionist state of Israel developed along parallel political lines.

For South Africans, May 1948 marked the election of the apartheid government, consolidating over three centuries of colonial conquest and subjugation, and the prelude to a forty-six year maelstrom.

For the Palestinians, 1948 ushered in a truly catastrophic era (the Nakba) of brutal dispossession at the hands of a rampant Zionist project, resulting in expulsion from a land they had inhabited for centuries, and their replacement by an exclusivist Jewish state whose unilateral independence was declared on 15 May that year.

Both new regimes proclaimed that they were democracies, and aligned to the west. That was a sick joke, for equality and full rights of citizenship were confined to minorities in both instances, minorities which imposed their political and military supremacy over the indigenous majorities and had no compunctions about suspending the rule of law and using an iron fist against even non-violent resistance.

Whilst apartheid was replaced in 1994 by a democratic, non-racist, non-sexist, unitary state of equal citizens, the suffering of the Palestinians only gets more excessive, and a just solution appears more distant.

Much has been written about the similarities between the legal and legislative framework governing Israel and apartheid South Africa, with the seminal work being Uri Davis's *Israel: an Apartheid State*. The laws and measures adopted by Israel, whether civil or military, closely mirror those of South Africa before and especially during the apartheid period.

Amongst these are the notorious nationality or race laws of both states

which excluded non-Jews or non-whites, as the case might be, from the entitlement and privileges of full citizenship: land and property laws making it illegal for those categories of people to own or lease land or businesses, or to purchase or rent homes except in specific areas; laws on the issuing of identity documents based on strict racial classifications and reinforced by obsessive Kafkaesque controls which greatly limit freedom of movement, including the right of people to live, work, study, play, relax, travel, where they wish and even determine where they may be buried; and scandalously, even laws affecting the rights of couples in mixed-marriages.

It is necessary to note that this legal framework relates to all Palestinians, those living within Israel as second-class citizens with limited rights, those in the occupied territories, and even those who fled Palestine as refugees, and who are now denied the right to return to their homeland.

The similarities to apartheid are remarkable and abundant, including the master-race psychosis it engenders, the cruelty and racial hatred generated, and the systemic crushing of the dignity of Arab or African. There is a colonial-type symbiosis between oppressed and oppressor in both scenarios and it is this that forms the focus of this paper.

Israel, from its very conception, embodied many of the features ascribed to 'colonialism of a special type' (CST), a term coined by the South African Communist Party in 1962 to characterise apartheid South Africa.

That thesis helped shape the strategy and tactics developed by the national liberation movement and it bears repeating here: "The conceding of inde-

pendence to South Africa by Britain in 1910 was not a victory over the forces of colonialism and imperialism. It was designed in the interests of imperialism. Power was transferred not into the hands of the masses of people of South Africa, but into the hands of the White minority alone ... On one level, that of 'White South Africa', there are all the features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stage of imperialism... But on another level, that of 'Non-White South Africa', there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and political domination ... The African Reserves show the complete lack of industry, communications and power resources which are characteristic of African territories under colonial rule throughout the Continent. Typical too of imperialist rule, is the reliance by the state upon brute force and terror ... Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself. It is this combination of the worst features of both imperialism and colonialism, within a single national frontier, which determines the special nature of the South African system and has brought upon its rulers the justified hatred and contempt of progressive and democratic people throughout the world."⁽¹⁾

It is not at all difficult to demonstrate Zionist Israel's colonial agenda. Indeed, from the early so-called political Zionists to Israel's first prime minister and associated military strongmen, we learn straight from the horse's mouth about the true colonial nature and objectives of their project, which at definitive times they did not bother to conceal.

The founding father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, stated in 1895 that once a Jewish state was established the aim would be to "spirit the penniless population [the Palestinians] across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country".⁽²⁾

Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion (see picture), who normally went to great lengths to conceal the true Zionist agenda, stated in an off-the-

record discourse in the 1950s: “Why should the Arabs make peace? If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them. Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it’s true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis ... but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we came here and stole their country.”⁽³⁾

The question arises: does the CST analogy assist us in understanding the Palestinian-Israeli situation and does it point to its resolution?

In my view it is essential to grasp the colonial factor in understanding the Palestinian case: what is happening there is a national liberation struggle of the indigenous and uprooted Palestinians against a colonial-settler project whose community has come to acquire a national identity within the same territory, and claims democratic rights exclusively for its own group. It is the settlers’ racist, colonialist agenda that is the fundamental cause of the conflict, as was the case in South Africa.

I would argue that the conflict stems from the Zionist worldview, namely its belief in a perpetual anti-semitism, which requires that Jewish people around the world (a faith group) usurp the territory of another people as their national home.

The biblical narrative is evoked to proclaim Palestine as the Promised Land – reserved exclusively for God’s ‘chosen people’ and their civilising mission. This is all too familiar, echoing almost exactly the vision of South Africa’s colonial settlers and exponents of apartheid.

In history this vision has consistently given rise to racism, segregation and a total onslaught on those who stand in its way, whether they be Africans or Arabs, native-Americans, Asians or Aborigines.

As with those whites who joined in the struggle for South Africa’s liberation, many Jews, within Israel and the diaspora reject the Zionist world view, and declare that being anti-Zionist and critical of Israel does not equate with anti-semitism any more than the accident of possessing a white skin meant one was a proponent of apartheid.

While the political impact of these Jews has until recently been somewhat limited, thankfully this is changing. Today we are seeing an increase in the number of those from within the Jewish community that refuse to remain silent in the face of Zionist oppression. It is my hope that these voices, will continue to grow louder and will eventually be heard.

Far from being a land without a peo-

ple, as Zionist propaganda falsely proclaimed in order to attract and justify colonial settlement, solid evidence points to the fact that for more than 2000 years an indigenous people – the Palestinians – lived there and developed agriculture and towns.

Shlomo Sand’s 2009 book, *The invention of the Jewish People* reveals that ample archaeological and other proof exists to conclude that Palestinians have lived in Palestine from Canaanite times.

In South Africa too, colonial and apartheid mythology taught generations of schoolchildren that when the Dutch colonists arrived on the shores of the Cape in 1652, the ‘Bantu tribes’ in their migration from the north had barely crossed the Limpopo River into what later became known as South Africa.



Tel Aviv 1960: David Ben Gurion (left) with US Zionist and millionaire, Billy Rose.

The predatory, expansionist Zionist project has been the source of war and untold suffering in the Middle East for over sixty years. This colonial dispossession inevitably has regional repercussions, and threatens the entire Middle East, in much the same way that apartheid South Africa destabilised the southern African region and beyond with its invasions, use of proxy forces, assassinations and massacres within and across its borders.

The destabilisation of the Middle East was amply demonstrated within eight years of the formation of Israel, in Israel’s joint invasion (with Britain and France) of Egypt in 1956, and the temporary seizure of the Suez Canal. Little wonder then that, back in 1920, Winston Churchill, then Britain’s Colonial Secretary, had observed that Zionism is good for the Jews and for the British Empire:

“If, as may well happen, there should be created in our own lifetime by the

banks of the Jordan a Jewish State under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four millions of Jews, an event would have occurred in the history of the world which would, from every point of view, be beneficial, and would be especially in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire.”⁽⁴⁾

After the Suez fiasco, America soon demonstrated its willingness to become Israel’s chief backer. Noted Egyptian scholar, Abdelwahab Elmessiri, has pointed out that Israel had become a ‘functional’ client state for US interests.⁽⁵⁾

It was through the US’s more than generous assistance in developmental and military aid that Israel became a regional superpower.

Since 1967, the US has provided approximately five billion dollars in aid annually – three billion of which is earmarked for military requirements alone – and sees Israel as its main strategic ally with regard to keeping the oil-rich Middle East under control.

An American organisation, Jewish Voice for Peace, has pointed out that US military aid to Israel since 1949 ‘represents the largest transfer of funds from one country to another in history’.⁽⁶⁾

It is estimated that this military aid amounted to 100 billion dollars by the end of the twentieth century.

President George W Bush demonstrated Washington’s support for Israel with a \$30 billion military-aid programme announced in 2007 – within a year of the Zionist state’s barbaric onslaught on Lebanon. The scale of this aid continues even in the aftermath of Israel’s horrendous attack on the Gaza Strip that took place from December 2008 into January 2009.

An unholy alliance between the two racist states, South Africa and Israel, from the mid-1970s lasted throughout the 1980s. When almost the entire world was boycotting South Africa as a leper state, Israel became its closest ally.

The two rogue states connived in secret arms’ deals, and Israel enabled the apartheid state to upgrade its jet fighter squadrons, naval fleet, and weapons systems, and to develop seven nuclear devices. The arms industries of the two states became closely interlocked, with billions of dollars worth of profits generated. It has taken some time for the democratic South African government to cut this Gordian knot.

During the hey-day of the Tel Aviv–Pretoria axis, after apartheid arms were supplied to an Israel reeling from the reversals of the 1973 October War, the two states exchanged military advisers and training specialists, in respect of both

conventional and unconventional warfare, and mutually encouraged the many terrorist excesses they perpetrated.

Oliver Tambo (pictured below), African National Congress leader at the time, addressing the UN General Assembly in 1982, stated:

The parallels between the Middle East and Southern Africa are as clear as they are sinister. The onslaught on the Lebanon, the massive massacre of Lebanese and Palestinians, the attempt to liquidate the PLO and Palestinian people, all of which were enacted with impunity by Israel have been followed minutely and with unconcealed interest and glee by the Pretoria racist regime which has designs for perpetrating the same kind of crime in Southern Africa in the expectation that, like Israel, it will be enabled by its allies to get away with murder.⁽⁷⁾

The United Nations partition plan for Palestine of 1947.⁽⁸⁾ accorded fifty-six percent of the British mandate of Palestine to a Jewish homeland, although Zionists had by then already acquired approximately seven percent of the land (purchased from absentee Arab landlords over the heads of tenant farmers) and comprised one-third of the population. (Most of the Zionists had recently arrived as Holocaust refugees from Europe.)

The remaining 44% of the land was allocated to the indigenous Palestinian majority who were never consulted on this, nor had they had anything to do with the diabolical suffering of the European Jews. The Zionists accepted partition with alacrity but never intended to honour the land allocation, and the Palestinians understandably rejected a plan that ripped their homeland asunder.

This took place over sixty years ago. The result of Israel's June 1967 war of aggression, a direct and dramatic extension of 1948, saw Israeli military occupation of the remaining twenty-two percent of the former mandate territory, including East Jerusalem, without any meaningful opposition from the west.

Whilst apartheid shocked western sensibilities, Zionist colonial conquest was accepted ostensibly as a payback for Holocaust suffering and the absurd argument, still vociferously peddled by Biblical fundamentalists, that Israel constitutes a mere two-hundredth or 0.5 % of the vast land that the 'God of real estate' allegedly promised the ancient Israelites!

Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza Strip are literally imprisoned under the most onerous conditions, suffering hardships and methods of control that are far worse than anything black South

Africans faced during the most dreadful days of apartheid.

In fact, any South African with integrity, visiting what amount to enclosed prison-ghettos under brutal military occupation, siege and collective punishment – imposed on behalf of a Jewish people that ironically suffered the Nazi Holocaust – will find stark similarities with apartheid immediately coming to mind; and even more shocking, comparisons with some of the methods of collective punishment and control devised by tyrannies elsewhere, including the Nazis.

The Palestinian people's fate clearly mirrors that of South Africa's indigenous majority during the colonial wars of dispossession of land and rights, as well as the harsh discrimination and suffering of the apartheid period, which was classified as a crime against humanity.



Israel is as guilty in international and humanitarian law as the apartheid regime once was. Israel's illegal conquest and occupation, with the avaricious land grab represented by its monstrous apartheid wall and the relentless expansion of its illegal settlements (in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention⁽⁹⁾), has reduced the West Bank to several disconnected pockets amounting to a mere twelve per cent of the land that formerly constituted Palestine.

No wonder that ex-US president Jimmy Carter, South African cleric Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others compare the situation to apartheid and its infamous bantustan system, whereby just thirteen per cent of South African land was allocated to its indigenous people.

There is, however, one key difference between Israel and apartheid South Africa. Israel has sought to rid itself of the Palestinian workforce on its doorstep, and, in an age of globalisation, is able to draw upon cheap labour from as far afield as Thailand and Romania instead.

This used to be apparent on entering the Gaza Strip through the Erez Crossing, with its huge but underused reception centre, originally constructed to process the daily movement of twenty thousand Gazan workers, who are no longer required by Israel. Indeed, all Gazans have faced starvation, bombardment and siege for over a thousand days – longer than the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War.

This makes for a situation in which segregation in Israel and its 'Palestinian' appendages – prison ghettos enclosed within Greater Israel – is far more severe but not different in essence from apartheid. Apartheid South Africa needed black labour.

Israel has reduced its dependence on the Palestinian workforce as far as possible, and applies all means to stifle the economy of the occupied territories, with the intention of completely driving out the remaining inhabitants. This is a merciless and ghastly process, which can only be reversed by the resilience of a beleaguered people reinforced by international support.

South Africa's colonial-apartheid order lasted almost 350 years with many ebbs and surges of conquest.

The Zionist colonial-settler project stems from the 1880s, and has consequently been violently crammed into a relatively shorter time, with shock waves of intense mass repression over the last six decades. The Israeli ruling class, corrupt and visionless, like the die-hard proponents of apartheid in its ailing years, is finding that it can no longer rule in the old way.

The Palestinians are not prepared to live under the old conditions. Here indeed, the CST thesis provides the Palestinian national liberation movement, and all pro-Palestinian activists, with the inspirational analogy of the anti-apartheid experience, as well as the strategy and the tactics of that struggle.

What is needed is firm Palestinian unity behind bold and courageous national leaders, reinforced by the popular mass struggle of its people. The strategy must embrace progressive Israelis and a powerful international solidarity movement exerting pressure on Israel.

Such a strategy – applied against apartheid – is waiting to crystallise. It will emerge with the growing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign, and the renewed energy that the Palestinian national liberation movement will undoubtedly generate.

As former beneficiaries of selfless international support, South Africans – with an anti-colonialist and anti-racist heritage – have a duty to encourage the

international campaign and press for genuine negotiations for a peaceful solution in the interests of all Muslims, Christians and Jews living in the holy land. South Africa's experience bears testimony to the fact that previously adversarial groups, once locked in a seemingly intractable struggle, can find a way of crossing the Rubicon, talking to one another and reconciling to seek a mutually beneficial solution worked out between equals.

The importance of the CST characterisation is that it demolishes the dangerous charade that Zionism has established a democratic system, and is itself a national liberation movement; it refutes the claims that both Israel and the Palestinians should therefore be treated equally by the international community in a balanced and even-handed manner.

The CST thesis lifts the veil to expose the true nature of this historic conflict as a struggle for land and national rights, and for full national determination and independence for the Palestinian people. CST exposes the charade of Israeli democracy.

Whilst the acceptance by Yasser Arafat's PLO of a state, based on the 1967 borders (East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza), appeared to limit the outright struggle for the whole of former Palestine, Israel's reluctance (with US support) to accept the Oslo Accords has come to threaten the two-state option. Consequently a revival of the full national demands of the Palestinians has

occurred, evident not only in the support Hamas has received, but also in the fact that Palestinian and some Jewish intellectuals are revisiting the original unitary, bi-national or single state option of equal citizenship and security for all, as in the example set by South Africa's democracy.

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FOOTNOTES

1. SACP (1962), emphasis added.
2. Herzl (1960: 88).
3. Quoted in Goldmann (1978: 99).
4. Winston S. Churchill, 'Zionism vs. Bolshevism: A struggle for the soul of the Jewish people', *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 8 February 1920. Available at: <http://www.fpp.co.uk/bookchapters/WSC/WSCwrote1920.html>.
5. Elmessiri (2007).
6. 'JVP statement on divestment', Jewish Voice for Peace, 8 December 2004. See <http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/content/jvp-statement-divestment>.
7. Statement at the plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 9 November 1982.
8. UN Resolution 181 (II): Future government of Palestine, was adopted on 29 November, 1947.
9. The Fourth Geneva Convention (the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War) is one of the four treaties of the Geneva Conventions. It was adopted in August 1949 and defines humanitarian protection for civilians in a war zone. It also outlaws a concept of war in which all citizens can be considered to be combatants.

The Socialist Correspondent

Conference

- When: Saturday 9 April 2011 @ 10.30 – 5pm
- Where: University of London Union (ULU) Malet Street, London.
- What: Sessions on:
- **The Global Economic situation**
 - **Britain: austerity, cuts and resistance**
 - **The Arab Uprising: where will it lead?**

Fee: £10 - £5 (unwaged)

Further info: The Socialist Correspondent, 10 Midlothian Drive, Glasgow G41 3RA

Gorbachev: the first cut of history

The dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 will provide rich pickings for historians of the next decades, if not for the centuries to come.

GREG KASER reviews three recent histories of communism to explore their treatment of the last General Secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.



Mikhail Gorbachev (pictured), its last leader, who celebrated his 80th birthday in March 2011 in London at an event to raise money to fight cancer, from which his wife, Raisa Maximovna, died, was the pivotal figure.

He published his own account of that history in his 1996 memoirs. The first crop of academic histories is now being issued, putting his accomplishments and failures into context. Moscow's archives are open and many protagonists remain available for interview so historians have no lack of source material.

Stephen Kotkin is a historian at Princeton University, while Archie Brown and Bob Service are fellows of St Antony's College at the University of Oxford. All three undertook research in the USSR in the 1980s and thus witnessed perestroika (reconstruction) at first-hand.

While never sympathetic to communism these histories are interesting for their near unanimity in ascribing the USSR's collapse as a state and as a social system to political misjudgement and Gorbachev's naivety.

Let's start with Kotkin, who puts his case succinctly at the start of his book. "Virtually everyone seems to think the Soviet Union was collapsing before 1985. They are wrong. ... Forget about the dominant tropes of 'neo-liberal reforms' and 'Western aid' for describing post-Soviet Russia, let alone 'emerging civil society' for characterising the late

- **Stephen Kotkin, 2001, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000*, Oxford University Press.**
- **Robert Service, 2007, *Comrades – Communism: A World History*, Macmillan/Pan.**
- **Archie Brown, 2009, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, Vintage.**

Soviet period. What happened in the Soviet Union and continued in Russia, was the sudden onset, and then inescapable prolongation, of the death agony of an entire world comprising non-market economies and anti-liberal institutions. The monumental second world collapse, in the face of a more powerful first world ... was triggered not by military pressure but by Communist ideology ... [when] the Soviet Union embarked upon a quest to realise the dream of 'socialism with a human face'. ... A generation, led by Mikhail Gorbachev, lamented the crushing of the 1968 Prague Spring. ... They [mistakenly] believed the planned economy could be reformed. ... Perestroika, unintentionally, destroyed the planned economy, [while glasnost undermined] the allegiance to Soviet socialism, and, in the end, the party too. And the blow to the party unhinged the Union, which the party alone had held together."

The same humanist motive is depicted by Brown: by 1989, "the views of Gorbachev and like-minded supporters [within the Party and among the intelligentsia] ... had evolved ... from wishing to reform the system to seeking a 'third way' - a new model of 'socialism with a human face'."

Interestingly the three historians see the collapse of the socialist system as a political event, and not driven by economic factors. Kotkin cites a KGB report that while the USSR had been "overcome by malaise" since the 1970s and had "lost the competition with the West, it was lethargically stable" and could have continued "muddling on for some time". They take issue with the simplistic Western liberal account that "communism did not work". To be sure, perestroika failed – "it was reform that produced the crisis" according to Brown – although why 'economic reform' (meaning the reintroduction of market forces as the drivers of the economy) was considered to be the solution is not explicitly addressed in these histories. I examine this question and the related issue of the USSR's political disintegration.

The move to the market

The link between a faltering Soviet economy, the falling behind of living standards in comparison to the advanced capitalist countries (and the new industrial countries, like South Korea and Malaysia), and the launch of perestroika along with political liberalisation is not straight forward.

If anything, the alleged deterioration in economic and scientific performance was the excuse used by the reformers to drive through political changes. Brown states that "the reasons for the dramatic changes in the late 1980s were the result of particular political choices. The choices that were made owed a lot initially to the stimulus of relative economic failure, but the radical political changes which were introduced in the Soviet Union after 1985 were by no means economically determined."

If the drivers of change were political and ideological, then from where did these ideas arise? Brown suggests that "some of the influence on party reformers came directly from the West". During the late 1980s, Gorbachev's "political beliefs evolved to the point at which they were virtually indistinguishable from those of the Social Democrats of Western Europe".

In this Gorbachev was by no means unusual, and Brown also alludes to this, since, during the 1980s, many European communist parties moved towards social democracy. This crisis of communism cannot, in turn, be seen in isolation from the rise of neo-liberalism as the dominant approach in social science and politics.

The second source of inspiration is to be found in Hungary, where a market-based New Economic Mechanism was launched in 1966, which legalised small enterprises and boosted living standards temporarily.



Brown mentions the connection between Yury Andropov (pictured), who had backed János Kádár successfully for the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party against Khrushchev's inclinations in 1956, as "a strong political relationship, which lasted until the end of Andropov's life".

It seems that Andropov's support for an experiment in market socialism by the Hungarians lay behind his own call for perestroika after he assumed the leadership of the USSR in 1982. Gorbachev was, of course, Andropov's protégé and his designated successor.

However, the internal, and underground, constituencies pushing for the legalisation of markets, within the co-operatives, the Komsomol youth organisation and the brokers and agents of the 'shadow economy', are left out of the picture in these histories.

The fraud and corruption within enterprises and in society generally played a crucial part in explaining why planning was abandoned in favour of the market mechanism.

Perestroika and the state

In his study, Service concludes that it was mainly due to good fortune that the USSR survived as a socialist state. "Perhaps if the first communist experiment had occurred on Christmas Island it would have been left alone; but any other country would inevitably have stirred up a crusade against it.

Communism in Russia came near to being overrun by the great powers" in 1919 and only the USSR's size and natural resources and Stalin's industrialisation enabled it to survive the Japanese and Nazi attacks of 1938 and 1941. The USSR operated under "an internal state of siege", whereby "military objectives skewed the budget and conditioned the whole organisation and official culture of society".

With détente came the opportunity to trade with capitalism and redirect investment towards consumption, but, as the Czechoslovak episode in 1968 showed, "economic decentralisation and open political discussion ... [to reform] communism was likely to turn ... it into something radically different", in other words, a return to capitalism. Former CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev "understood this", but Gorbachev "went at his task like a bull at a gate".

Gorbachev sought to accommodate nationalists in the Baltic States, the Caucasus and Ukraine by refounding the USSR along parliamentary and federal lines. Kotkin points out the inconsistency in Gorbachev's strategy whereby "the Communist Party was supposed to be both the instrument and object of perestroika".

The communist party was "indispensable to the integrity of the [Soviet] Union," Kotkin suggests. Service argues similarly that Gorbachev's constitutional changes in the name of democracy and respect for human rights broke "the Soviet order".

By this Service means the workers' and soldiers' councils that took power through a class alliance led by the com-

munist party. The Soviets combined executive and legislative functions, unlike the situation prescribed in the US Constitution where there is a separation of powers between the organs of the state.

Essentially, the legitimacy of the socialist countries' governance regimes stemmed from the 1917 Revolution and the part played subsequently by the Party in developing the country and securing the victory of 1945.

Forty years on, however, it was clear that the pride the Soviet people felt for past achievements was considered little compensation for chronic shortages in supplies and petty restrictions in day-to-day life, while Party privileges were resented. As a visitor in the mid-1980s I heard first hand how people were expecting Gorbachev to deliver change for the better.

Thus, while Gorbachev was "a brilliant and brave leader ... he and his society paid dearly for his recklessness"; his "inability to understand the nature of the Soviet order ... ruined the economy and smashed the state into fragments", Service explains.

Having supported the transformation to a market economy in the expectation "of American-style affluence, combined with European-style social welfare ... the people got an economic involution and mass impoverishment", according to Kotkin.

A market economy requires an autonomous legal system to enable fair competition, so Gorbachev sought to create a law-based state, which would also uphold human rights. In doing so, he undermined deliberately the CPSU's strategic role and its internationalist perspective.

He had to eliminate not only the rival source of authority that the communist party represented, but also dismantle its influence over the "state sponsored associations" of civil society, which, Kotkin acknowledges, empowered the Soviet people. "The Soviet model developed by Lenin and Stalin", Service concludes, could not incorporate "political pluralism" without becoming "vulnerable to internal dissolution or external intervention", as Salvador Allende in Chile had "learnt the hard way". Service mentions the activities of Western intelligence agencies but does not elaborate on what they did or achieved.

Ever since Thomas Hobbs in the Seventeenth Century, liberal political scientists have viewed the state as a necessary evil. Through an implicit social contract, civil society tolerates a state's monopoly



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Fidel Castro and the Communists 1952-59

One of the most contentious debates in the study of the Cuban revolution concerns the relationship between Fidel Castro and the Cuban communist party, the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP).

STEVE CUSHION reviews the book by Angelina Rojas.

This dispute is significant because of the important role played by one-time members of the PSP in Cuban political life after the triumph of the revolution in January 1959, resulting in a tendency, both by those who support that role and by those who oppose it, to rewrite history in order to maximise or minimise the communist contribution to the revolutionary victory.

Equally, some of Fidel Castro's enemies have attempted to discredit him by alleging that he was always a secret communist. Angelina Rojas has helped us get to the heart of the matter in the final volume of her three volume history of the "First Cuban Communist Party" which will shortly be launched at the Havana Book Fair and which will be presented to the delegates at the forthcoming Cuban Communist Party congress.

The first two volumes of this work by Rojas, who is a historian at the Institute of Cuban History in Havana and who teaches at Havana University, dealt with the development of Cuban communism from its origins in the 1920s through to the eve of the coup staged by Fulgencio Batista in March 1952.

This final volume covers the party's reaction to that coup and its role in the subsequent insurrection which led to the triumph of the revolution in January 1959.

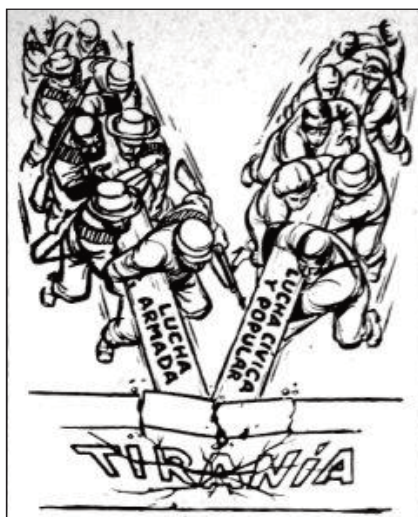
Of particular interest is the way the book deals with the relationship between the PSP and the Revolutionary Movement of the 26th July (M-26-7), led by Fidel Castro. Based on extensive archive research and interviews with surviving militants, this book's most important contribution is to show how history is made by real people whose opinions and practice changed over time in response to events.

Rojas Blaquier, Angelina: Primer Partido Comunista de Cuba, Tomo 3, Santiago de Cuba, Editorial Oriente, 2011

After his 1952 coup, Batista initially moved slowly, leaving a narrow space in which opponents such as the communists could still operate. In these circumstances, the PSP strongly opposed the armed struggle, counterposing "mass action" to what it saw as "terrorism" and "putschism".

Thus, when Fidel Castro made his famous attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago on 26th July 1953, they condemned it out of hand as adventurism. It is only with hindsight that we can see that Castro's gamble paid off, at the time it must have indeed appeared the act of a madman.

In the period between 1953 and Castro's return in the Granma at the end of 1956, the PSP concentrated on building its clandestine organisation under a



1959: Fidel Castro.

regime that relied to a great extent upon dividing and attempting to corrupt its opponents, only using violent repression when that failed.

This approach changed drastically following the start of the rebel guerrilla campaign in the Sierra Maestra. The communist party, despite its insistence on peaceful mass action, was equally targeted by government death squads alongside supporters of Castro's rebels, the newly formed 26th July Movement.

Many of the party's working class activists were murdered in cold blood or simply disappeared. The repression was heaviest in the eastern end of the island, where the rebel army was based, and this produced a political difference between the PSP leadership in Havana and the membership in Oriente province, where ordinary workers started to feel that they needed armed protection from the agents of the increasingly dictatorial regime if they were to be able to defend their wages and conditions. This led PSP and M-26-7 militants into collaboration at workplace level, often unbeknown to the leaderships of both organisations.

Such regional differences, as well as the political convergence of the communists and supporters of the rebel army from the base up, has been ignored by most historians, whose interest is concentrated on the doings of political leaders based in Havana.

Yet it may be argued that the pressure →

Gorbachev: the first cut of history

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of violence to enforce the law, ensure defence, facilitate a functioning economy and provide public goods, like health care.

Conversely, a government that relies on popular participation in decision-making and in the execution of programmes (including internal security and the courts), and guarantees the basics of life, often enjoys more than the formal legitimacy that is provided by a constitution and periodic elections.

Bread and butter issues are fundamental to securing a state's legitimacy. Whether it is a chicken in the pot (Roosevelt) or an iron rice bowl (Mao), the people expect some basic benefits and guarantees.

In the USSR people had always grumbled about the shortages of sausages but they only lost confidence in Gorbachev when the economy crumbled, with the government asking eventually for food aid from the USA, Canada and the EU in late 1990 alongside massive IMF structural adjustment loans. (Throughout the 1990s the USA provided butter, powdered milk, wheat, rice, peanuts and infant formula as humanitarian assistance to needy children and old people in the Russian Federation, and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, despite the evidence that food supplies in the region were adequate.)

Removing the implicit guarantees of affordable basic foodstuffs, of job security, and doing away with the role played

by Party members locally, and within enterprises, to resolve people's personal difficulties – the pillars upon which stability in the USSR were based – was crucial.

External subversion of socialist countries and other regimes disliked by liberals usually involves supporting critical voices from within civil society that highlight deficiencies – the clamour over electricity supplies in Venezuela being a case in point. By these means, it is hoped to undermine a regime's legitimacy, though there is scant evidence that it is ever a decisive factor in regime change. What the CIA failed to achieve, however, perestroika managed to accomplish.

Only by undermining those pillars of legitimacy, the keys to retaining popular confidence in the Soviet order (and to delivering the communist vision of a society without a civil society/state division), under the guise of freeing people from communist repression, could a liberal regime be re-installed in the Soviet Union.

That said, the tendency of Western liberals to ignore class division (e.g. corporate power) and outlaw groups (e.g. mafia) within civil society also meant that they were caught by surprise by the success of the likes of Putin

(pictured) in Russia, Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan and Lukashenko in Belarus.



The stability of the newly installed pro-capitalist but illiberal regimes owes much to the restoration of some of the features of Soviet society. For liberals, and for Gorbachev, the subsequent political evolution of the former states of the Soviet Union, with no comforting rotation of power between the equivalents of Republicans and Democrats, has been a disappointment.

Overall Kotkin provides a racy and readable account of the transformation and does not hesitate to finger the fraudsters and spivs who turned a pretty penny in the process.

The more measured tomes from Brown and Service demonstrate an impressive historical and geographical scope, and give plenty of detail on who said what to whom. But none display any sense of why these events of the 20th Century mattered then or now. There is no sense of 'the struggle' or any analysis of what communists were trying to achieve at the industrial or cultural levels.

The history of communism is one of ideas and argument, of trailblazers and consolidators, of strategies and wakes, of failures and achievement in the cause of turning the world upside down.

Above all, the story is exciting, and though 1989 will be remembered as a date as significant as 1789 or 1917, the story (and the struggle) remain unfinished. The indictment of perestroika is presented too blandly, as if the events Gorbachev set in train were inevitable, and its historic significance is left unexplored.

→ from the working class base in the East forced a convergence of the national political line of both organisations, with the PSP moving to support the armed struggle and, following the disastrous failure of their call for a general strike on the 9th April 1958, the M-26-7's taking working class organisation much more seriously.

Thus, in May 1958, Fidel Castro appointed Níco Torres, a railway worker from Guantánamo, to build the rebel workers' section, the Frente Obrero Nacional (FON) and to negotiate common cause with the communists.

This was not easy, as both sides jockeyed for position, but finally, in November of that year, the Frente Obrero Nacional Unido (FONU) was formed with the support of both groupings.

This united front organised two workers' congresses in December 1958 that

laid plans for a sugar workers' strike aimed at preventing the start of the 1959 sugar harvest, thereby threatening to cripple the economy.

In the event, Batista fled on New Year's day and a general strike quickly overwhelmed the few remaining supporters of the dictatorship, in the process thwarting the planned interventions of the US ambassador.

What therefore is the balance sheet of communist involvement in the Cuban insurrection? The main accusation of their enemies is that the PSP only jumped on the rebel bandwagon when victory was assured.

This ignores the fact that, when the PSP first publicly announced its support for the guerrilla war, in March 1958, rebel victory was far from a foregone conclusion.

But the real injustice of this accusa-

tion is that it ignores the heroic work of ordinary rank and file communists, who risked their lives distributing a constant stream of leaflets and underground newspapers, which contributed to maintaining and building a level of working class discontent that responded so overwhelmingly to Fidel Castro's call for a general strike on 1st January 1959.

That strike would equally have been impossible without the armed support of the rebel army and it is the convergence of the two tactics, armed struggle and mass action, which ensured the triumph of the revolution.

Whatever else may come out of the forthcoming congress of the Cuban Communist Party, the decision to publish Rojas's book for the delegates has provided historians with a sound basis to reassess an important historical debate.

Camden School students' occupation

School students became increasingly politicized after the coalition began announcing cuts to public spending, especially those policies that cut funding to education: meaning higher university fees and the ending of the Educational Maintenance Allowance.

ASHER KORNER's account of the 24 hour occupation against Tory-Liberal government education cuts.

Some sixth formers studying at Camden School for Girls decided to organize a peaceful protest against the cuts by occupying the school building for 24 hours.

The plan was spread through word of mouth around the sixth form, with an initial group spreading it to a further four people each until the day itself. There was a strong sense of anticipation in the week leading up to the planned date, Wednesday 8th December 2010.

On the evening of Tuesday 7th, leaflets about 'What you need for an occupation' were handed out by a few students at the school gates, deliberately scrunched up so that if they were dropped, they would not alert the school authorities to the plan. A core of thirty students was established, and agreed to meet in Cantelowes Park, opposite the school, at 8.45 on the morning of the 8th December.

8.45 Forty students assemble in Cantelowes Park with overnight bags.

9.00 The students walk to the front gates of the school, and are met and confronted by school staff. They are quickly let in since they all have lessons starting at 9am, and walk to the sixth form hall, where they set up camp.

9.05 Four students go to meet the head of sixth form and the head teacher of the school, in order to lay out the plan for the day, and to arrange another meeting later on. The teachers are very angry, having been surprised by the plan to occupy the sixth form building. They feel that the good relationship between students and staff has been irrevocably broken. They are adamant that no student can remain on the premises after hours since a schoolkeeper, and members of staff, are required by law to be

present on site at the same time as a student.

9.20 Although word quickly spreads that the teachers are worried, the occupied hall is being covered in banners, and chairs are set out in circles for discussions. A laptop is brought in and used to publicise the Camden School sit-in.

9.40 There is a core of at least 15 students present in the hall throughout the morning, since most students have lessons that begin at 9 or at 9.40.

11.00 Other sixth formers begin to visit the occupied hall; students who do not know about the sit-in are informed, and word spreads quickly. The same four students who met with the teachers in the morning go again to speak to the head of sixth form.

11.15 It is made clear to the group that the sit-in will be impossible: the schoolkeepers are not employed after hours; there are legal implications; the plans are irresponsible and inconsiderate of the teachers. A third meeting is arranged for 13.15.

11.30 A member of the Sociology department visits the sit-in to give us some photocopies of an article on the cuts to the public sector. She is invited, and agrees, to give a talk to the students who are in the hall at the time.

11.40 The media turn up outside the front gates of the school, and because we have agreed with the teachers not to allow huge media attention to get in the way of the Year Six entry examination that day, some students asked the journalists to interview them around the corner. Some news teams agree but many do not, stating that they have full rights to film wherever they want. The media consist of the BBC, ITN, Channel 4,

Guardian, Telegraph, Ham and High (local paper). Channel 4's Dispatches give a camera to the students. There are solidarity talks from students at SOAS and UCL, and visits from parents of other schools.

13.10 The media attention grows until 13.30, when students are called back into the sixth form hall. The four person negotiating team returns to the head teacher and the head of sixth form, and leave the meeting feeling the occupation is impossible and that it will have to take place in another building. A general meeting of all the occupiers is called.

13.35 About 60 students sit in a circle in the hall in discussion, and use a 'consensus' to decide things. A chair is elected, and it is agreed that the students will remain in occupation until further notice. It is also agreed that it would be a bad idea to try to bribe the schoolkeepers to stay the night. The media are kept updated by the students on the two laptops in the hall.

14.00 Unsure but excited and energetic atmosphere. Slight confusion among students about which course of action will be taken. Students are fully settled in at this time, playing cards and gathered in groups in the hall. It is announced that Camden are the 6th most looked at trend on Twitter in the UK.

14.10 Another general meeting is called and the point is again stressed that the protest is NOT against Camden School, but that the school feels that it is indeed a personal attack. General agreement to keep up the protest. It is also announced during the meeting that Acland Burghley sixth form nearby are also in occupation, giving the students at Camden a sense of solidarity. The question is also raised about the demands that had initially been set out to the teachers: should a protest that is not aimed at the school have any demands to the school itself? It is generally agreed that the protest is more important than the inconvenience to the school.

15.00 The school refuses entry to some students who have left by the front gate to get food from Tesco opposite the school. This is seen as an unnecessary

restriction – students are forced to climb over the gates at the back of the school.

15.15 A new negotiations team is formed which goes to speak to the teachers. It becomes apparent that the negotiations team are finding it hard to combat the teachers on their own, so another general meeting is called and the negotiations team is invited back into the occupied hall. The head of the school and of sixth form enter the hall, but are asked to leave for a few minutes so that a final decision can be agreed on. The head teacher talks to the occupiers in a manner very different to the one she used whilst talking to the negotiations team. She says that our aims have been achieved and that a meeting with the school governors can be organized: "Let my staff go home".

15.30 The teachers leave the room and discussions begin. The students are tense and serious about the conflict between them and the school, and it is clear that some students would rather leave. However, it has been agreed before that we are in it together and that every move has to be agreed mutually. 70 students are in the hall, and the decision to stay is finally made. The point is made that the students knew an occupation would create conflict from the start, so to back down would be cowardly. It is also noted that since Acland Burghley's occupation has now been shut down, we are the representatives of many schoolchildren across the UK. Students from UCL are regularly visiting us and bringing us food from Tesco. The newspapers are calling students non-stop. It is announced, thanks to

legal advice from law students at SOAS, that the students are safe from police intervention unless drugs and alcohol are found on the premises.

16.10 Some students leave with the promise of return, to go to play football for a Sixth Form team fixture. They phone, saying that there are still media teams outside the school, BBC1 broadcasting live.

16.20 The meeting still going. Channel 4 phones about an interview, and says that our occupation is the talk of their office. A journalist from the Camden Journal calls the Camden protest, 'the boldest'. The teachers are informed of the final decision to stay overnight, so the group of 10 or so teachers enters the hall for the first time to find out what is going on. Some try to convince us to leave, some are actually encouraging.

17.30 Although the teachers are seen settling in outside the hall, it is clear that parents are being called and that the school is trying everything to get the students out. They have locked all gates, and have a member of staff on the front gate at all times. Some students go to speak to the teachers who have clearly volunteered to stay with the students, and come up against some very angry feelings. The students explain that one night's discomfort for both students and teachers is nothing compared to a life of discomfort and debt. The teachers feel blackmailed into staying.

17.45 The head teacher and the head of sixth form come into the hall once more, and talk to the students again. A meeting with the school counsellor is offered, but the teachers walk out of the

hall before a response can be made. The head teacher's speech leaves the students resolved to stay overnight.

18.30 Camden Sit-In on BBC London News live.

19.00 "Good natured protests across the UK" – Channel 4 News. A student from the sixth form is invited to do a live interview with Jon Snow and a leading Liberal MP, at the Channel 4 studios for Channel 4 News. 70 students crowd round a single laptop to see the interview, in which the student demolishes the argument of the Liberal MP. "We feel completely betrayed", says the student. Jon Snow behind the student all the way.

19.15 Food fund is organized. Some students leave to buy food.

20.15 The football team returns. An Arsenal match is on the laptops, people sitting in groups. More subdued atmosphere, accustomed to the idea of sleeping in school. Music, cards, films, duvets, laughter. Media attention remains strong well into the night.

01.00 Lights are turned off in the hall.

03.30 Students stop talking and go to sleep

07.30 Students begin waking up. Meeting called in the morning. Congratulations given. Agreed that letters should be written to the teachers. Some students bring chocolates and flowers for the teachers. Students empty out of the hall and some remain and clean it up completely. It is agreed that the sixth formers will meet again in Canteloves Park at 11.00am to go down to the demonstration in central London that day – the 9th December.

Camden School for Girls (and boys)

HISTORY

Founded in 1871 by the suffragette Frances Mary Buss, who also founded North London Collegiate School, the Camden School for Girls was one of the first girls' schools in England.

A grammar school for much of the 20th century, it became comprehensive in 1976. It was not fully comprehensive until 1981. Although the name has remained, male students are now admitted.

NOTABLE TEACHERS

* Geoffrey Fallows, headmaster 1989–2000, President of the Joint Association of Classical Teachers from 2003–5

* Carol Handley, headmistress 1971–85, President of the Classical Association from 1996–7

* Margot Heinemann, teacher 1959–66, Marxist writer. She joined the Communist Party in 1934 because of its active opposition to the British Union of Fascists. She had a relationship with John Cornford, while a student at the University of Cambridge.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm, there also at the time, wrote 'she probably had more influence on me than any other person I have known.'

FORMER PUPILS Include:

* Geri Halliwell of the Spice Girls;

* Emma Thompson, actress; and,

* Sarah Brown (née Macauley), wife of former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A 1999 Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report called it "a unique and very effective school in many ways."

Another, written in March 2005, said it was "a very good school with excellent features," and the most recent report said that it "rightly deserves the outstanding reputation it has among parents and in the community."

Its GCSE results are good, and its A-level results are the best in the Camden LEA.

Angela Davis: a woman writes history

During recent years I have noticed that I have thought more and more about the period in the early seventies when I found myself in custody accused of the capital crimes of murder, kidnapping and conspiracy.

ANGELA DAVIS's foreword to the book by Klaus Steiniger about her imprisonment and trial in the USA during the 1970s.

Not because I regard it as necessary to cling to these memories from a personal point of view. Certainly it was a disturbing, overwhelming and often frightening part of my life, and I would like to keep those times as vivid as possible in my memory.

But in particular, in this epoch of the global war against "terror", of conservative efforts to restore the equilibrium of the collapsed welfare state, of the racism permeating everything in the education and prison systems, I want to emphasise that in my case a mighty international mass movement irrevocably triumphed over the state.

When in the year 2009 I think of the story of my trial and of the campaign which led us to a victorious conclusion, for me it is not primarily about my story, but about the possibilities of collective solidarity which transcends borders.

Today the effects of global capitalism on the people are far more powerful than anything that we at the time could imagine – even in our most passionate efforts against the might of capital. We saw the present as something that could be changed.

Today too we must be in a position to see it as changeable. We must place our collective trust in a future which will be forged by the communities of the struggle – of workers, students, artists, prisoners, with people of different racial, ethnic and national backgrounds.

With this in mind I am very happy that Klaus Steiniger's enlightening report on the trial and the movement round my case is being re-published. And it is my great honour to add some introductory words to the book "Angela Davis. A Woman Writes History".

"Angela Davis: Eine Frau schreibt Geschichte" by Klaus Steiniger. Published in German by Verlag Neues Leben.

The impressive action "Freedom for Angela Davis" in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) especially moved me in those days. I knew from my comrades in the leadership of the Communist Party and from people who had spoken to Klaus Steiniger and Horst Schaefer that our comrades in the GDR were conducting a determined campaign around the demand for my freedom.

As special correspondent sent by "Neues Deutschland", Klaus Steiniger took part in the trial in San Jose and also reported on the campaign which was winning more and more supporters all over the world.

It moved me more than I could ever have imagined when I learned of the true extent of this action. As presented in the book, at the time I was in custody in a prison in California.

People reported to me the scale the movement had assumed in the GDR. I was at that time in the third place of detention since my arrest. At first I was held in the New York women's prison, then, after being delivered up to the state of California, in the prison of Marin County and finally in an institution in Palo Alto, not far from San Jose, where the trial took place.

It was a cold damp cell and I remember it as being pervasively grey – both in its colour and in its effect. The cell was intended for two prisoners and I could use the upper and lower bunks because I was held in solitary confinement.

As it was a place of detention in which

prisoners were held temporarily, there were no recreation rooms, no open corridors or other areas where it would have been possible to move about, walk a few steps, do some sport or be with other inmates. There was not even a visitors' room.

In other words: the institution generated extreme claustrophobia. Members of the National United Committee for the Freedom of Angela Davis and all Political Prisoners protested at these conditions of imprisonment. That led to the prison supervisors allowing me access to a neighbouring padded cell.

This place was described by the officials – without a hint of irony – as a "suite". But I must admit that I valued the extra space even when I saw with concern that the hole in the middle of the floor, which had served the inmates before me as a toilet, could overflow and my books could get wet.

In this cell every day one of the duty warders would bring me my post, which I always waited for impatiently. Normally I spent several hours a day on the correspondence.

At the beginning of my imprisonment it was possible to answer every letter, but as the movement then grew stronger, there were no longer enough hours in the day to attend to the growing pile of letters.

I made an effort to read all of them and tried to write back at least to all the children and other prisoners who sent me messages. One day, when I was going through my post, I noticed that I had received many cards with solidarity messages from the GDR.

"Freedom for Angela!" was written on them, and it seemed to me as if they had been written by children. The postcards were decorated with red roses, each one of them differently drawn and the expression of the creativity of each individual child who had sent them to me. I still know how charming I found it that the children from the GDR were sending me roses that would never wither.

At the beginning I could examine each of the 15 to 20 cards that arrived, every day more came, then 100, then 500, and finally the cards from the chil-

Angela Davis speaking at the Myer Horowitz Theatre in the University of Alberta, Canada - 28 March 2006.

Photo: Nick Wiebe



dren reached me in such numbers that they were delivered to me in large US post office sacks.

At first I read and enjoyed every individual one and tried to imagine what the child might be like who had written me the card. But then there was such a huge number of cards that there was not enough time to read each one, however much I had wanted to.

Hundreds, thousands, then tens of thousands, a million wonderful roses! "A Million Roses for Angela". Finally so many cards had arrived that they had to be taken to another place.

Today they are preserved in the archives of Stanford University in Palo Alto, not far from that prison in which I sat when the postcards arrived. Today when I think back to the international campaign for my freedom, the million roses of the school children of the GDR come first and foremost into my mind.

Now, almost 40 years later, I have met many German women and men who have reported to me that when they were

children they sent postcards decorated with roses to the prison I was held in. Around 2003 I visited Berlin on the occasion of the laying of Herbert Marcuse's ashes in the Dorotheenstadt Cemetery. During my stay in the city many people told me they had been part of the "A Million Roses" campaign as children. In 2005 I was invited to speak at the annual Rosa Luxemburg Conference run by "Junge Welt".

I took part in the meeting with my friends Horst and Itte Schaefer. During this visit too I met people who had written postcards as children and who were proud that this political gesture in their youth had played an important role.

Not long ago I gave lectures at a series of universities in different places all over the USA. German emigrants let me know that they too had taken part in the "A Million Roses" campaign. I have met adults all over the world who shone full of nostalgic joy when they reported their childhood memories of having created a postcard for me at school.

Every time I meet one of these million children of the time, I am conscious of how important it is to preserve the historical memory of what the socialist countries were able to achieve.

In reality I owe my freedom to those campaigns which were supported by the governments of the socialist countries – from the GDR to the USSR to Cuba – and by the communist parties of the whole world. But beyond that we would do well to remember the achievements of the socialist community of nations when we try to ward off the intrusion of capitalist interests into the most intimate spheres of our lives and here, in the USA, fight for basic rights.

To conclude I would like to express to Klaus Steiniger my deep gratitude for his life's work and his engagement for the cause of freedom. I am very lucky that he, as a journalist and lawyer for world wide justice, supported me as well.

I hope that the re-publication of this book reminds many readers of a worthy contribution to humanity and solidarity.

The Pits and the Pendulum

Andrew Turner's recent retrospective exhibition of paintings, drawings, prints and banners was on show at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, near Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

PAT TURNBULL reviews Andrew Turner's retrospective exhibition.

The museum is in Caphouse Colliery, which was closed in 1985, shortly after the great miners' strike – an appropriate venue in view of the themes of his art.

The title of the exhibition was 'The Pits and the Pendulums', subtitle 'Coal Miners versus Free Markets'.

In the guide to the exhibition Andrew Turner introduced himself: 'Born into a miner's family, I grew up in a small pit village situated in a most exposed position some 600 feet above sea level in West Lothian, Scotland. ... A large slagheap had grown up each side of the

village, and as I grew, they grew. The miners called them "bings" and we nick-named them "pyramids" because of their triangular shape. Slaves had built the ancient pyramids and generations of wage-slaves "built" ours. Thirty years later I recreated their image for the prologue of my series of drawings "The Generals' Strike".

'The year I left school the spectre of pit closures had begun to haunt the British coalfields. ... I did not realise it at the time of course, but I had experienced the first post-war swing of the pendulum against the pits...

'A raw class and political consciousness rooted my imagery in excessive, pro-social objectivity; and it continues to do so to this day.' Andrew Turner contrasts this with the state of 'much contemporary British art and culture'. 'Far too many of our art galleries, both public and private, are financed by free-market-sponsored promotions, which breeds an excessive, anti-social subjectivity...

'Serious art with a social or political purpose is dismissed as propagandist or ignored, and even censored.'

Gordon Wardman, who, like Andrew Turner, has 'plagued British painting and poetry for over 30 years', also writes in the guide. 'Andrew Turner's "The Nation Mourns the death of Churchill", from

his "Ballads Moribundus", has looked down on my labours for thirty years now. It's an old friend, and it's still growing on me, with its echoes of Rembrandt, Hogarth, Brueghel, and a lifetime of class struggle ... These two pitmen dancing on a grave, so solid and so graceful, always make me smile.' He describes Andrew Turner's 'grim masterpiece the "Black Friday Triptych"' as 'a stern warning to learn from the lesson of history, a lesson etched in stark configuration, and, in the Triptych, stark colours (never have red, white and blue carried more weight or meaning!).'

Gordon Wardman goes on to the other aspect of Andrew Turner's work: 'Andrew has painted some dozen union banners over the years. There is, if you can track it down, an excellent French book about them, "Un peintre de bannières syndicales" by Denise and George Sentis (1998, Lille) ... What Andrew brings to that form is a bold, fresh use of colour and perspective and a wealth of painstaking symbolic detail.'

Two banners were in the exhibition, one of them the ASLEF (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen) Leeds 116 Branch banner.

A train races down the centre, a train entitled 'Flying Privateer', riding over 'Pensions, Wages, Jobs'. Above it a man bound to a wheel – the nationalised railways – is pecked at by crows.

On one side stand 'Dr Bloodaxe Beeching, Patron Saint of Closure B.R.B 1963' and a man with a file 'Second Great Train Robbery'.

On the other side are three railway workers, two men and a woman. One seizes a crow, another holds a ballot paper '116 Branch strike ballot' with a cross in the 'Yes' box. Each side holds one end of a white sheet under the Flying Privateer. Who will win?

There are two poems at the bottom.

**'And man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!'
1880 – ASLEF RULE BOOK – 1993**

**'If I'm designed yon lordling's slave –
By nature's law designed –
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?'
Robert Burns 1759 – 1796**

The other banner in the exhibition is currently illustrated and described on the Hebden Bridge website (hebden-bridge.co.uk). It is the banner of the North Selby Branch Yorks Area NUM, produced after the 1984-5 miners' strike. The web site says, 'British Coal



"The Nation Mourns the Death of Churchill"

management banned it from North Selby pit's annual Open Day on the grounds that it was "too provocative".

The banner's powerful imagery interprets the strike, with mounted police pressing a tombstone down on miners who fight to push it back. Central is a pitman lying injured on a stone, but still managing to show two fingers to Margaret Thatcher, the financiers and media barons to his left. The banner evokes memories of the Battle of Orgreave.'

The introduction at the entrance to the exhibition pointed to the symbolism in Andrew Turner's work: 'Many images recur, such as the negotiating table, political leaders and bosses, the media and power of the worker or the worker in chains.'

The Generals' Strike

The series "The Generals' Strike", about the British General Strike of 1926, was published as a book by Journeyman Press in 1977. The drawings reflect more treachery than triumph – the miners' perspective.

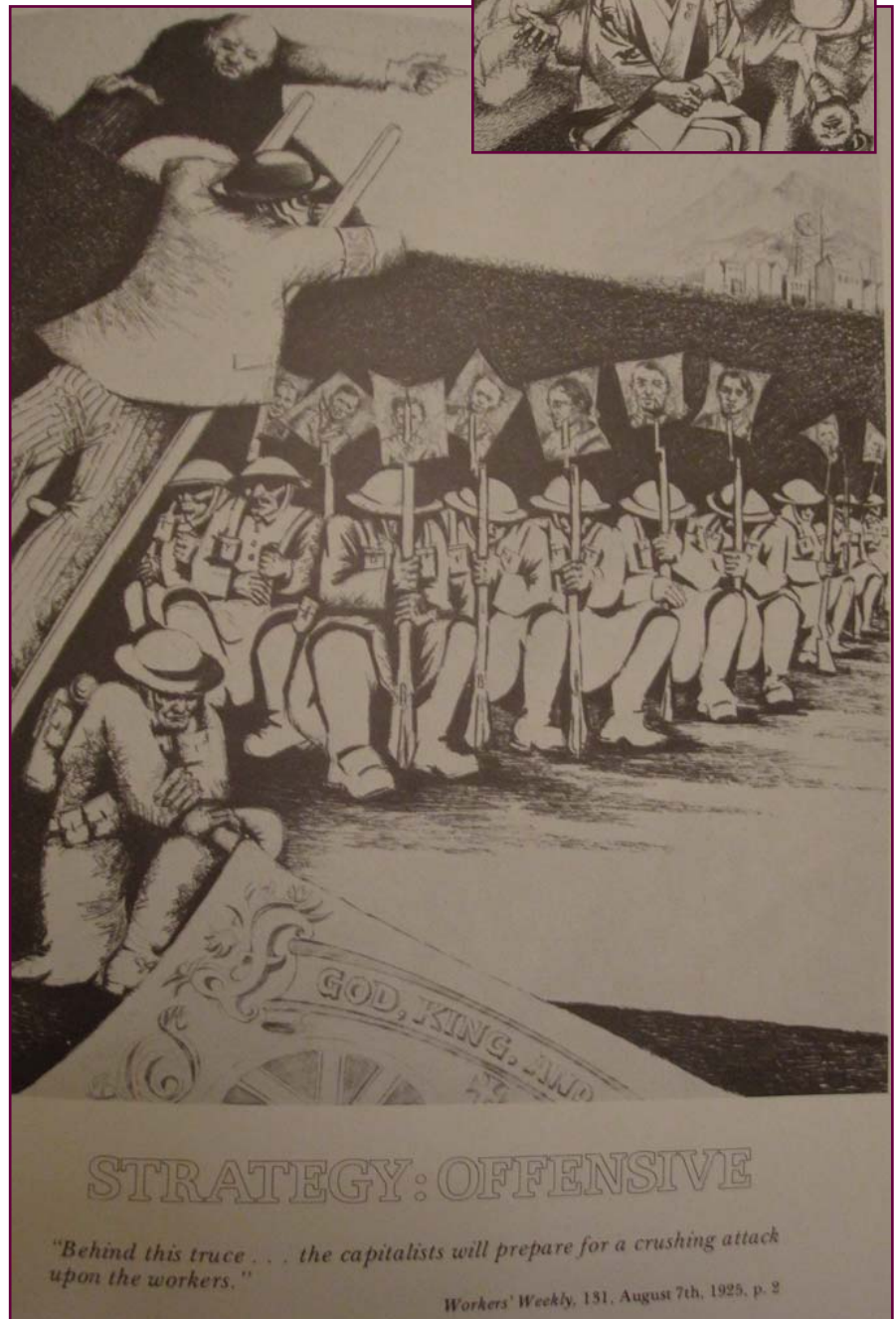
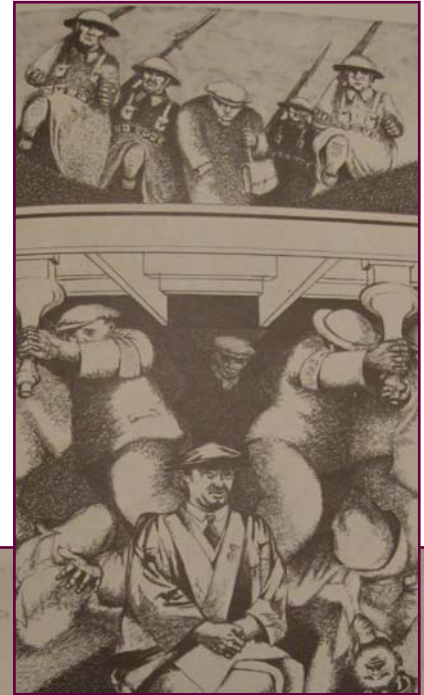
On a banner in the first drawing are the three generals: General J.R. Macdonald, General J.H. Thomas and General J.R. Clynes. The last drawing updates us to the 1970s, with Generalissimo H. Wilson and General L. Murray, with a third figure, Private R. Filer, a skull in a miner's helmet. In the centre of each drawing is the negotiating table – Gordon Wardman describes it as 'the table with nothing on'.

Each drawing has a title and a caption, sometimes ironically at odds. Drawing 3, 'Strategy: Offensive' with its caption 'Behind the truce ... the Capitalist Class will prepare for a crushing attack upon the workers' contrasts with Drawing 4, the TUC General Council's response, 'Tactics: Defensive' – 'a studied attitude of unpreparedness'. Once the General Strike begins, Drawing 9 'Second Day: Allies' shows the table on its side with miners' pick-axes in it over the caption 'From John O'Groats to Land's End the workers answered the call to arms to defend us.' Drawing 14 'Seventh Day: Diplomacy' captioned 'Stand firm'; 15 'Eighth Day: Desertions' – 'Be loyal to instructions and ...'; 16 'Ninth Day: Surrender' – 'Trust your leaders' tell their own story. And then the bitter irony of 17 'Casualties' – 'Let us forget whatever elements of bitterness the events of the past few days have created ... and address ourselves to peace, which will be lasting ... it looks only to the future with the hopefulness of a united people.' 19 'Peace?' points to the only real hopefulness, the strength of the workers: 'Jan. 12. 1927. 'Our organisa-

tion is still intact, and we are determined to recover the ground that has been lost.' (M.F.G.B) – Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

In the exhibition guide Andrew Turner reflects on where we are today: 'with a decimated coal-mining industry, and the free-market pendulum poised to swing with the banker as a galloping monument to capital, who will now organise our resistance?'

Andrew Turner is working on a banner for National Women Against Pit Closures. He describes this as 'a salute to the women of the British coalfields who played an active and major role in the epic 1984-5 Miners' Strike'. According to the exhibition notes 'The banner will be unfurled in 2011.'



READER'S LETTER to The Socialist Correspondent

Tea Party bankrolled by Corporates

The Tea Party has been presented as dominating the recent elections in the USA. To put the Tea Party in perspective, even the most generous estimates are that they represent no more than 2% of the voters.

However, because they were created and bankrolled with millions by some of the richest, most reactionary corporate interests in this country, especially the Koch Brothers who made their billions in oil, those backers were able to catapult them into the national media.

This was done primarily through the Fox "News" Channel, owned by Rupert Murdoch and home to the most vociferous right wing voices, including Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh and famous for promoting the former Republican Presidential candidate Sarah Palin. (Murdoch's infatuation with Palin stops at the cash register, though. When her reality show lost nearly half its viewing audience the second week it was on and ratings continued to plummet, Palin was abruptly cancelled.)

The Kochs funded Dick Arme (former Republican House member, driven from office by charges of corruption) who started something called "Freedom Works," that morphed into the tea parties.

Those identifying themselves as tea partiers are mostly older, white, conservatives who are in a state of inchoate rage over the demographic (i.e., more people of color than whites), social and technological changes. The election of a black president, even a moderate one, was the last straw for them. Never underestimate how stupid racism makes people in this country.

The Koch Brothers and the Club for Growth, who are a group of the same ultra-reactionary corporate types (no

regulation, no taxes on them, no health & safety laws, no unions, return the country to the robber baron era of the 19th century) funded most of the "tea party" types who ran.

This election, under the rules established by Bush's Supreme Court (anything goes in campaign funding, no limits and no requirements to identify who's paying) saw an open effort by these corporate interests to take over government in a way we haven't seen in this country since the 19th century.

Here in California, two corporate heads, Meg Whitman (eBay) and Carly Fiorina (Goldman-Sachs) ran for governor and U.S. Senate, respectively. Both lost after spending the most money ever spent in a campaign. Interestingly, the coalition of voters who defeated them included a majority of the State's Latino voters. This is a huge problem for the GOP.⁽¹⁾

They use racist fear tactics to fight immigration reform while realizing they're driving Latino voters nationally to the Democratic Party. Hispanics make up the fastest growing bloc of voters.

This has huge implications for Republican-controlled states like Texas and Arizona that are home to very large Latino populations. Faced with a similar corporate offensive in 1936, FDR said "they (referring to Wall Street and corporations) hate me. I welcome their hate," putting himself on the same side as millions of Americans who were still suffering poverty, unemployment and the economic catastrophe that was the Great Depression. Obama needs to take a lesson from FDR not former President Bill Clinton.

There's no running to the center now. The left and the center stayed home in this election because there was nothing

to vote for, only an eleventh-hour plea to vote against. Having said all that, my local City election went extremely well as did many others including San Francisco where an attempt to gut the pension plan of City workers was soundly defeated.

My two school bond measures were passed overwhelmingly and the baseball field I've been working on since 1998 will finally be built. The California electorate overwhelmingly defeated an attempt by the Koch Brothers (they were everywhere in this election) to repeal California's very effective Clean Air act.

Unfortunately, at this time, I have little confidence that Obama will provide the leadership that so many want and would respond to enthusiastically.

But, things can turn around very quickly when people begin standing up and speaking out.

After the tragedy in Arizona in which it appears a mentally unbalanced man was easily able to buy a lethal weapon and large amounts of ammunition, killing a Federal judge, five other people and nearly assassinating a Member of Congress, there is a national discussion going on about how political discourse is carried on here and the need to rein in the insane gun laws.

Palin has been scrambling to explain her decision to target Rep. Giffords (the Arizona Democrat who was shot) in the last election by placing a bull's eye on her district. The Republicans were forced to cancel their vote to repeal the modest health care reform passed in the last Congress. The last word has definitely not been spoken.

Stephanie Allan - California

1. GOP means Grand Old Party and is a late 19th century acronym for the Republicans.

Wisconsin battle opens class war in USA

Up to 100,000 people protested in the Wisconsin state capital, Madison, on Saturday 5 March against a new law ending the collective bargaining rights of state employees.

The demonstration capped weeks of public protests and came a day after right-wing Republican Governor Scott Walker signed the anti-union bill into law. To block Walker's legislative plans, Democratic Party Senators fled the state to deny Walker a quorum in the senate.

Republicans hold a 19-14 majority in the legislature, but they needed at least one Democrat to be present before they could vote on Walker's bill. State police tried in vain to apprehend the runaway Democrats as the constitution allows for

them to be compelled to appear.

Republicans stripped budget measures out of the bill leaving it as a vote only on collective bargaining. That meant the absent Democrats were no longer needed for a quorum. Protesters cheered the Democratic state senators return to Wisconsin after fleeing to Illinois for three weeks.

Wisconsin's labour and progressive movement had responded to the attack with a remarkable display of mass civil action and solidarity that regularly saw some 100,000 protesters take to the streets of Madison. In addition, some 6,000 public employees and supporters occupied the State Capitol building.

Speaking to a 70,000 strong rally in

Madison on 23 February, US steelworkers union president, Leo Gerard described what he saw when he toured the occupied Capitol building. "I saw fat, white middle-aged men like me. But I saw them linking arms with people of every race, creed, color and age, fighting together for their rights and for a future for their children and grandchildren."

Across America, other Republican Governors in the states of Ohio, Minnesota, New Jersey, Florida and Indiana have been egging on Governor Walker who has become the American right's current standard bearer.

America's unions knew the stakes were high in Wisconsin because other Republican held states are likely to follow.