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Discussion, debate and authors' opinions

To encourage the broadest possible discussion and debate around the aims of exposing capitalism and promoting socialism, we hope our readers appreciate that not all the opinions expressed by individual authors are necessarily those of The Socialist Correspondent.

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Continuing Economic Crisis

The big winner at the G20 Summit was the IMF. \$750 billion to be precise. The IMF, as well as gladly accepting the money, immediately referred to its lack of capacity.

There will need to be an increase in its staff to cope with the increased workload. Jobs for redundant bankers?! Not that Sir Fred Goodwin nor the other big bankers need the money.

In the article, "Ramsay McDonald and Gordon Brown", Paul Sutton analyses the G20 Summit and compares it to the failed 1933 capitalist summit and the very successful (for capitalism) Bretton Woods Agreement, which established the IMF and the World Bank towards the end of World War II.

The article concludes that, whilst Prime Minister Brown claimed a huge success, it is more likely to turn out like the 1933 disaster. And, that meant the Depression and then war.

Gentlemen's Club

Some credit must be given to Mr Brown for referring to the House of Commons as a "Gentlemen's Club". The MPs expenses scandal has uncovered one of the layers creating Britain's bi-partisan political system.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee developed partly due to the Commons being a Gentlemen's Club, in which new MPs were inducted into how the great institution of the Mother of Parliaments works ... for them.

Once incorporated, and benefiting from membership of the exclusive club, it was seldom that an MP would retain or develop independent thoughts and, even less likely, rebellious actions.

The gentlemen's club has matured and adapted over the years. For example, women are now allowed membership and some lost no time in joining the men at the trough.

However, for the moment, the corrupt and corrupting Parliamentary system has come unstuck.

Of course, the *Daily Telegraph*, in uncovering the mass corruption among MPs across all political parties, realised that this could lead to

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anger and more cynicism about the political system. The newspaper well understands that cynicism can lead to apathy. An apathetic electorate not voting is helpful to the Tories, whose core vote is more likely to turn out.

And, that is what happened in the local council and European elections in June as James Thomson points out in his article, "Britain's ruling class want the Tories back". Before the MPs expenses scandal there was already considerable apathy.

And, who can blame the people given the choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The ground has been well prepared for the return of a Tory government.

South Africa

No British government since 1945 has won a majority vote but in contrast, the turnout for the recent South African election was 77% of the electorate and the African National Congress won 65.9% of the votes cast.

The British media tried to make something of the fact that the ANC vote fell short of the two thirds majority necessary to change the constitution. Some of the media even said that the ANC had "failed".

But, then, they are hardly supporters of the liberation movement. Alex Davidson reports on the South African election results and the challenges facing the new ANC government.

Big Pharma

The developing world has long suffered from the actions of the transnational companies.

When the South African government introduced legislation to use generic drugs as an affordable way to deal with HIV/AIDS, the big pharmaceuticals took the government to court to stop the legislation.

After two years of protracted legal battles, and only at the 11th hour, did "Big Pharma" withdraw their legal challenge. Many more people died in the intervening two years. Now one of the big pharmaceutical companies, GlaxoSmithKline, is on a new tack and Les Masters asks, "Has the leopard really changed its spots?"

Imperialism's aim: to defeat socialism (first the Soviet Union, now Cuba)

Helen Christopher, in celebrating 50 years of the Cuban Revolution, reflects on the country's successes and its continuing challenges. One of these challenges has been dealing with the US boycott. However, the tactics of the United States are changing and with it will come different challenges for the Cuban government and people. Imperialism never gives up in trying to defeat socialism and many different tactics will be used until that end is achieved.

As in Cuba, with the Bay of Pigs invasion, the young Soviet Russia faced armed intervention. That period is examined by Gina Nicholson in "14 Nations intervened to destroy the first ever socialist state at birth". That tactic was defeated but Imperialism did not give up. British Imperialism tried to use fascist Germany against the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union's attempts to ally with Britain against fascism in Europe were rejected, the socialist state signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. This, like many other aspects of history, is currently being re-written to discredit the Soviet Union and socialism. Pat Turnbull puts the record straight in her article, "Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1939".

We also reproduce a chapter from Harry Pollitt's book *Serving My Time* on the "Hands Off Russia"/Jolly George strike in 1920 which illustrated British working class internationalism and solidarity in action in support of the Russian revolution.

Charles Darwin

In this bi-centennial year of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150th year of the publication of his seminal work, "The Origin of Species", we publish a thought-provoking article by S. Wordfish, which reflects on Darwin's achievement; the connections between discoveries in the natural world and politics, economics and everyday life; Marx and Engels' views on Darwin and neo-Darwinism and its alternatives.

Britain's ruling class want the Tories back

Since Tony Blair's enforced departure in June 2007 as leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister, Britain's ruling class have been seriously trying to win back parliamentary and legislative power for its number one party, the Conservatives.

JAMES THOMSON analyses what lies behind the latest attempt to remove Gordon Brown as Prime Minister and force a General Election.

Son of a Conservative Party organiser in the north east of England, Tony Blair was the safest pair of "Labour" hands Britain's ruling class has ever had.

From the ruling class' standpoint Labour without Blair is less predictable and malleable and a bit more prone to trade unionist, working class, Keynesian and liberal economic influences.

With big changes at home and abroad about to happen better to have at the helm the leader of your own party. In any event, Blair's and Brown's New Labour job is done. They delivered an even more docile and compliant Labour and trade union movement than existed two decades ago and it's a very good time for them to go and let the number one party of capitalism takeover again.

The 4 June results in the English local elections and the UK European Parliament elections confirm the trend of opinion polls for more than a year now: the Tories are well ahead in UK voters' intentions.

So a new Tory Government is a distinct probability and there is much for a new Tory government to be concerned about to protect the interests of those they serve, especially dominant finance capital:

- There's a new reforming President in the White House who will be in the vanguard of changes to the international financial and monetary system;

- similarly in the UK, there will be changes to how our banks and financial institutions are run and regulated.

- there will be major changes to how Parliament is run in the wake of the MPs' expenses scandals; and we are told,

- there will be significant constitutional changes.

Plans and blueprints on all of these important matters are already being drawn up and for Britain's ruling class,

who governs and who speaks for Britain is vital and time is of the essence. But how do you get your hands on parliamentary and legislative power now? You need a General Election and the sooner the better.

Enter the Daily Telegraph - or the Torygraph as some wags would have it - arguably the most influential broadsheet of Britain's ruling class. It has deliberately launched a sustained and all out assault on the British Parliamentary system that has left its parliamentarians reeling.

War is a risky and unpredictable business. But all aggressors who wage war do so in the certain knowledge there will be casualties on all sides. Class war is no different. Casualties are inevitable in pursuit of the greater cause: in this instance, a Conservative electoral victory and control once again of all the levers of parliamentary and legislative power. After all it's been more than 12 years since the last Tory leader occupied No 10 Downing St.

How else can we explain former Conservative Party leader Michael Howard's outburst that the "Telegraph should hang its head in shame" for what it is doing in its daily dripping roast of revelations of MPs' expenses scandals, including those of the erstwhile Tory leader himself.

No longer in the ruling class' High Command, Michael Howard and others like him are acceptable and calculated 'friendly' casualties of war.

For two years now the clear and open strategy of the British ruling class and its 'Torygraph' broadsheet has been to precipitate a big enough government crisis that forces the Labour Prime Minister out of office and a General Election before 2010.

And what a job they have done. The occasion this time round was the widely predicted disastrous for Labour 4 June election results. By Friday 5 June,

after a month of the Telegraph's MPs allowances scandals - Cabinet and Junior Ministers by the barrowload had resigned and some of them thumped their leader in the solar plexus as they walked out the door. One of them, former Work and Pensions Secretary, James Purnell MP even demanded that Brown, "stand aside to give our party a fighting chance of winning" in the General Election.

The day before Purnell departed, Communities (local government) Secretary, Hazel Blears MP announced she was quitting - the day before England's local government elections. This was nothing less than an angry act of sabotage for which she has now apologized. And after Purnell came Europe Minister, Caroline Flint MP who scornfully accused the Prime Minister of using her and other female Labour ministers as "little more than female window dressing." (sic).

This was barely disguised odium. So



Gordon Brown's infamous YouTube performance on the MPs' expenses scandals.

why does Gordon Brown provoke such detestation among his parliamentary and ministerial colleagues? What's important about all of the above Cabinet Secretaries and Minister and

most of the others who went with them is that they were all staunch supporters of Tony Blair.

It is no secret that for most of his political life, Gordon Brown believed his 'destiny' was to be Leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister. That ambition has consumed him since he became an MP in 1983 and especially since Labour ended 18 years of Tory rule in 1997 when Tony Blair, at his friend Brown's expense, became Labour Prime Minister.

Since then Brown (and his intimidating Westminster praetorian guard) worked day and night to position himself as the unassailable next Labour leader after Blair. When it became clear that Blair was not for going when the two former friends agreed he should, Brown saw his 'destiny' ebbing away. It was Brown and Brown alone who masterminded and led the sustained Westminster campaign that eventually forced Tony Blair to announce a date for his premature departure.

Blairites have never forgiven Brown for what they believed was a bitter, disloyal and underhand campaign against the man they believe was Labour's best ever and most successful leader.

For the two years of Brown's Premiership grieving and vengeful Blairites, relatively speaking, kept quiet. Their first and their best chance to unseat Brown came at the 2008 Labour Party conference in Manchester when Brown was trailing badly in the polls following the series of damaging leaks and mishaps that followed on from his failure to go ahead with the General Election he had planned for November 2007. A combination of Brown's major conference makeover, his organisation and ruthless tenacity combined with the Blairite plotters' lack of nerve saw off any challenge to his leadership.

But now? Well they tried again during the first week of June and they failed again. At the height of the "Brown must go now" June crisis, the Blairites smelt blood and frenziedly pounced on Brown like a pack of what turned out to be toothless wolves.

Brown survived their mauling. He's battered and badly bruised but he is still alive and kicking and could very well hobble on for some time to come and give his party some scintilla of hope that an economic miracle will occur that can make them electable again.

On 5 June Brown re-shuffled his ministerial pack in a classic spin manoeuvre of "moving the story on to something new" and shift the spotlight from himself. That re-shuffle saw Lord Mandelson promoted to the role of

what is effectively Brown's Cabinet Enforcer. Brown's last reshuffle saw Mandelson brought back from Europe to quell the Blairites who know and regard Mandelson as one of their own.

While that may well be true, what Mandelson is much more wedded to is his, Brown's and Blair's New Labour project of running capitalism better than the capitalists, which he sees is in mortal danger if some semblance of party unity is not restored soon.

That's what brought him back from Brussels and that's why he is straining every sinew to help his old fellow New Labour architect. The fact that they personally loathe each other is something both of them can put up with.

Brown's re-shuffle also had a populist flourish with his friend and TV star Sir Alan Sugar, soon to be Lord Sugar, agreeing to become Enterprise Tsar.

On the same day as he announced his re-shuffle, Brown warned off his enemies by vowing in Mandelsonian language, "I will not waver. I will not walk away. I will get on with the job and finish the work." Fighting talk!

Those Cabinet Ministers who resigned or 'retired' were targets in the Telegraph's allegations of dodgy MPs expenses. Hazel 'flipping' Blears and James 'capital gains' Purnell could well be facing their own troubles at their constituency courts of public enquiry. Such local public outcries forced Tory MPs Andrew Mackay and Julie Kirkbride to quit, and may yet result in the premature end to the former Labour Cabinet Ministers' parliamentary careers.

Perhaps Blears and Purnell know what's ahead of them and chose to attack Brown in the way that they did because they know they had nothing to lose.

For Labour MPs more generally, on the principle that turkeys don't vote for Christmas, most won't relish the prospect of an early General Election and will be hoping that Gordon "the best Labour Chancellor ever" can pull some rabbits out of his hat and get the British economy moving again in time for the General Election next year.

For their part, the British ruling class may have to content themselves with waiting a little while longer for that election safe in the knowledge that they have severely damaged the man who will most likely lead Labour into that election. Unless something miraculous can turn round Gordon Brown's and Labour's fortunes, an election will give the Tories the parliamentary power they so desperately desire.

But in launching their assault on

Britain's Parliamentary system, the ruling class' High Command and the Daily Telegraph took two big risks.

First was that too many 'friendly casualties' (Tory MPs) could seriously damage their own party and its fighting spirit and morale.

That risk was always worth taking as long as the Tories remained far enough ahead of Labour to win a General Election. Once back in power, party strength and morale could be restored. Nothing succeeds like success. The 4 June election results have justified the taking of that risk.

The second was that they might fundamentally damage the very parliamentary system that has served them well for hundreds of years.

The "revolutionary" rhetoric of the main party leaders - all wearing their obligatory hair shirts - is replete with pledges of fundamental change of a corrupt parliamentary system.

But actions speak louder than words and all that we do know is that there will be a new Speaker of the House of Commons and that MPs' allowances will now be the responsibility of an outside agency. Hardly a revolution and hardly anything for Britain's ruling class to worry unduly about. If that's all that comes about big risk number two will also have been well worth taking.

Tory leader David Cameron has talked about transferring power from "the political elite to the man and woman in the street" but everyone knows he doesn't mean a word of it.

His continued demand for a General Election while he's ahead in the polls and his steadfast refusal to contemplate any form of proportional representation - that might produce a Lab-Lib government for years to come - prove that he and his masters are interested in one thing only: winning an election and re-gaining parliamentary and legislative power.

As the present "Brown must go now" crisis inevitably recedes, the greater political crisis which the Daily Telegraph's revelations has provoked will come to the fore again.

Brown's and Cameron's handling of this could still seriously affect their personal and their party's fortunes.

Although much has been revealed, it seems clear the expenses scandals and the crisis they've caused have still to run their full course. Such is the public mood that full disclosure of everything that our MPs have been up to is the minimum that will be demanded.

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Ramsay MacDonald **1933** and Gordon Brown **2009**

Plus ça change, plus c'est meme chose

In June 1933, two heads of state, eight prime ministers, 20 foreign ministers and 80 finance ministers, representing 66 countries, met in London with the UK prime minister Ramsay MacDonald as chair to try to revive the world economy, then in the fourth year of the Great Depression.

Dr. PAUL SUTTON examines the current world capitalist economic crisis and reviews the recent G20 Summit in London.



The conference was beset with difficulties and within a month had collapsed with the withdrawal of the US to pursue its own programme, the New Deal, under its newly elected president Franklin Roosevelt.

The effect was immediate. Countries went their own way in protecting trade and national currencies. Unemployment continued to rise as the Depression deepened. The US turned its back on Europe and Hitler, recently elected as chancellor, re-occupied the Rhineland as the first international act of a resurgent Germany. The rest, as they say, is history.

There can be no doubt that global economic conferences can have an impact. In contrast to the disastrous 1933 London Conference most historians and contemporary commentators would celebrate the Bretton Woods conference in the closing years of the Second World War, which sought, successfully as it turned out, to stabilise the international capitalist economy for nearly three decades.

The question that needs to be asked today is whether the new London

Summit, the recently concluded G20 meeting under the chairmanship of Gordon Brown, will be judged as favourably as Bretton Woods or closer to 1933.

Not surprisingly, Gordon Brown judged it a huge success. A consensus was reached on a programme of change, which US president Barack Obama

described as “a turning point in our pursuit of global economic recovery because of the size and scope of the challenge that we face and because of the timeliness of our response”.

Similar comments came from the French president Nicolas Sarkozy who called the outcome “unprecedented” and more guardedly from the German chancellor Angela Merkel who spoke of “a very, very good, almost historic compromise”.

The use of the word ‘compromise’ shows there were disagreements among the participating countries. This is scarcely surprising. The G20 consists of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

The impact on them of the current recession has been mixed with some, such as China and India, better positioned to cope with it than others, although all face the prospect of much lower economic growth or negative economic growth in the immediate future.

The need to reach an agreement was thus of importance to all and controversial issues were left for future debate. In the end action was agreed in four major areas.

The first was financial regulation. The statement issued by the G20 asserted that “major failures in the financial sector and in financial regulation and supervision were fundamental causes of the (global economic) crisis. Confidence will not be restored until we rebuild trust in our financial system”.

The remedy was a blueprint for reforming the regulatory framework. It would be comprehensive to include hedge funds, credit rating agencies and tax havens, which had hitherto escaped scrutiny (or sanction) as well as ensuring more effective regulation than before of other financial institutions, including new rules on pay and bonuses.

The central role in coordinating this action was given to the Financial Stability Forum, renamed the Financial Stability Board, and widened to include all the G20 countries and not simply the Europeans plus the US and Japan.

The second was an expansion of financial commitments centred on the transfer of US\$750 billion to the IMF and a further US\$100 billion to the World Bank and the multilateral development banks.

These were to be in the form of loans and were to be directed toward both so-called ‘emerging market’ and ‘middle income’ developing economies, with additional funds to be made available to the poorest. Conditionalities on loans (i.e. pre-specification of policy in the borrowing country and its monitoring by the IMF) were also to be eased along with a promise to reform how the IMF and the World Bank were governed in the near future.

The third was a commitment to keep markets open and not to resort to protectionism. The WTO was charged with reporting measures that might potentially distort trade and naming and shaming countries that breach free trade rules.

The Summit also committed to make available up to US\$250 billion in trade credits (loans and guarantees as insurance to suppliers against the risk of not being paid) over the next two years to stimulate trade. This was a measure directed toward the developing countries in particular to better integrate them into the global trade system.

Finally, there was a reiteration by the leaders present to ensure that the various national measures already taken or promised to kick-start national economic growth through fiscal stimulus, rescue of the banking sector etc. would be followed through and increased if necessary. While no new economic resources were earmarked for this commitment Gordon Brown was quick to point out that the G20 countries were already implementing "the biggest macroeconomic stimulus the world has ever seen" amounting to US\$5 trillion by the end of 2010.

The main thrust of the Summit was therefore the immediate situation rather than a Bretton Woods style 'future shape of the world economic order', although a consideration of some of its measures begin to show us what this might be were it to be attempted.

The biggest smile at the end of the Summit, it is said, was on the face of Dominique Strauss Khan, the managing director of the IMF. His organisation, previously seen by many as 'slipping into obscurity' was, in his own words "now truly back" with greatly increased resources and responsibilities. Increased powers and/or responsibilities were also given to the WTO and the World Bank.

This represented a major reversal for the G20 who in their communiqué at the end of their 2006 Conference criticised the IMF and the World Bank as lacking "legitimacy and effectiveness" and in need of fundamental reform.

Reform of both institutions is promised in the Statement from the London Summit but the question must now be asked as to 'how far, and how much'?

To date, for example, much criticism has focused on the governance of both institutions. In the IMF the combined vote of eighty low-income countries amounts to 10% cent while the US alone commands 16.5%, which when combined with Europe and Japan gives a solid majority of 55.6%. Additionally, the EU member states appoint ten of the powerful twenty-four executive committee members responsible for much of the business of the IMF.

Admittedly, some change in this pattern was conceded in 2006, which saw the votes of China increase from 2.9%

to 3.6% and South Korea and Singapore combined from 1.2% to 1.7%. But beyond this other changes were minimal while the difficulties of agreeing even this modest redistribution were monumental.

The IMF has also been criticised for failing to learn from its mistakes. In the 1980s and 1990s the IMF imposed conditionalities on countries that borrowed from it which are now commonly recognised to have been wrong and greatly damaging.

Again, the London Summit said these will be changed but as a recent paper by economists at the widely respected Center for Economic Policy and Research in Washington D.C. reports "the IMF is still prescribing inappropriate policies that could unnecessarily exacerbate economic downturns in a number of countries", with El Salvador, Pakistan, Ukraine, Hungary, Georgia, Latvia, and Belarus all at risk.

Compounding this re-birth of the IMF for many developing countries, with its attendant risks, is the very modest improvement in resources for them set out in the Summit. In all, less than US\$50 billion of the total US\$1.1 trillion agreed is specifically earmarked for them, while closer consideration of it since by development based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) suggest it may in practice be only half that amount.

Given the recognition by the Summit statement that the crisis had "a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable in the poorest countries" this sum is pitiful and well below the US\$216 billion 'shock' the IMF itself forecast for low-income countries.

Indeed, the position of the poorest will get worse. As already noted, the new funds are loans, not grants and there has been little clarification since on special concessions for them. The opportunity to spell this out was available to the IMF (and World Bank) at their twice-yearly meetings with finance ministers at the end of April.

Instead, the meetings merely reaffirmed the vague promises of the London Summit. Increasingly, these are being seen as favouring the 'higher middle-income' developing countries, particularly in the application of the new 'flexible credit lines' setting out easier and faster access to financial resources, which are of special benefit to countries like Mexico.

The net effect of this, by design or accident, is the beginning of a divide between developing countries. As a recent paper by Eurodad, an influential

Brussels based NGO campaigning for debt reduction in the developing world put it: "Middle income countries which feel they have a chance to be included in the circles that matter when it comes to global economic and financial governance are less and less interested in uniting with the world's poorest in a common front". The risks for developing countries from what is being proposed, and agreed by the powerful, could scarcely be starker.

Such countries could also be very misguided. A couple of weeks before the London Summit the Daily Telegraph (13/3/2009) published details of a leaked memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which divided the G20 into two tiers: a top tier of 10 states defined as "high priority" targets "for intensive diplomatic lobbying and engagement" (Italy, China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Saudi Arabia), four of which were considered "key" (US, Japan, France and Germany); and a second tier (Australia, Russia, Argentina, Canada, Mexico, Indonesia and Turkey).

This is a dramatic demonstration that international economics is not simply the drafting of plans by experienced economists however knowledgeable and talented, but international political economy in which realpolitik matters. As such, the future of the G20 must be in some doubt.

The G20 was formally created at the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US) meeting of finance ministers in 1999 and met for the first time in December that year. Its remit was to engage key 'emerging market' and developing countries in the core of global economic discussion.

There was no formal criteria for membership though it was considered important that countries and regions of systemic significance for the international financial system be included. Aspects such as geographical balance and population representation also played a major part.

In the words of the G20 website: "It has a high degree of representativeness and legitimacy on account of its geographical composition (members are drawn from all continents) and its large share of global population (two-thirds) and world GNP (around 90 per cent).

The G20's broad representation of countries at different stages of development gives its consensus outcomes greater impact than those of the G7". The membership and composition of the group has remained unchanged since it was established.

But for how long will it do so? The

G7 was created in 1976 in the context of the Cold War to co-ordinate economic and political action among the major capitalist economies. In recent years it is said to have lost its rationale as the world's balance of forces have shifted and countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs) have emerged to claim a place in the international system. The G20 was touted before and at the London Summit as the answer to the G7 and a replacement for it since it was more representative and hence more legitimate.

But this ignores the continuing realities of raw state power. The G7 acted, often imperfectly it must be agreed, as the 'international executive committee of the global bourgeoisie' (to paraphrase Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*).

It has not yet been abolished and its remit remains. The logic of the present, and the FCO memorandum, would see the G7 expanded to the G11 with the inclusion of the BRICs (or G13 with South Africa and Saudi Arabia added, or G9 if Canada and Russia are demoted).

In short, the G20 is an appropriate technical economic tool to address the current economic crisis but not the proper political tool to provide global leadership and security for the major capitalist countries. Something else will emerge to take its place.

The progressive and democratic place for a discussion of 'a new world economic order' is the UN, but its role in the present economic crisis is either marginal or silent. As such, the judgement that comes from a consideration

of the London Summit is that it is closer to 1933 than Bretton Woods.

It is more concerned with preserving the power of the powerful than looking for a really inclusive economic system.

And more concerned with 'fire-fighting' the present conflagrations than acting as 'midwife' to the future.

In conclusion, the claim by Gordon Brown at the London Summit that "a new world order is emerging" is hollow unless he means that a new G?? is in the making.

If so, then historians of capitalism may well look on him favourably but historians of the common man and woman will see him in a very different light, as a modern Ramsay MacDonald turning his back on them and compromising principle for the momentary limelight of power.

Britain's ruling class want the Tories back

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In the pubs and clubs and up and down the high streets of Britain, ordinary people are angry and incredulous and demanding to know what have our MP been up to? Those MPs who have admitted to inappropriate behaviours are jeered and taunted with cries of, "cheat" and "resign." Even those who are as squeaky clean as its possible to be within a corrupt system, get tarred with the same brush as their guilty colleagues.

Each day brings new and more shocking revelations and in its wake new suspensions, resignations or "retirals" as the Parliamentary rats desert their ship like never before.

Never in this correspondent's memory has the currency of all politicians been so debased.

But even more fundamental than all of the scandals of corrupt MPs is the year long financial and economic crisis that Britain and the rest of the world is suffering from. Just a few months ago it was Britain's bankers and the whole financial system that were being vilified for the financial and mortgage crisis which has led, among other things, to 2.2 million people being unemployed. Now it's Britain's MPs in the dock of public scrutiny.

Our eyes have been off the banking crisis ball for sometime: the fact is that Britain's downward spiral from a banking, financial and economic crisis to a crisis of the whole political and economic system has been as quick as it is profound.

The 4 June results show that if a General Election was called tomorrow Labour would be out and the Tories would be back in after an absence of 12 years.

Britain's 4 June European Parliament election results which were announced on 7 June, hit record lows for all sorts of reasons but most of all for the Labour Party.

In a record low turnout in Britain of 34.8%, compared to the EU-wide record low turnout of 43%, Labour for the first time in any UK election in Wales lost first place to the Conservatives. That's over 100 years.

Labour's humiliation was not just confined to Wales, it was UK-wide; coming third, with only a calamitous 16% share of the vote, behind the Conservatives on 28.% and the UK Independence Party in second place with 17%.

Undoubtedly the lowest point of all was the double success for the British National Party in Yorkshire and Humberside and in the North-West of England, where party leader Nick Griffin was elected - the first time the BNP has won seats in a national election.

In Scotland, the rise and rise of Scottish nationalism continues with the Scottish National Party, for the second time in succession, topping a country-wide poll ahead of Labour. The last occasion was the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2007.

These dreadful EU results for

Labour followed the equally dreadful local government election results, also held on 4 June, in England where again Labour suffered badly losing 291 seats with the Tories gaining 244.

These results are no accident and are a result of the New Labour Party's failure of trying to run capitalism better than the capitalists: this is nothing new as far as the Labour Party is concerned but its apotheosis was Brown's, Mandelson's and Blair's New Labour Party.

This electoral disaster represents New Labour in its death throes. Labour's leader and the country's Prime Minister may have changed in June 2007 but the New Labour strategy and policies have not.

On 4 June millions of Labour voters, unable to vote for the Tories or anyone else, stayed at home. That explains the record low turnout and why, in terms of the numbers of votes they won, other parties did not do so well either.

Like wars, political and economic crises can be unpredictable but one thing is very clear, Britain's capitalist ruling class are determined that they should not shoulder the cost of resolving this current and deep crisis: that's why they want the Tories back.

In whose interests this general crisis of capitalism will be resolved is the big and urgent issue facing the British people and especially the British Labour and trade union movement. Get that wrong and we could be facing another 18 years of Tory rule.



Viva La Revolucion Cubana
Hasta La Victoria Siempre

Cuba at 50: a luta continua

The Cuban revolution has defied the enormous odds stacked against it and this year celebrates the 50th anniversary of the overthrow of the US-backed Batista regime.

HELEN CHRISTOPHER reflects on 50 years of socialism in Cuba and argues that it is deeply rooted in the Cuban people's struggles against slavery, colonialism, imperialism and dictatorship.

Its importance is at least as great now as when it triumphed, and to appreciate the immensity of its achievement it is worth reflecting on what it has had to endure and overcome.

The Cuban revolution has survived:

- Invasion sponsored by the United States of America and ignominiously defeated at the Bay of Pigs.
- Hundreds of terrorist attacks against the Cuban people and assassination attempts on the life of Fidel Castro emanating from the US.
- The illegal US blockade which is nearly as old as the revolution itself and which has enacted sanctions against third countries and agencies for trading with Cuba.
- Being the centre of the nuclear stand-off between the US and the Soviet Union during the 1962 missile crisis.
- Building socialism in a tiny third world country which started out with a monoculture of sugar and as the playground of rich Americans.
- The blows of the overthrow of Allende in Chile, the US invasion of Grenada and the defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua
- The visit of the arch anti-communist Pope John Paul II
- The defeat of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries
- The virtual collapse of the economy when the gross national product almost halved between 1991 and 1993.
- The illness and incapacity of the revolution's iconic leader and great intellect, Fidel Castro.
- Adverse climatic conditions where the island is frequently ravaged by hurricanes.

How has this been possible? The revolution is deeply rooted in the experience of the Cuban people and their struggles against slavery and colonialism. It did not, therefore, follow any prescribed model or path, but grew out

FACTS ABOUT CUBA

- Life expectancy in Cuba is 77 years
- 75% of homes in Cuba have been built since the revolution and 85% of houses are privately owned.
- Work is guaranteed for all. If someone loses their job then benefits are paid at 60% of salary until they can be re-trained or find a new job.
- Cuba has the second highest level in the world of participation of women in their parliament.
- 62% of university students and 66% of professionals are women.
- Health care is free and there is a doctor for every 165 inhabitants in Cuba.
- Infant mortality is 5.8 per thousand live births.
- 1 in 5 Cubans has a University degree.

YOU CAN HELP CUBA

Call on Foreign Secretary David Milliband to:

- Develop stronger ties with and pay an official visit to Cuba.

Call on President Obama to:

- End the illegal blockade of Cuba
- Withdraw from the illegal US occupation of Guantanamo Bay
- Free the Miami 5



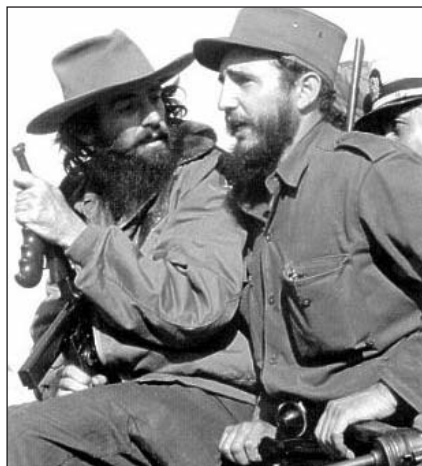
Fidel Castro on his arrest after the assault on the Moncada Barracks in July 1953.

of this history. A trip to any museum in Cuba shows the development of the nation starting from before the Conquistadores and featuring the

resistance of the people to Spanish conquest and latterly US domination. Drawing on this powerful tradition, by the 1950s there were strong movements in Cuba among the working-class and the students opposing the dictatorship of Batista.

The young Fidel Castro's ill-fated assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba and the Granma expedition which narrowly survived annihilation when the group landed, were not isolated adventurist gestures, but were part of these strong anti-Batista, working-class, student and socialist movements.

The July 26th Movement⁽¹⁾ actively built alliances with all these forces and with the local peasant populations while the guerrilla war was being fought.



Camilo Cienfuegos and Fidel Castro in 1959.

The breadth of the movement against the weak and corrupt Batista regime and the popular support for the armed struggle were the basis of its success and on January 1st 1959 Batista and the US Mafioso fled the country.

The Cuban revolution freed the people not only to build a new society but also freed them from imperialist domination.

The revolution is not only socialist, bringing all the benefits of a social and economic system which works for people rather than for profit, but is also synonymous with the dignity of a people who have thrown off the domination of a power which treated them as though they were second or third class human beings.

Even more than that this tiny country, once a plaything of the US has become a major force on the world stage. The pride of the Cubans in being able to determine their own future and not live to be exploited at the behest of the US has generated a great strength and resilience in the people. These qualities are a major factor in how Cuba has survived against all the odds.

The approach of the revolution has also been to value people above all else, creating high levels of social cohesion and support for the revolution.

The people are what maintain and sustain so much of everyday life that is the fabric of the revolution. That is how they can survive such huge adversity such as hurricanes and the ravages of the special period, because people collaborate socially to help each other.

This is a million miles away from a society where it is the state which provides all which has been a caricature of socialism presented by hostile forces and a characteristic of socialism when it is not working well. It is also unlike the paternalistic welfare stateism of social



Now a museum piece: the bullet-riddled truck used in the assault on the Presidential Palace in Havana in 1959.

democracy in Western Europe.

An example which brings this to life is how the medical system works in Cuba. Readers of this journal will be well acquainted with its phenomenal successes (likewise in the field of education). These achievements of the health system in Cuba are because the role of doctors is primarily to improve the health of communities and secondarily to treat illness. They are well known in their local communities, visiting families on a regular basis and know the people and area they are working in.

In their internationalist work Cuban doctors are renowned for going anywhere and not only treating anyone, but being prepared to live with the population they are treating. They will work in all kinds of conditions trying to find solutions to what often seem insurmountable problems, because what they are there for is to use their expertise and knowledge for their fellow human beings.

However, capitalism is relentless in its propaganda and economic power, promoting selfishness and individualism. Surviving in such a hostile sea has had an impact on Cuba, as has the huge number of tourists which have visited the island in the last decade.

Nonetheless, the Cuban leadership has not closed its eyes to these problems. Through the nature of the revolution itself and conscious effort to promote the ideals of the revolution Cuba has tried to combat the insidious influence of capitalism.

In a population of 11 million, hundreds of thousands of Cubans have lived, worked and fought in other countries and have seen the realities of the other side of capitalism. They have been soldiers, doctors teachers and technicians in over 160 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

This presents another factor in

Cuba's amazing feat of survival. Leading by example, it has gained huge authority and influence, particularly in the third world through the support it has given to health and education programmes all over the world, offering practical assistance in time of need.

Cuban doctors were there in Pakistan after the earthquake; not a natural ally of Cuba. Many Cubans have lost their lives fighting imperialism beyond their homeland. Their most notable contribution was in the defeat of the South African apartheid forces at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola in 1988.

All this was not to export a Cuban model or bring other nations into its sphere of influence but to support common struggles against imperialism and its effects. Memorably they offered help to the United States when New Orleans was decimated by Hurricane Katrina a couple of years ago – it was refused.

But no example illustrates more the Cubans ability to adopt the moral high ground than the work of Cuban doctors in Bolivia as part of Operacion Milagro⁽²⁾, who restored the sight of the man who killed Che. The Cubans called it "Che's revenge".

Of Cuban internationalism, Nelson Mandela said: "Cubans came to our region as doctors, teachers, soldiers, agricultural experts, but never as colonisers ...They have shared the same trenches with us in the struggle against colonialism, underdevelopment and apartheid. Hundreds of Cubans have given their lives, literally, in a struggle that was, first and foremost, not theirs but ours. As South Africans we salute them. We vow never to forget this unparalleled example of selfless internationalism."

The South Africans recently recognised this contribution by awarding Fidel Castro their highest honour the

Order of the Companions of O R Tambo in Gold.

Though socialism was defeated in the Soviet Union, its struggle to build a better world continues to have practical meaning and purpose. The development of the infrastructure of Cuba and its survival in the teeth of the US blockade would never have occurred without the support of the Soviet Union. Cuba's continued existence to lead the socialist movement in the 21st century is one of the most important legacies of the Russian Revolution.

As well as the huge benefits derived from alliance with the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist world, Cuba's self-made path to revolution and its geographic location bred a concept that it might need to survive on its own.

This was reinforced by the outcome of the October 1962 missile crisis, which left Cuba high and dry. The Cubans were stung by Soviet actions, as they had put themselves on the line hosting Soviet missiles, yet the confrontation was resolved by the Soviet Union without reference to them, with the Cubans only finding out about it when it was made public.

Whilst paying fulsome tribute to the support of the Soviet Union for Cuba, Fidel Castro also said of this particular time, "... at least as a matter of principle, Khrushchev ought to have consulted with us, but he did not do so. We thought that was absolutely incorrect; it provoked irritation and we lodged a protest. It influenced Cuban-Soviet relations for years. That was the incident that really affected our relations with the Soviets."⁽³⁾

Though hugely reliant on trade and aid from the Soviet Union, nevertheless that continued wariness and independence of spirit and mind helped Cuba survive. It did not embrace Perestroika, but continued to believe that socialism was a superior system to capitalism and determined to find a way forward when everything else was collapsing around them.

When the Pope visited, designed to signal a death knell for the revolution, the Cuban Communist Party instructed its members to turn out to greet the pontiff, meaning that the visit could not be used as a rallying point for anti-communist forces. Out-numbered and out-manoeuvred the visit passed off without making a dent in the revolution.

Particularly since the end of the Soviet Union, Cuba has also worked skilfully on the world stage promoting alliances where it can to counter-balance the power of the United States and developing economic relations with

European Union countries and countries such as Canada, China, Russia and Iran.

Chinese bicycles were the main mode of transport in Cuba during the worst times of the "special period"⁽⁴⁾, when it was common to see not just two people travelling on each bike, but often three.

Over the decades Cuba has combined idealism with pragmatism and an ability to learn from mistakes. Therefore, many of the measures taken to survive after the end of the Soviet Union were regarded as a necessary evil, not as developments that would advance socialism.

These included the promotion of mass tourism, legalisation of the dollar, introduction of joint ventures with foreign capitalist enterprises and the promotion of small businesses.

Despite the difficulty of trying to hold back the tide of these material realities, the Cuban government has tried to control these developments as far as possible so that the forces they engender such as inequality, corruption, crime, the re-introduction of prostitution etc. do not simply have free reign.

The Cuban government and Communist Party characterised their policy and efforts at this time as "defending the gains of the revolution".

During this time there were also positive measures which built on Cuba's strengths and made a virtue of necessity. These included the development of organic, sustainable agriculture, the development of Cuba's world-leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries and the diversification of the economy. Cuban music and culture are finding new international audiences.

The Cuban leadership has also promoted new and younger leaders and tried to create a more collective leadership which did not rely on one person alone. When, therefore, Fidel was too ill to continue to lead the nation the transition was seamless to Raul becoming President.

Now at last the tenacity and perseverance of the Cuban people is beginning to pay off. In the darkest times of the early nineties when the socialist world and Cuba's main allies and trading partners disappeared almost overnight, when people did not have enough to eat, there was little in the way of transport and frequent power cuts, it almost seemed madness to think that the revolution could survive.

Even if the Cubans did not adopt the road of Perestroika and commit class suicide, then surely the compromises made to allow people to eat, have jobs

and retain the social and cultural infrastructure of the country would erode the fabric of the revolution and destroy it anyway. Well it has not been easy and there have been detrimental effects of the reforms of the nineties, but Cuba is still there, demonstrating that another world is possible and that it can be done on the doorstep, and in defiance of, the world's greatest super-power.

Now there is cause for hope, not only for Cuba, but for the whole world. Cuba no longer stands alone as it did through much of the 90s. Across Latin America left wing and socialist governments are the norm, the most advanced, of course, being in Venezuela.

Cuba's amazing feat of survival means that it has nurtured a new hope for socialism in the 21st century. The historic importance of this cannot be underestimated.

Humanity owes a debt to the heroism of the Cuban people throughout the last 50 years and for their defiance of the forces of reaction throughout the world which sought to destroy socialism internationally in the 1990s.

The strength that enabled them to do this lay in a mature and principled revolutionary leadership, a revolution which was born from generations of struggle and which gave the Cuban people not only material benefits and self-determination, but also great pride and social coherence.

Cubans have never thought their revolution was complete and that socialism only required a few finishing touches to make it perfect, rather theirs has been a history of struggle. In his speech celebrating the 50th anniversary of the revolution President Raul Castro promised the next 50 years "will also be of permanent struggle".

FOOTNOTES:

(1) The July 26th Movement was the movement led by Fidel and takes its name from the date of the assault on Moncada.

(2) Operacion Milagro is a programme of Cuban medical assistance to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has already restored or saved the sight of over 1 million people.

(3) An Encounter with Fidel. Gianni Mina Ocean Press 1991 p. 92

(4) After the end of the Soviet Union the Cubans designated the time as the special period, acknowledging the extraordinary challenges they were facing to survive. They had always considered that war might be the cause of their isolation from their allies and considered that that would be a special period, however, they found themselves having to deal with similar conditions in a time of peace.

Victory for ANC, but challenges ahead

The South African election on 22 April overwhelmingly returned an African National Congress (ANC) government with 65.9% of the votes cast on a 77% turnout.

ALEX DAVIDSON reports on the election and the challenges that lie ahead for the people of South Africa and the ANC government led by their new President, Jacob Zuma.



Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as President on 9 May and his Cabinet was announced the following day.

The election result showed that ANC is still dominant. Neither the Democratic Alliance (DA) with 16.6% of the vote nor the Congress of the People (COPE) with 7.4% came anywhere near challenging ANC except in the Western Cape (see table page 13).

The DA won control of the Western Cape. This Province has always been a problem for ANC. In elections since 1994 one of its weakest performances was in the Western Cape. This is largely due to the ethnic nature of the province inherited from the colonial and apartheid past. The province has a very high 'coloured' population and a relatively large 'white' population. In addition, ANC has had internal problems in its provincial structure.

The other province which has been difficult for ANC is that of Kwazulu

Natal, where the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has its base. The IFP's support has been declining and with it has come internal problems. Opposition to Gatsha Buthelezi has been growing. The IFP share of the vote in the province fell to 20.5% in this recent election. ANC now controls the province.

COPE did not do as well in the election as anticipated ("played up"?) by the media. This is partly explained by it being a very new party (formed in December 2008) as well as it being hampered by divisions emerging within the new grouping. Notwithstanding this, COPE failed to dent the ANC core support.

Zuma's Cabinet

President Zuma's cabinet reflects the unity of the tri-partite alliance with leaders from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and

the South African Communist Party (SACP) being given ministerial posts.

The SACP's General Secretary, Blade Nzimande, has been appointed Minister for Higher Education and Training and Jeremy Cronin, SACP Deputy General Secretary, has become Deputy Minister of Transport.

It should also be noted that several ANC big businessmen, including Tokyo Sexwale, have been included in the cabinet.

Several new governmental departments have been created, reflecting discussions and decisions developed within the tri-partite alliance in the run-up to the election. A new National Planning Commission has been introduced within the Presidency with Trevor Manuel, former Finance Minister, as its head.

The new government has inherited the difficulties of the global economic situation. South Africa has, so far, been

less badly affected by the capitalist banking crisis. However, the general economy is feeling the effects and has been declared officially in recession. It is clear that the economy will shrink from its 5-6% growth rate per year over the last number of years.

Zuma's challenge

In the first fifteen years of post-apartheid South Africa many positive developments took place in the country. There was a huge increase in the num-

bers of people accessing clean water, electrification and sanitation. Millions of new homes were built and education was opened to all.

These government led-developments were largely funded from the income derived from the economy's steady growth. However, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Unemployment stands at 25% (40% unofficially). All of this has angered many and was a major factor leading to criticism of Thabo Mbeki's government.

The Zuma government, faced with a declining economy, and the challenge of reducing the gap between rich and poor, is being pressurised to move to the left by COSATU and the SACP. At the same time it is also under pressure to continue with prudent fiscal policies and to protect business.

Zuma and the ANC are going to have to box cleverly. Managing capitalism and, simultaneously re-distributing wealth, amidst a global capitalist economic crisis will not be an easy path.

2009 SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

Total Valid Votes: 17,680,729. Number of Registered Voters: 23.18 million. Voter Turnout: 77.3%.

PARTY	LEADERS	No. of Votes (%age)	Seats
African National Congress (ANC)	Jacob Zuma	11,650,748 (65.9)	264
Democratic Alliance (DA)	Helen Zille	2,945,829 (16.66)	67
Congress of the People (COPE)	Mosiuoa Lekota	1,311,027 (7.42)	30
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	Mangosuthu Buthelezi	804,260 (4.55)	18
Independent Democrats	Patricia de Lille	162,915 (0.92)	4
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	Bantu Holomisa	149,680 (0.85)	4
Freedom Front Plus (VF +)	Pieter Mulder	146,796 (0.83)	4
African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	Kenneth Meshoe	142,658 (0.81)	3
United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP)	Lucas Mangope	66,086 (0.37)	2
Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)	Motsoko Pheko	48,530 (0.27)	1
Minority Front (MF)	Amichand Rajbansi	43,474 (0.25)	1
Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO)	Mosibudi Mangena	38,245 (0.22)	1
African Peoples Convention(APC)	Themba Godi	35,867 (0.2)	1
OTHERS		134,614(0.52)	0
TOTAL		17,680,729 (100)	400
Spoilt Papers		239,237	

Election Result by Province (%ages) (A blank indicates less than 1%)

PROVINCE	PARTIES			
	ANC	DA	COPE	IFP
Eastern Cape	69.7	9.97	13.31	
Free State	71.7	12.1	11.11	
Gauteng	64.76	12.1	7.78	1.68
Kwazulu Natal	63.97	10.33	1.55	20.57
Limpopo	85.27	3.71	7.21	
Mpumalanga	85.81	7.6	2.89	
Northern Cape	61.1	13.08	15.94	
North West	73.84	8.7	8.43	
Western Cape	32.86	48.78	9.06	

14 nations intervened to destroy at birth the first-ever socialist state

The revolution in Russia on November 7, 1917, was followed by a ferocious attack, spearheaded by the British, on the young socialist state.

GINA NICHOLSON looks back to 1917 when the Imperialist powers waged war in their bid to destroy at birth the world's first-ever socialist state.

This attack took two main forms: assistance to counter-revolutionary forces within the country, and outright invasions without any declaration of war.

On December 21 1917, six weeks after the Russian revolution and while the war with Germany still raged, the British War Cabinet issued a memorandum which, while asserting its support for self-determination of countries, nevertheless agreed to suggest that Britain and France should share in giving financial support to 'anti-German' forces which, in fact, happened to be counter-revolutionary Cossacks and the like who happened to be thousands of miles away from any German army presence.

This memorandum was agreed by the French two days later and clearly was the policy behind subsequent developments.

Even before this memorandum, on December 3 the British Cabinet had guaranteed funds to Kaledin, a Cossack general, who had proclaimed on November 7 that he had taken state power in the Don region and formed a White volunteer army which proceeded to attack Soviet forces and massacre miners.

China meanwhile, on December 16, seized the railway linking Central Siberia with the far eastern provinces.

The fledgling Soviet government had signed an armistice with Germany on December 5. Nevertheless, on 27 January 1918, signing a treaty with the Ukrainian Central Rada, the German generals moved a 300,000-strong occupation into the Ukraine.

The hastily organised detachments of



**PETROGRAD 1917
Red Army soldiers
storm the Winter
Palace.**

the new Soviet army were unable to check their advance. The Germans then abolished the Rada, set up a Ukrainian landowner as controller of the region, and began systematically looting the Ukraine of its foodstuffs.

At the beginning of January, Semyonov, a captain in the Tsarist army, having formed a 'Special Manchurian Force' composed mainly of Chinese professional bandits and led by Cossacks, seized the frontier railway station of Manchuria and shot the members of the local Soviet.

He then captured other stations, cutting railway communications. 'Massacres, floggings and plunder accompanied Semyonov's operations throughout.' (Rothstein)

The British military attache at Peking received Semyonov's representative and recommended meeting Semyonov's demand for £10,000 a month to pay his soldiers. The British government complied with this request.

On January 30, the Government of India was involved in organising a mission, with the British Government's agreement, to 'proceed to Turkestan and enter into relations with anti-Bolshevik elements in that region'. (Quoted by Andrew Rothstein in his book 'When Britain invaded Soviet Russia').

On February 10 Trotsky broke off peace negotiations with the Germans, who resumed their offensive against Russia. This action of Trotsky's was

countermanded by the Bolsheviks, who insisted on a peace treaty. Thus, on 23 February a peace treaty, although with terms far more onerous than previously, was signed.

In March, the arrival of Allied (British, French and American) naval and military forces, strengthened the diplomatic mission in Murmansk, which developed into a fully-fledged occupation.

Incidentally, this period was good news for the Birmingham Small Arms Company, which had acquired the right to broker all sales of small arms. They managed to sell a great many surplus Lee-Enfield rifles to the interventionists. "The biggest single item was the large stock of Pattern 14 rifle in .303 calibre. Marketing these rifles was difficult as the calibre was in wide use only by the British Empire, Estonia and Latvia. After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the British supplied Ross and Pattern 14 rifles from Royal Navy stocks to these Baltic nations. During the Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War, they supplied large numbers of rifles to the "White" anti - communist forces." - (www.rifleman.org.uk)

The Japanese invaded and occupied Vladivostok on April 5, 1918.

Andrew Rothstein, in his book 'When Britain invaded Soviet Russia', remarks "The most serious threat which faced the Soviet Republic within its first year of existence . . . was the mutiny . . . of the Czechoslovak Legion in May, 1918".

Although the Republic of Czechoslovakia was not formed until 28 October, 1918, the Czechoslovak Legion, numbering between 50,000 and 70,000 soldiers, was formed in Russia from prisoners of war taken from the Austro-Hungarian forces. On December 16 1917 the French government recognised the Czechoslovak Legion as an autonomous part of the Czechoslovak army in France.

The British had put pressure on the Czechoslovaks to put their forces at the disposal of the Allies in Russia. President Masaryk later confirmed that he had favourably considered this, but thought his forces not strong enough by themselves to 'fight the Bolsheviks and the Germans in the name of democracy'. He thought that in practice only intervention by the Japanese could make this possible.

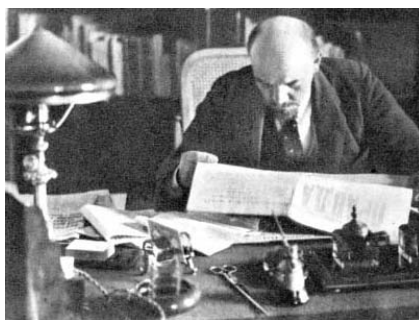
However the Legionaries of the Czechoslovak 2nd Regiment stationed in Kiev were allowed to slip away to the Don and take service in General Kornilov's counter-revolutionary Cossack forces, forming a detachment

of their own. The Soviet government gave permission for this corps to go home via Archangel, keeping only enough arms for their own defence, but the Legion retained far more arms than allowed, and their departure was delayed over some months.

The April 5 occupation of Vladivostok by the Japanese changed the outlook for the Czechoslovak Legion. Strung out as they were along the trans-Siberian railway they were in a crucial position and their revolt, urged by Britain and sanctioned by Masaryk, in late May 1918 was a very serious blow to the Soviet authorities.

On August 2, after a long series of attempts to subvert the local Soviet power, Archangel was occupied by British and US forces. No declaration of war was made before this or before any other military incursion on Soviet soil during this period.

Various 'diplomats' in the country at this time were plotting and organising with counter-revolutionaries. A notable member of this group was the British agent Lockhart, who, with Francis and Noulens, plotted with counter-revolutionary terrorists 'to overthrow Soviet power, to arrest the members of the Soviet government, and to assassinate Lenin.' (Genesis of the Soviet Federative State, 1917-1925). On August 30 Lenin (below) was shot and



seriously wounded by a Socialist-Revolutionary in an assassination attempt.

'In the autumn of 1918 ... the Entente powers intensified their criminal intervention against the Soviet people, bringing the numerical strength of their expeditionary forces to over 300,000 ... During 1919 the authors of this war of aggression, notably British Minister of War Churchill, worked on a plan of organising a fourteen-power coalition for an anti-Soviet campaign.' (A Short History of the World, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975).

This is not a complete account of what happened in the short time after the revolution, but it gives an idea of some of the forces the Soviet power had to contend with. Sidney and

Beatrice Webb, in their book 'Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?' give a graphic description of the state of things:

'In 1918 . . . Even in Petrograd and Moscow there was the very smallest security of life and property. Robbery with violence in the streets, and the incursion of armed bandits into the houses ... were of daily occurrence. Outside the cities there was no organised protection. The deliberate and long-continued blockade maintained by the British fleet, and supported by the other hostile governments, kept out alike food and clothing, and the sorely needed medicines and anaesthetics. The whole country swarmed with counter-revolutionaries, who passed easily from individual saboteurs into wandering groups combining in varying degrees rebellion with banditry. Presently came the armies of Great Britain, France, Japan, Italy and the United States ... actually invading ... These horrors, in the perpetration of which mere banditry and racial and religious persecution joined hands with war and rebellion, lasted at one place or another for more than two years; and extended, at one time or another, to nearly the whole of what is now the USSR. ...

'... so dire was the condition of the people, so implacable was the enmity of practically all the governments of the world, and so fierce and persistent were the attacks which the most powerful of them promoted and supported, that the Soviet Government only just managed to survive.'

This survival was helped in some part by the pro-revolutionary actions of workers in other countries. The sailing of the Jolly George and some other munitions ships was prevented by the Hands Off Russia movement in London's docks (see page 16), and there were many other incidents of international solidarity. But the brunt of the struggle was of course borne by the heroic people of Soviet Russia.

■ *When Britain Invaded Soviet Russia* by Andrew Rothstein, pub. Journeyman Press, 1979.

■ *A Short History of the World* pub. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975.

■ *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* By Sidney and Beatrice Webb (pub. by private subscription), 1935.

■ *History of the CPSU(B)*, pub. Foreign Languages Publishing House Moscow, 1938.

■ *Biography of Lenin* by Ralph Fox, pub. Gollancz, 1933.

■ *Genesis of the Soviet Federative State* pub. Progress Publishers Moscow, 1982.

■ *Harry Pollitt: A Biography* by John Mahon, pub. Lawrence & Wishart, 1976.

“Hands Off Russia” Jolly George campaign

1920 London dockers’ strike: International working class solidarity in action

Below we reprint Chapter VII from HARRY POLLITT’s autobiography, *Serving My Time, an apprenticeship to politics*. In this he deals with the “Hands Off Russia” campaign and the successful Jolly George London dockers’ strike of 1920 in which he played a leading role. Pollitt became General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1924.

The news of the revolutionary overthrow of Tsarism by the workers and peasants of Russia in 1917 evoked a tremendous response among the whole working class of this country, and an equally terrific hostility from the ruling class.

Never was such a stream of filthy propaganda poured out against any Government as was poured out by the gentlemen of Britain against the first Workers’ Republic in the history of the world. Against the might and influence of the capitalist Press and the Government’s statesmen, our resources for conducting propaganda for solidarity with the Russian Revolution seemed very limited, but the sympathy with workers’ Russia grew. Various working-class organisations took part, and in the summer of 1919, when the “Hands Off Russia” movement was formed, a great deal of work had already been done.

At this time I was very active in London with a group of comrades associated with Sylvia Pankhurst in the Workers’ Socialist Federation. Many of these comrades could be seen standing outside the London docks and shipyards on Fridays and Saturdays, selling “Hands Off Russia” literature, and our members were also selling literature inside the dockyards and shipyards.

Day after day we were posting up placards, sticky-backs and posters on the dock-sides and in various places in the ships and lavatories. Sylvia Pankhurst kept us continuously supplied with copies of Lenin’s *Appeal to the Toiling Masses*. This was considered by our democratic rulers as a seditious document, so that it had to be printed illegally.

My landlady in Poplar one day



In 1970 the USSR printed a special Harry Pollitt stamp depicting Harry appealing to London dock workers not to load the Jolly George ship with munitions to be used against the young Soviet workers’ republic.

expressed surprise that my mattress seemed to vary in size from day to day, and “that I must be a rough sleeper, as it was so bumpy.” She little knew that inside the mattress we kept our copies of Lenin’s *Appeal*, and each day took a supply to distribute amongst the workers in the docks and shipyards.

Every Saturday night and Sunday found the group addressing meetings and distributing literature. I remember how indefatigably the late comrade, Mrs Walker of Poplar, used to work for the “Hands Off Russia” movement. She toiled like a Trojan. If on a shopping morning you went down Chrisp Street, Poplar, you could rely upon seeing Mrs Walker talking to groups of women, telling them about Russia, how we must help them, and asking them to tell their husbands “to keep their eyes skinned to see that no munitions went to help those who were trying to crush the Russian Revolution.”

Our Sunday night meetings at the East India Dock gates grew in size and

enthusiasm. Then began the attempts of the Allies to use Poland as their main hope for crushing the Russian Revolution. Rumours flew thick and fast in Dockland, and soon we began to hear that such-and-such a ship was carrying munitions to Poland. Whilst we could never trace actual shipments, we redoubled our propaganda, and there could not have been a place in Poplar where the cry of “Hands Off Russia!” had not been heard.

Then we received definite information that two large Belgian barges lying in the East Dock at the back of the Blackwall Shipyard were to be transformed so that they could transport war material to Poland. I was ordered to work on these barges, and asked point blank, “Were they for war purposes - to help Poland against Russia?” I was told “Yes.” So I refused to work on this job, got sacked, and will confess was greatly disappointed that, in spite of my influence with the shipyard workers, I did not succeed in getting strike action on this job. Every man was receiving extra wages, and whilst these men would have willingly followed me if it had been a purely trade union question, this issue did not appeal to them in the same light.

It was a danger signal! We became frantic with the thought that we were letting our Russian comrades down. That shipyard was bombarded with “Hands Off Russia” appeals. The men were ordered to work on a Sunday to finish the job. Our group was outside the shipyard that Sunday morning at 7 a.m. When the men came along, we gave each one a copy of Lenin’s *Appeal to the Toiling masses* and made many personal appeals. At nine o’clock it

started to snow, and at 10.30 a.m. all the men were ordered home, but paid double time for the whole day to offset our propaganda.

That night we had a meeting in the Hall at Old Ford Road, Bow. It was a shocking night and a shocking meetings. I think all of us felt the position very keenly. After the meeting, I met an old workmate who cryptically said, “What are you worrying about, Harry? It’ll all come right in the end.” And when a few weeks later the news came through that the towing rope attached to the barges had broken while they were proceeding across the North Sea, and the barges had sunk, it looked almost as if his prophecy had something of inspiration about it!

Rumours about munitions being loaded for Poland in the East India Docks became more insistent, until one day rumour turned out to be a fact. Guns and aeroplanes appeared on the dock-side labelled “O.H.M.S. Munitions for Poland.” This was at the very moment when in Parliament Bonar Law was indignantly denying that the British government was sending any war material whatsoever to Poland.

On May 1st 1920 the Danish steamer Neptune left the East India docks. We had failed to stop her, but it was clear that the dockers were in a restive mood. They didn’t like the business. They were getting ready to act. But it was with heavy hearts that we joined the May Day Demonstration in Poplar to march to Hyde Park. It seemed such an awful contradiction: international solidarity in Hyde Park - munitions being shipped from Poplar to kill our Russian comrades.

From Hyde Park, however, came new inspiration. Back to Poplar! Wherever our meetings could be held, we were on the job. Mrs Walker worked herself to a standstill. There must be no mistake this time.

Two revolutionary firemen signed on this boat, and their plans were well laid. The owners and the Government thought that all was well. The boat got as far as Gravesend, and up came the two firemen. They called a meeting on deck to explain to the deckhands that they were carrying munitions against Russia, and what about it?

The Captain came down and demanded to know what was going on. It was made very plain to him. While the argument was proceeding, another ship coming up the Thames struck the munition ship. There was no further argument. It was towed in a sinking



Winston Churchill, 1904.

condition to the dock and that was the nearest it got to Poland.

The news of this incident soon spread to Poplar, and was talked about wherever sailors and dockers gathered together. It happened that in these early days of May, one of the Walford Line of “Jolly” boats, the Jolly George, was waiting for cargo in the East India dock. The cargo soon arrived, again labelled “O.H.M.S. Munitions for Poland.” Would the dockers follow the lead of the seamen? They soon showed they would.

They sent a deputation to Fred Thompson and Ernest Bevin, the London and General Secretaries of the Dockers’ Union and received assurances that the Union would stand by them if they took action on the Jolly George.

On May 10th, *The Times* was, oh, so happy! The Poles were carrying all before them. Kiev had been captured by the Poles. “Heavy Defeat of the Red Army” screamed “Thunderer” and in its leading article it triumphantly proclaimed: “The fall of Kiev is a great triumph for the Poles and their Ukrainian allies, as it is a heavy blow for the Bolsheviks. The city was entered, according to the Russian wireless, on Friday, after heavy fighting during Thursday and that day, and by the latest reports, the Russians are in retreat, followed by Polish cavalry. King George expresses the traditional feelings of the British people when he conveys to Marshal Pilsudsky on the occasion of the Polish National Festival their ‘most cordial congratulations and good wishes for the future of the Polish state.’”

Naturally, the enemies of Russia were jubilant - so jubilant that all the Parliamentary denials that Britain had been sending munitions to Poland were now dropped. Britain must be in at the kill, but let it be done in the traditional

“gentlemanly” manner. It was left to Winston Churchill to do the job.

“The British War Office have given no assistance to the Poles in this enterprise, but both the British and the French Governments in former periods - last year, and so on - have helped to strengthen and to equip the Polish Army, that being an essential part of the policy of the Treaty” (*The Times*, May 12th, 1920).

Not so fast, gentlemen! Other events are taking place that will make the fall of Kiev a Pyrrhic victory.

The London dockers have taken strike action on the Jolly George on May 10th 1920. The coal-heavers have refused to coal the Jolly George on May 10th 1920. They struck better than they knew!

Soon the news is all over Britain. Every worker is triumphant. Wherever the Jolly George and the London dockers are mentioned, scenes of enthusiasm are witnessed. Questions are asked in the House of Commons about the matter, and the same Bonar Law who on May 6th 1920 denied that munitions had been sent to Poland, now admits that both the British and French Governments have been supplying munitions to Poland free of charge since October 1919.

The offensive against Russia goes on, but the counter-offensive for Russia gathers momentum.

The strike on the Jolly George has given a new inspiration to the whole working-class movement. On May 15th the munitions are unloaded back on to the dockside and on the side of one case is a very familiar sticky-back: “Hands Off Russia.” It was only small, but that day it was big enough to be read all over the world.

The British workers were now thoroughly roused. They were ready for any action to defend workers’ Russia. Councils of Action were set up everywhere. The movement was on its mettle. Labour leaders were forced to pay heed to the mass feeling. The emergency conference of the Trades Union Congress, Labour Party and Parliamentary Labour Party had adopted on August 9th 1920 a resolution in which it stated that: “It therefore warns the government that the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war” (i.e. the war upon Russia).

In this open war, the Allies and especially Britain had long been preparing to participate as direct combatants, and they met at Hythe, also on August 9th. But the game was up. The threat of

general strike action called a halt. The open war plans had to be abandoned.

The strike on the Jolly George had won its greatest victory. It was the action which completely changed the international situation - a change that was forced on the British Government.

Let Winston Churchill testify to this:

“The British Labour Party had developed a violent agitation against any British assistance being given to Poland ... Councils of Action were being formed in many parts of Britain. Nowhere among the public was there the slightest comprehension of the evils which would follow a British collapse. Under these pressures, Mr Lloyd George was constrained to advise the Polish Government that the Russian terms do no violence to the ethnographical frontiers of Poland as an independent state, and that if they were rejected the British Government could not take any action against Russia” (The World Crisis, “The Aftermath,” p.269).

So the workers won. So they can win again, if now, every hour and every day, they make their preparations for actively fighting war. The strike weapon has now been finally rejected by the labour leaders as a weapon of struggle against war, but nonetheless it is one of the most powerful weapons the workers possess. However, it needs to be emphasised again and again that to ensure its success, the work of preparation must be unending.

The strike of the Jolly George was the result of two years’ tremendously hard and unremitting work on the part of a devoted band of comrades in East London. Today this lesson should be brought home on every possible occasion. There is widespread pacifist feeling - there is mass patriotic propaganda conducted by the National Government, but there is all too little militant anti-war propaganda being carried out, which is a grave reflection on all those of us who claim to be actively opposed to war.

Never was there such a need to be vigilant, to be on guard. If at any time between 1930 and 1933 we could have organised one protest strike in a munitions factory or in a rail depot or on a dock-side or ship, where munitions were being made or exported to Japan, we could have struck a mighty blow in defence of the Soviet Union, which means in defence of the working class of Britain and of all who love peace and hate war.

We must remember that never again will the government be so clumsy as to

flaunt their bold “O.H.M.S. Munitions for ...” in the rail depots and on the docks. They have learned from the Jolly George. So can the workers. To those who fear victimisation - why, if any docker on the Jolly George had been victimised there would have been riots in Poplar! The whole movement was ready to stand by the dockers. The working class is ready to stand by those who are in the position to strike effective blows against the warmongers now.

Not by pacifist appeals, but by action, can we retard and prevent war and build up that power and organisation that can end capitalism, the cause of all wars.

There is one detail, not without interest today, that I might add to this account of the Jolly George. Some time afterwards I was working in the West India Docks and heard a Polish steamer was going to load munitions for use against Russia, at what are now the Hays group of wharves. I rushed out of the docks to 16 King Street, because I knew the *Communist* would be coming out and there was still time to get this news into the paper. Perhaps I looked rather dirty in my overalls, for I had considerable difficulty in penetrating into the editorial sanctum, where the Editors of the *Communist*, Francis Maynell and Raymond Postgate, were at work. They were poring over old books, which meant nothing to me, as I did not know that Francis was an expert on typography. I told my story and saw at once that they were more interested in old books than in the business I had left my work to report upon. So I went back to my work calling them names their parents would have blushed to hear said about their offspring.

Today, when once again a great part of the world has been driven to war by the greed of the imperialist Powers, one realises how comparatively easy it seemed in the years immediately following 1918 to organise actions against war. Then “Never again!” was the common cry. The great majority of the people of Britain were disgusted with the horror and misery of a war which, as they had come to realise, had been fought purely and simply in the interests of the big capitalist and giant monopolist concerns.

The experience of four years of war had not been lost upon the people. More and more they saw through the sham pretexts on which their husbands, sons and fathers had been driven out from their homes to be uselessly slaughtered, as much by the incompe-

tence of their own generals as by the enemy.

Above all, the workers who had done nine-tenths of the fighting and nine-tenths of the paying - by worsened conditions of work, higher cost of living and indirect taxation - were in no mood to allow themselves to be offered up in further sacrifice, especially when that sacrifice was directed against their own brothers in the young Soviet State, who had succeeded in overthrowing their capitalist war-making rulers.

But today the position is different. The horror of those four years has been deadened by time, and new generations are being summoned to fight who, in 1918, were children or unborn. Now more than ever, therefore, it is imperative for us, who remember the last time, to warn them of what we know.

Now more than ever it is the duty of every socialist, of every class-conscious worker, to expend all his energy in tearing away the mask of ideals with which the Imperialist rules of the world seek to hide the true fact of this war for profits.

As I write this, though the new world war has been in existence for five months, the inferno of bombs and gas and blood has as yet scarcely been unloosed.

And yet already in Britain (not to speak of the other countries, Germany and France, where conditions are much worse) the suffering of the common people has begun: their homes have been broken up by evacuation; their children let loose upon the streets in thousands, without schools or medical attention; their trade union rights, fruit of a hundred years of struggle, are being threatened; and while the cost of living rises steeply, hundreds of thousands of workers, already living at or below the poverty line, are glibly informed by this government of banks’ and industrialists’ representatives that they must expect no increase of wages.

Yet there is one other point to be borne in mind. The struggle against imperialist war reached its highest stage in England after the last war, in the fight leading up to the stopping of the Jolly George.

Already today though the struggle is as yet far from that stage, it is led by men and women whose understanding of imperialism and whose determination to end it once and for all is more firmly rooted and more clearly conscious than it was in 1920; and we can count on the same vigilance being shown by the rank and file of the Labour movement as was shown by the men who stopped the Jolly George.

1939 Soviet-German non-aggression pact

On 23 August 1939 the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany.

PAT TURNBULL investigates the major factors in the lead-up to WWII that forced the USSR into signing the pact with fascist Germany.

Why did the Soviet Union, the first state in human history to represent the real interests of the people, make a non-aggression pact with the most vicious representatives of monopoly capitalism?

The Soviet leaders based this decision on experience and on an accurate analysis of the actions and motives of those in power in the capitalist countries since the October Revolution.

On the night of October 25 – 26 1917 (November 7 – 8 in the current calendar) workers, soldiers and sailors led by the Bolshevik Party stormed and occupied the Winter Palace in Petrograd and arrested the members of the Provisional Government who were hiding in one of its suites. Three hours later the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies proclaimed Russia a Soviet Socialist Republic. The people, led by the working class, had taken over state power. The people's uprising had won with very little bloodshed.

The Congress elected a Soviet government, the Council of People's Commissars. On its first day it decided a Decree on Peace and a Decree on Land, confiscating without compensation the land of landlords, monasteries and churches, with property and livestock. From now on all land was the property of the people, held by their state.

The land was to be distributed to the peasants and their debts – 3000 million roubles – were cancelled. There followed a decree on an eight-hour working day, and a Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia.

The Soviet government took over the State Bank and nationalised all other banks. The workers were put in control at all enterprises employing hired labour. The main means of transport were nationalised and the state took over foreign trade. These were only the

first steps in the construction of a new form of government with a new aim – to serve the people.

It is not hard to see why the next step by the world's exploiters was to do their utmost to strangle the Soviet revolution at birth. (See page 14: *14 nations intervened to destroy at birth the first-ever socialist state*, by Gina Nicholson)

The imperialist nations had inflicted on Soviet Russia a bloody war with

**“British capitalism always was, is and will be the most vicious strangler of popular revolutions ... but the British bourgeoisie does not like to fight with its own hands. It has always preferred to wage war through others.”
Joseph Stalin, 1927.**

great loss of life and vast destruction. More than twenty million people were killed in the First World War and the Civil War that followed. 1920 output was one seventh of that of 1913. And yet the Soviet people threw out the invaders and defeated the insurgents.

At the Genoa Conference, April 1922, hundreds of reporters waited to hear the first declaration in history by a socialist country at an international conference. The Soviet delegation urged ‘economic cooperation between

countries representing these two systems of property’, a reduction of armaments and a prohibition of particularly savage methods of warfare.

The western diplomats turned down the Soviet peace initiatives. But they were split, and the Soviet delegation entered into negotiations with the German delegation, which was attending its first international conference since Germany's defeat in the First World War. On April 16, 1922, the Soviet-German Treaty of Rapallo was concluded, withdrawing all reciprocal claims, cancelling all pending payments, and resuming diplomatic and consular relations. The Soviet Republic was no longer isolated, to the fury of the other imperialist representatives.

But the imperialist countries did not give up their aim of destroying the Soviet state. In particular, they wanted to push Germany into conflict with the Soviet Union and therefore helped Germany reconstruct her military and economic power. Between 1924 and 1930 Germany received credits and loans of 21,000 million Marks. The Locarno Treaties of October 1925, where negotiations were led by Britain and France, guaranteed Germany's western borders but left her eastern borders un-guaranteed, offering her freedom of action eastwards.

Soviet experiences thus far explain why in 1927, in an article entitled ‘Notes on Contemporary Themes’, Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union from 1923 until his death in 1953, wrote: ‘British capitalism always was, is and will be the most vicious strangler of popular revolutions. Ever since the Great French Revolution of the end of the eighteenth century, down to the Chinese revolution that is now in progress, the British bourgeoisie has always stood in the front ranks of the butchers of the liberation movement of mankind ... But the British bourgeoisie does not like to fight with its own hands. It has always preferred to wage war through others.’

What was to follow only confirmed his judgment.

Throughout the 1930s the policy of

British imperialism was to encourage a war between the Soviet Union and Germany. In this war they hoped the two countries would destroy each other, thus disposing of the first socialist country and a powerful imperialist rival at one fell swoop. As the imperialist countries in the inter-war years lurched from crisis to crisis the Soviet Union built a strong socialist country where the people could at last benefit from the results of their own labour.

In the year of the great crash in the west, 1929, the Fifth All-Union Congress of Soviets adopted the First Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR. Investments in industry were four times greater than over the previous five years. The country became one huge construction site of giant industrial projects. In April 1929 there were still 1,700,000 unemployed in the Soviet Union, but by 1931 they were all at work.

In 1940 the gross output of large-scale industry was twelve times that of 1913. The Soviet Union had achieved complete economic independence and was no longer obliged to import equipment like machine tools. In fact the country had begun to export tractors, cars, sewing machines and other industrial products. The national income of 1940 was six times that of 1913.

Meanwhile in the rest of the world an imperialist arms race had started in the mid-1920s, masked by endless 'disarmament' talks. In 1927 a Soviet delegation led by Litvinov proposed general and complete disarmament to the Preparatory Commission within the framework of the League of Nations. It was voted down - similarly at a 1932 World Conference on Limitation and Reduction of Armaments in Geneva.

In 1933 the Soviet Union offered a draft definition of aggression (an aggressor would be any country that declared war on or invaded another) and proposed a collective security system against Nazi Germany. This too was rejected. It was obvious that the rulers of Great Britain, France and the USA wanted a clash between Germany and the USSR. They were convinced Hitler would expand east.

In 1929 - 33 there was an economic crisis of the whole capitalist world. It was greater and longer than any previous crisis and the strongest impact was in the USA. Industrial production in the capitalist world diminished by 35 - 40 per cent. After 1933 there was a depression then in 1937 a new economic crisis. This time Germany, Japan and Italy were unaffected, boosted by



Moscow, August 23, 1939: Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov signs the German-Soviet non-aggression pact; Joachim von Ribbentrop and Josef Stalin stand behind him.

government war orders.

War is imperialism's most brutal way out of economic crisis. In September 1931 Japan attacked China. The League of Nations took no sanctions. The imperialist powers hoped Japan would make war on the Soviet Union. Instead the Japanese military seized US and British property, and in March 1933 walked out of the League of Nations. In 1937 the Japanese army occupied the central provinces of China and the eight-year Sino-Japanese war began.

In Germany workers' resistance to the economic crisis had grown. In 1928 the Communist Party received 3,200,000 votes in elections, and in November 1932 this had grown to 6,000,000.

But Hitler's fascist party, funded by the capitalist monopolies, was extending its own grip on the people. The Nazis took over on January 30 1933. In June 1933 Britain, France, Germany and Italy signed a pact of accord and cooperation, which, although never ratified, served as an encouragement to the German Nazis and Italian fascists. In October 1933, Germany walked out of the League of Nations and began preparations for a war of revenge and conquest.

French foreign minister L. Barthou and other French statesmen proposed a united front of peace-loving states against the Nazi threat. Barthou's proposal for a pact of mutual assistance

between France and all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was never concluded owing to the equivocal attitude of Britain and German pressure.

In October 1934 Barthou himself was brutally killed by fascist agents, making it easier for the reactionaries of the Western powers to make deals with the fascists. Germany was allowed to introduce compulsory military service in March 1935, and in March 1936 to militarily occupy the de-militarised zone on the left bank of the Rhine.

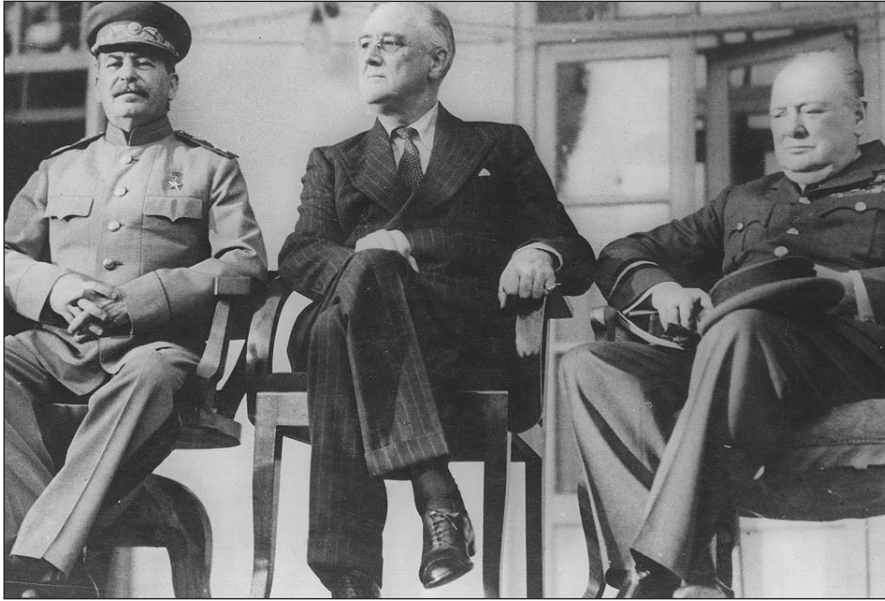
This occupation was achieved with the connivance of the British government which vetoed the demand of the French government for a stand to prevent it. In June 1935 the British government concluded a naval agreement with Germany, violating the naval disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles concluded after the First World War. Italy felt free to invade Ethiopia in October 1935. The Soviet Union proposed collective action but none was taken. In 1936 Italy conquered Ethiopia.

In Spain in summer 1936 the Spanish generals under Franco mounted an armed revolt against the elected Popular Front government. The rebels were supplied by the German and Italian fascists with tanks, planes, warships and expeditionary forces. The governments of the western powers and the League of Nations did not lift a finger to aid the Spanish people. The Non-Intervention Committee under Anglo-French sponsorship allowed Germany and Italy to continue their intervention and in effect condemned the Spanish people to defeat, although they fought bravely, supported by the International Brigades of fighters from all over the world, and by substantial Soviet aid in arms and men. In the three years of the war, the Germans and Italians lost arms to the value of about a billion US dollars.

In May 1937 Chamberlain became British prime minister. In November 1937 Lord Halifax, one of his closest associates, went to Germany to negotiate with Hitler, telling him that Britain would place no obstacles in the way of his expansion in Eastern Europe.

On March 13, 1938, Hitler occupied Austria without firing a shot. The only protest was from the Soviet Union, Litvinov saying there was still time if all states would take a stand.

In 1935 the Soviet Union had signed treaties with France and Czechoslovakia. On September 25, 1938, the Soviet government advised France that thirty Soviet divisions were on the western frontiers of the USSR in



Following Soviet victories, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met at the Tehran conference in 1943 and took the decision to open the Second Front in western Europe.

readiness. But no Czech request for assistance came. On September 29 and 30 1938, Chamberlain and Daladier (France) held a conference with Hitler and Mussolini in Munich. Czechoslovakia was partitioned and Germany received certain areas.

On September 30 1938 an Anglo-German non-aggression declaration was signed, and in December 1938 a similar declaration was signed by France and Germany. In March 1939 Germany occupied the whole of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain's actions had condemned millions to suffer under Nazi terror.

The Soviet Union was drawing its own conclusions. On March 13 1939, speaking at the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Marshal Voroshilov, People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR, declared: 'The country of victorious socialism is the most peaceable country in the world. But it is surrounded by hostile imperialist countries and it is a thorn in the flesh to moribund capitalism, and it is, therefore, more in danger of military attack than any other country.

'The peaceable countries, which include some of our near neighbours, are doing very little to strengthen the cause of peace and to prepare to resist the aggressors. We must, therefore, as always, rely only on ourselves.'

In Spain, in April 1939, the fascist forces entered Madrid, beginning the brutal reign of Franco over the Spanish people, and offering further encouragement to the German Nazis and Italian fascists. Britain and France hurried to

recognise Franco. France handed over Spain's gold. British bankers offered Franco a loan.

In April 1939 Italy occupied Albania without hindrance.

In summer 1939 there were secret negotiations between the British and German governments, discussing a political and economic settlement and the division of spheres of influence.

Germany had for years been on a war footing. Fascism had enabled its leaders to introduce compulsory labour in the factories. The working day had been increased to ten or twelve hours or more; it was forbidden to raise wages and the workers had no defence because of the destruction of the trade unions and brutal persecution and murder of all opponents of the Nazi regime. The industries and workers of the occupied countries too were put to the service of the Nazi war machine.

The Munich agreement was followed by a new jump in armaments in Germany, where since Hitler had come to power military expenditure had already increased 32 times.

By 1939 five hundred million people world wide were already embroiled in war. The Second World War had in reality already started.

Meanwhile negotiations from March to August 1939 between Britain, France and the Soviet Union resulted in no agreement.

In these circumstances the Soviet Union had to look to its own security and to its responsibilities to the Soviet workers and to the workers of the world to preserve the first socialist state. In

August 1939 Germany offered a non-aggression pact. It was signed on August 23.

At the time R. Palme Dutt, a leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, wrote in the September 1939 Labour Monthly in his Notes of the Month, 'The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact is the logical and inevitable answer to the treachery, double-dealing, sabotage of the Peace Front and counter-revolutionary war plans of British imperialism, and to the spineless impotence, passivity, trust in Chamberlain and incapacity of leadership of the official democratic opposition in Britain and France. The howl which greeted it from the representatives of this leadership of the betrayal of democracy is only the expression of the consciousness of the bankruptcy of their own policy.'

He continued: 'Nothing is to be gained by minimising the seriousness of the situation, which is the consequence, not of the Soviet Union's policy, but of Chamberlain's refusal of the Peace Front ... [which] has left the British people exposed to the ever closer menace of war under the most unfavourable conditions.'

The howl which greeted the pact then has been going up ever since. This pact was forced on the Soviet Union by the refusal of the leaders of Britain, France and the United States to sign an all-inclusive Pact of Mutual Defence which would, as Palme Dutt said, have placed 'an overwhelming superiority of forces on the side of peace'.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's army invaded Poland and on September 3 the French and British governments declared war on Germany. Hitler's armies made rapid progress across Poland. The reactionary government never got the aid it expected from Great Britain and France, still hoping for a German-Soviet war.

On September 17, 1939, Soviet Army units crossed into Poland, which had virtually ceased to exist as a state, and reunited Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia with Ukraine and Byelorussia. These regions had been annexed by Poland in 1920.

In September and October 1939 the governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia concluded mutual assistance agreements with the Soviet Union, concerned at the German reign of terror in Poland. In June 1940 the pro-Nazi governments in these Baltic republics were overthrown; there were free elections and popular governments were elected which in July applied for admission to

the USSR, granted a month later. This had moved the Soviet Union's state frontier 200 – 350 km westward.

However, Leningrad was only 32 km from the Finnish border and Finland was ruled by a reactionary government, which refused an offer from the Soviet Union to exchange a large piece of Karelia for a piece of the Karelian isthmus. The Finnish government provoked an armed clash with the Soviet Union and the Soviet-Finnish war began in late November 1939.

The British and French, supposedly at war with Hitler, formed expeditionary forces of 100,000 and 50,000 respectively with the purpose of aiding the Finns. However, in March 1940 Finland was defeated and a peace treaty secured the safety of Leningrad.

In summer 1940 Rumania restored Bessarabia to the Soviet Union – it had been annexed in 1918. Northern Bukovina, with a Ukrainian population, joined the Soviet Union at the same time. Thus the actions of the Soviet Union strengthened her western borders at the same time as freeing millions of people from the burdens of exploitation and temporarily at least from Nazi occupation.

The advance of the Nazis westward across Europe continued. Between April and June 1940 German forces invaded and occupied Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg and France. German submarines blockaded Britain and in August 1940 devastating bombing raids began on British cities to terrorise the population and disorganise industry.

But at the Nuremberg trials it was established that Germany did not really intend to invade Britain at this time. Hitler decided in June 1940 to attack the Soviet Union before invading Britain and in December he endorsed Operation Barbarossa for war against the Soviet Union. He estimated that the war on the Soviet Union would require eight weeks.

In September 1940 the Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan and between September 1940 and March 1941 Germany compelled Hungary, Rumania, Slovakia and Bulgaria to join the pact. In April 1941 the German army occupied Yugoslavia, whose people had refused to join the pact, and occupied Greece.

The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact had given the Soviet Union two more years to prepare for attack by Germany, which they knew was inevitable. On June 22nd 1941 Nazi Germany without warning or a declaration of war broke the non-aggression

pact and invaded the Soviet Union.

Hitler said this in his Proclamation of June 22nd: 'While our soldiers from May 10 1940 onwards had been breaking the power of France and Britain in the west, the Russian military deployment on our eastern frontier was being continued to a more and more menacing extent.

From August 1940 onwards, I therefore considered it to be in the interests of the Reich no longer to permit our eastern provinces to remain unprotected in the face of this tremendous concentration of Bolshevick divisions. Thus came about the result intended by the British and Russian co-operation – namely, the tying up of such powerful German forces in the east that the radical conclusion of the war in the west, particularly as regards aircraft, could no longer be vouched for by the German High Command.' So even before they entered the war, the Soviet people were preventing the British people from becoming victim to an even more bru-

“The Soviet-German non-aggression pact gave the Soviet Union two more years to prepare for attack by Germany, which they knew was inevitable.”

tal assault by the Nazi air force. Thus they played a crucial role in the Battle of Britain.

On July 12 1941 the British government finally signed a British-Soviet Pact of Mutual Aid and Alliance. In August 1941 Palme Dutt wrote: 'At last German Fascism, after eight years of victorious advance, made possible mainly by the corrupt assistance of the upper class conspirators in the other countries, meets now a combined front of the peoples.

At last German Fascism, after enslaving all the other nations of the European Continent, meets the mighty power of a free people who face it ready and prepared with equal strength; who fight with the knowledge that they fight for no imperialist aims, but for the cause of their own freedom and the freedom of all peoples, including the German people, enslaved by Fascism; and who thereby make these aims the

common aims of all peoples engaged in this just war for the defeat of German Fascism.' And in a timely reminder: 'Only a little over a year ago the British and French Governments ... were dispatching planes and guns to Fascist Finland for use against the Soviet Union.'

However, the Soviet people were to bear the brunt of the Nazi attack for more than three years. As Stalin said in November 1941, in his speech on the 24th anniversary of the Russian Revolution: 'There are no armies of Great Britain or the USA on the European Continent at present which are waging war against the German fascist troops' with the result that 'the situation now is such that our country is waging a war of liberation alone, without military aid from anyone.'

In December 1941 Palme Dutt in Notes of the Month described it as galling that 'while the Red Army could engage nine-tenths of the Nazi forces, the entire British Empire could not face the remaining one-tenths in the West.' Alone the Soviet Union faced 'the most ruthlessly organised slave factory for war and war production' (Notes of the Month Nov 1941). Meanwhile the US and Britain were planning the future campaigns of 1942 and 1943 and how they would sort the world out between them afterwards.

The turning point of the war in the east was at Stalingrad (now Volgograd) in February 1943 where, after months of bitter fighting, Field Marshal Paulus, Commander of the German Sixth Army, surrendered with over 90,000 officers and men. Still Britain and the USA postponed the all-important invasion of Europe across the English Channel, preferring a landing in Sicily in July 1943. They hoped to break through into South-East and Central Europe, preventing the arrival of Soviet troops and helping maintain the reactionary regimes there.

Before the end of 1943, two-thirds of Soviet territory at one time held by the enemy had been liberated. The Soviet victories led to periodic high level conferences of the USSR, USA and Britain, starting in autumn 1943. The Teheran Conference of November 28 – December 1 1943 took the decision to open the Second Front in Western Europe in May 1944, despite Churchill, who wanted to open it in the Mediterranean area.

In January / February 1944 the Soviet Union defeated the blockade of Leningrad (now St Petersburg) which had lasted 900 days. In winter and spring offensives 175 enemy divisions

Has the leopard really changed its spots?

Pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has recently announced that it is to slash the price of drugs to the poorest countries (to 25% or less of UK and US prices), return some (20%) of its profits to be used for health spending in those countries, and share information about patent-protected potential drugs for “Third World” diseases.

LESLIE MASTERS argues that while GSK’s announcement has been welcomed, the real reasons for it lie in economics not philanthropy.

New GSK CEO Andrew Witty argued that drug companies had an obligation to help the poor get treatment.

This announcement has been broadly welcomed by medical charities operating in the Third World, and by liberal commentators, who regard it as a “sea change” in the attitude of at least one drug company.

But has the leopard really changed its spots? And, if it has, is it really for the philanthropic reasons advanced by GSK?

The real reasons for GSK’s apparent

change of heart have to be sought in economics, not philanthropy.

Some campaigners have already remarked that the price cuts may seriously damage the generics companies that supply much of the medication sold in developing countries – especially expensive anti-HIV drugs. Precisely!

Patent laws that apply in the most developed capitalist states often have little or no legal standing in many developing countries.

Generics companies are able to manufacture and supply copies of patented

drugs (illegal copies, in the eyes of the drug giants) to these countries.

Since they have not spent vast sums of money (many hundreds of millions of dollars) on researching and developing the drugs – and even vaster sums on marketing them – and because they operate in low-income regions, the generics manufacturers can undercut the giants by very considerable margins.

So big is the problem (from the standpoint of “Big Pharma”) that they have enlisted the help of Western governments – particularly the Bush administration as was – to suppress the activities of the generics manufacturers through threats of economic sanctions.

This has had little success. Pharmaceutical manufacturing plants are not easy to establish, but the generics companies simply have to move their operations from one country to another – or resume operations under a new name – to keep one step ahead of their enemies.

Furthermore, even where the patent laws are accepted, they permit governments to declare a state of emergency in respect of a particular disease. They can then circumvent the laws, and make or import generic versions of patented drugs quite legally.

The South African government has threatened to do this in its dispute with the US government over just this issue.

Under pressure from campaigners, the drug giants have reduced their prices to developing countries, though still not to a level affordable to the latter.

Despite these legal and commercial efforts, Big Pharma has effectively priced itself out of the market for HIV and other drugs in the developing countries. Dropping their prices to

1939 Soviet-German non-aggression pact

were put out of action. It became obvious that the Red Army could crush Nazi Germany and liberate the captive nations itself. On June 6 1944 Britain and the USA began landings on the north coast of France. At the call of the leaders of the Resistance, the French people rose in arms and on August 25, when the Allied divisions entered Paris, it was already in the hands of the people.

Still the Soviet-German Front was the crucial battleground, where the German High Command kept its main forces. But at the end of December 1944 the German army launched an offensive in the west. On January 6 1945 Churchill addressed the Soviet government, requesting a large-scale Soviet offensive to relieve the situation. In response the Red Army moved a massive offensive, from the Baltic to the Carpathians, forward from January 20 to January 12. On that very day the German High Command called off its assault on the British and US positions. The reserves held for the westward drive were transferred to the Soviet front.

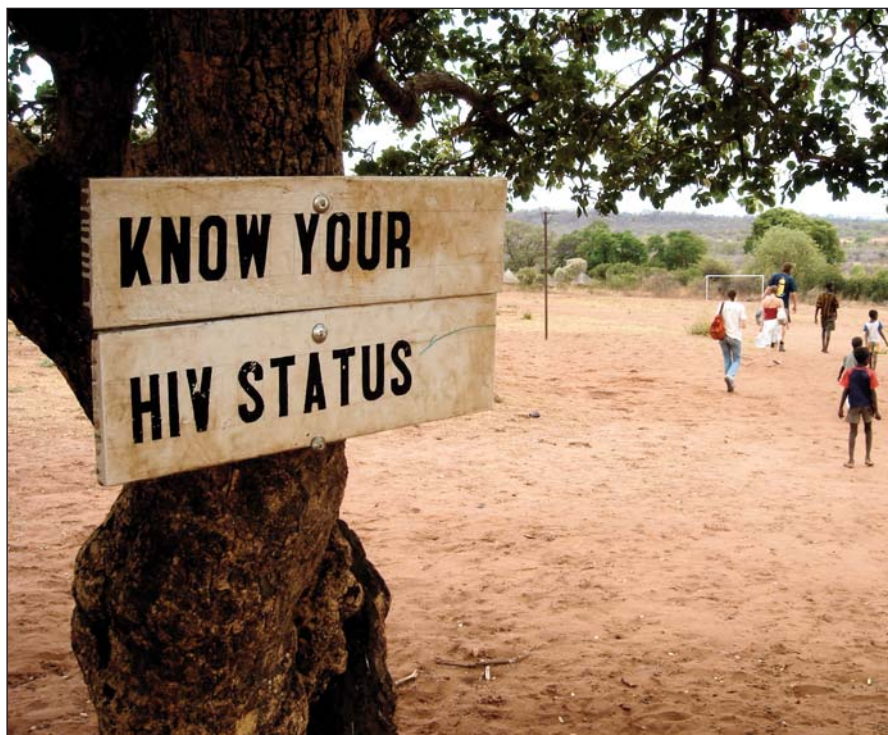
In April 1945 the Red Army’s Berlin

operation brought about Hitler Germany’s final collapse. On May 2 the Berlin garrison laid down its arms, and on May 8 1945 the unconditional surrender was signed in Berlin.

German battle casualties in the Soviet-German war were 73.5 per cent of the aggregate German battle casualties of the Second World War.

The Soviet Union had suffered terribly in its heroic struggle. More than 20 million people were dead. 1,710 towns were sacked and ruined; over 70,000 villages were destroyed by fire. Industry, collective farms, transport, housing, cultural and medical facilities – all had suffered heavy damage. By the end of 1945 some 5,200,000 Soviet people had been repatriated from Germany, including over 600,000 children.

It is a huge tribute to the Soviet people and their socialist system that by 1948 the 1940 level of aggregate annual volume of output had been reached and surpassed and that the industrial output of 1950 was 70 per cent higher than that before the war.



these countries to affordable levels will help them get back into these markets by allowing them to compete more effectively with the generics manufacturers.

That need is pressing - for the drug giants. Just 5 days before Andrew Witty made his announcement, GSK reported that it intended to cut its workforce in order to cut costs by a further £1 billion a year by 2011.

Glaxo were coy about the number of job losses, but figures of 10,000 (10% of the global workforce) have been suggested. This came a week after AstraZeneca announced 6,000 job losses. Pfizer are also planning cuts in the wake of their acquisition of Wyeth. Drug giants may be like bookies - whoever met a poor bookie - but they are not immune to the effects of the global recession.

Re-investing profits from developing countries in the health services of those countries is part of this strategy to conquer these new markets. The hope is that the individual hospitals and health centres, and entire health services which benefit from this generosity will remember where the money came from, and purchase their drugs accordingly.

It is possible that strings will be attached to this money as well, forcing the recipients to agree not to buy generic competitors of GSK's products. The proposal is nothing more than a colossal bribe.

It is also very telling: despite the mas-

sive reduction in prices involved, GSK still expects to make profits from its operations in the developing countries.

Yet the drug giants have always maintained that they need high prices to recoup the costs of developing the drugs (and the drugs that failed to make it to the market - about 90% of those developed).

So confident are GSK that they will maintain and improve their market position, they have given Witty a 17.5% pay rise, taking his basic pay to £1 million per year.

A last point here: there will also be nothing to stop companies like GSK from recouping any losses on sales to developing countries by raising their prices in richer countries.

Thus far, the pharmaceutical giants have been very protective of their "intellectual property rights", which they regard as essential to recouping the costs of, and profiting from, the development and marketing of their drugs. The proposal to share protected information, therefore, sounds radical.

In the first instance, the patent pool will not cover existing licensed drugs, such as HIV treatments. It only covers drugs still in the early stages of development, or on the back burner. (The patented compounds may have changed quite considerably if and when they get to market.)

This will, however, include a number of potential drugs of particular interest to health practitioners in developing countries. Secondly, GSK is not actual-

ly abandoning these patents - it will retain the intellectual property rights in any drugs developed.

One of the major criticisms of Big Pharma is their concentration on developing treatments for diseases of the rich, developed nations, while ignoring those mainly confined to developing countries.

The criticism is only justified on "moral" grounds: the drug giants are capitalist corporations, and can be expected to behave accordingly. Like any such company, they will develop and market only what appears to be profitable - nor can they be expected to behave otherwise.

Hence, they attempt to develop anti-obesity drugs - even though this is not a condition that actually requires pharmaceutical intervention in the vast majority of cases - because obesity is rife in the Western world, and the market for such drugs is therefore likely to be very lucrative.

In the meantime, even if they find a candidate to treat an endemic Third World disease, it is developed slowly or not at all, because the drug giants know that the market for the drug does not actually exist, since the only potential buyers cannot afford to pay for it. The problem is capitalism itself, not one portion of it.

Again, GSK's "change of heart" is presented in philanthropic terms; again, it has an underlying economic rationale.

By sharing the information on "Third World" drugs - but keeping control over any marketing of successful candidates - GSK can cut its own development costs significantly simply by farming them out to other companies and researchers. The drugs can then be sold cheaply enough to create a market for them.

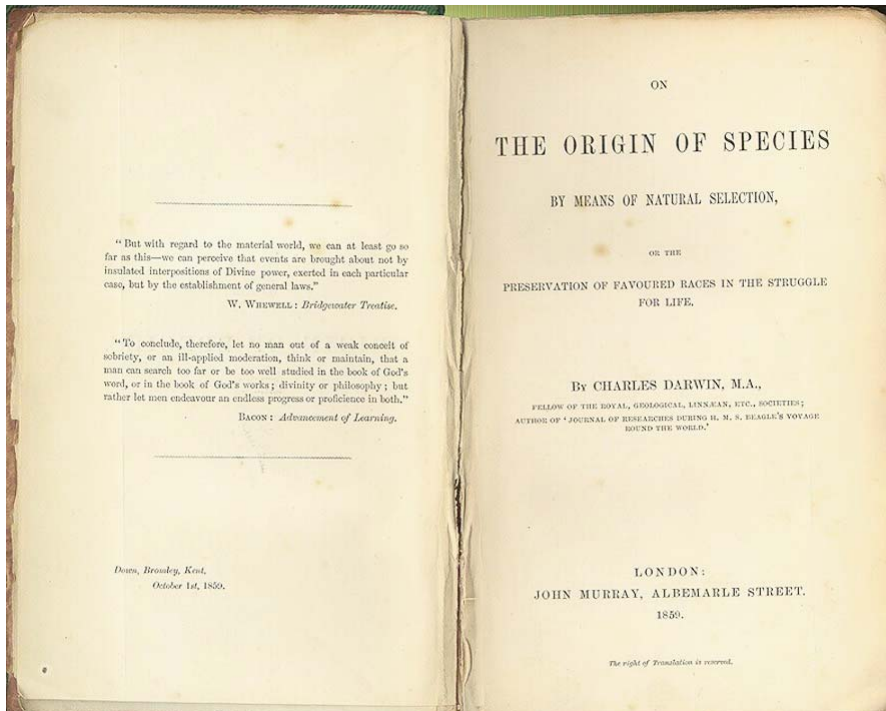
This is hardly a new tactic in the fight by capitalist companies to cut costs. Indeed, within the pharmaceutical industry itself, some early stages of the drug research process are already conducted by "independent" specialist companies.

These stages do not usually involve patented chemical compounds. However, as development costs soar, especially in a recession, it is almost inevitable that, in the search for greater cuts in costs, sooner or later, such contracting-out will involve patented compounds.

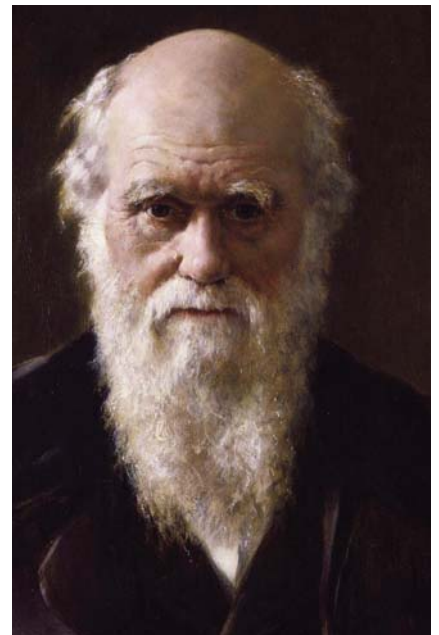
This is also the rationale behind GSK's offer to open up places to outsiders (even from rival companies) at their newly opened Spanish centre for research into tropical medicine.

Darwin's magnum opus: *The Origin of Species*

The 1859 cover of the Origin of Species



Portrait of Charles Robert Darwin, by John Collier (1850-1934), given to the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1896.



S. WORDFISH reflects on Darwin's groundbreaking achievement of establishing evolution by natural selection.

Charles Darwin, the great English naturalist, was born 200 years ago, on 12 February 1809.

Fifty years later, on 24 November 1859, he published his groundbreaking book, *The Origin of Species*.⁽¹⁾ 2009 is therefore a double anniversary for the man who established evolution by natural selection as a unifying principle in the development of life on Earth.

Darwin's great insight was that since some individuals of a given species reproduce themselves more successfully than others, so the frequency of any reproducible characteristic that improves their chances of doing so increases in successive generations.

The world is awash with information about Darwin's life and work. Some of it is specialised and technical, but there are also engaging biographies and convenient summaries of his scientific insights.⁽²⁾ This article reflects on Darwin's achievement in three sections,

starting with the longest, about connections between discoveries in the natural world and politics, economics and everyday life; then the shortest, about what Marx and Engels made of Darwin's ideas and how these were expressed; and lastly some observations about neo-Darwinism and its alternatives, which impact on practical politics today.

Nature and Society

Darwin was interested in life as a global phenomenon but in his bicentenary astronomers and exobiologists (as they are called) are already looking for life further afield.

Star-orbiting planets outside our solar system began to be identified as recently as the 1990s and on 6 March this year NASA launched Kepler, a new

space telescope, to discover more of them. Some such planets might harbour life more intelligent than the New York Times reporter who claimed that 'Someday it might be said that this was the beginning of the end of cosmic loneliness.'

Such views echo the hyperbole that often colours accounts of great discoveries in the past, such as those by Copernicus, Leverrier and Galileo in establishing the orbital structure of the solar system or by Darwin and Wallace in disproving the independent creation of different forms of organic life. In his apocryphal statement 'yet it moves', Galileo is credited with exposing the absurdity of supposing matter in space is influenced by whatever he or religious dogma may say about it.

The equally apocryphal public exchange between 'Darwin's Bulldog', T. H. Huxley, and 'Soapy Sam' Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, set up Christian opinion as an affront to reason. In reality, both 'heresies' were fairly soon accepted by the religious establishment, although Galileo didn't

get an official apology from the Pope until 2000 nor Darwin his from the aptly-named Primate of the Church of England until just last year.

Those who report or interpret science for the general public are typically gung-ho about how discoveries or inventions have transformed everyday experience, such as no computers without electricity, or no modern road or air transport without the internal combustion engine – while further scientific intervention is welcomed to mitigate the ‘collateral damage’ of such developments, like internet fraud or pollution.

The idea that science is always beneficial (or, for that matter, the opposite) merely abstracts ‘science’ from the social practice of scientists.

By failing to take the social dimension of science seriously – refusing to make appropriate allowance for the fact that not everyone is a scientist – discoveries like Life Elsewhere In Universe, or Earth Goes Round Sun, or Biological Species Not Created Separately were assumed to affect most people’s personal philosophies, as if these were the same as scientific ones.

It may be a different matter with theories about common relationships and behaviour, but popular imagination often resists ideas even when they offer clear practical advantage.

Marx can identify the source of capitalist profit in surplus value or demonstrate the cyclical nature of capitalist economics; or medics can point out the link between smoking and lung cancer or between LDL cholesterol and heart disease.

But it’s something else for workers and consumers to want or be able to turn such information to advantage. The perils of capitalism and other persistent forms of ill-being could be overcome if the insights of Marx, medics and many others found more organised expression in tune with contemporary realities, rooted in the simple idea that taking action with others can make a difference.

If it’s rash to assume most people are more like scientists than they really are, it’s equally so to imagine what we call science has a monopoly of understanding.

As the evil scientist is an obvious stereotype, the heroic scientist, nobly dispelling ignorance among the unenlightened masses, is less obviously and therefore more insidiously so. Although peddling rationality, such a figure may look from the receiving end much as saints or missionaries did to their target audiences in the past.

More missionary than scientist, General Booth of the Salvation Army railed against irresponsible workers in the late 19th century for drinking their wages on Friday night in London’s East End pubs.

In the period before social insurance buying a round for others kept you in supportive friendships that made life worth living, and could save you in a crisis. If missionaries saw souls and scientists livers, they all agreed individuals should behave (and believe) differently.

Neither profession had much time for claims that people’s social relationships are as essential to them as food and air.

Much has been made of resistance to Darwin, then and since, by those claiming God created species separately. But even before 1859, the vast extension of geological time proposed by Lyell and others had already shaken whatever faith people may have had in Genesis.

There is no convincing evidence that in Darwin’s day most of those counting themselves Christians took the Bible as the Word of God.

Across Europe, leading biologists openly subscribed to evolutionary ideas for decades before Darwin came up with how evolution actually worked.

Neither scientists nor theologians approve of the untidiness in most people’s minds, so, like historians, they impose their own order upon it, thus misrepresenting this segment of reality.

Uncertainty is then routinely reported as fact. In a recent TV programme about Darwin, Sir David Attenborough leafed through a large bible, saying that everyone used to believe it was literally true. In the words of Ira Gershwin: ‘It ain’t necessarily so.’

A future science informed by both an historical overview and an insider-perspective on what happens in social settings, and with full popular participation to ensure it is applied for common benefit, would need to be very different from its familiar antecedent, shaped by capitalist values.

In pursuing his research over many years, Darwin was driven by his own passion for understanding rather than by a business-derived audit culture of performance targets, feasibility studies and citation indices.

It helped that he had a private income, but maybe in the future, science can be more productive and pleasurable by learning from Darwin’s practice as well as from his outputs: ‘The thing you cannot get a pigeon-hole for is the finger-point showing the way to discovery’ (Sir Patrick Manson).⁽³⁾

Marx and Engels on Darwin

Marx read *The Origin of Species* in 1860, making extensive notes on it, and later Darwin declared Marx’s *Capital* to be a ‘great work’, although it seems he managed only the first 105 of its 822 pages (in the original German, *Das Kapital*).⁽⁴⁾

Although Darwin’s book is about the natural world and Marx’s about human activity – and the two authors used different styles of argument – they share the insight that man does not stand ‘above’ or ‘outside’ nature; that change is inherent to life; and that individuals have to be considered in their mutual relationships.⁽⁵⁾

Darwin’s overall argument and his many examples of the dynamic co-dependency of organisms and environments are fully consistent with the dialectical emphasis on engagement and process which Marx and particularly Engels were developing at the time, and which is brought out so strikingly in Engels’s phrase that ‘in a sense [...] labour created man himself.’⁽⁶⁾

For Marx and Engels the issue was not natural selection but how Darwin, and later others, presented it.

This was yet another scientific theory bearing the imprint (expressed in the familiar idioms) of the society in which it emerged, but as analysts and critics of that society who were also working to overthrow it, the founders of Marxism could not ignore the terms in which Darwin’s theory was discussed and for what purposes.

Marx’s main objection was that ‘Darwin rediscovers, among the beasts and plants, the society of England with its [...] “struggle for existence.”’⁽⁷⁾

Engels spells it out even more clearly. Having transferred the image of individual competitiveness from (Thomas Hobbes, hence, early) capitalist England to ‘animate nature [...bourgeois Darwinians] proceed to re-extrapolate the same theories from organic nature to history, and then claim to have proved their validity as eternal laws of human society.’⁽⁸⁾

So in Victorian England, Darwin’s theory of natural selection, that was to revolutionise biological science and heralded a continuing stream of discoveries and practical benefit, was nonetheless mired in the metaphors of its time which allowed it to serve as an ideological prop for capitalism.

Though some of the metaphors have been updated, it is important to bear in mind, during the double anniversary commemorative razzmatazz, this is still the case today.

Neo-Darwinism and its alternatives

In the preface to the second edition of *Anti-Dühring*, his entertaining demolition of 'mechanical' materialism, Friedrich Engels observes that, "The 'system' of Herr Dühring [...] ranges over a very wide theoretical domain; and I was compelled to follow him wherever he went and to oppose my conceptions to his. As a result, my negative criticism became positive; the polemic was transformed into a more or less connected exposition [...] covering a fairly comprehensive range of subjects."⁽⁹⁾

Like Dühring, neo-Darwinism also makes wide territorial claims, but it's a many-headed Hydra attracting multiple critiques, several of which are mentioned in footnote (2), and because of limited space only a couple of points can be highlighted here: the idealist core of neo-Darwinist thinking; and the related, and politically-charged, subordination of actual human agency to that of our idealised genotypes.

For neo-Darwinists (of whom Richard Dawkins is probably the best-known), what is actually selected in (Darwinian) natural selection is a 'formal design specification' for an organism, its genotype.

In Marxist terms, this is an 'idealist' concept, the assumption of something existing outside of or prior to the actual life of the organism. Instead of the neo-Darwinist concept of the organism as a fixed or 'discrete, prespecified entity', we might take it instead as a 'particular locus of growth and development within a continuous field of relationships', a view which no dialectical materialist should have any problem with.⁽¹⁰⁾

When someone runs out of arguments for why a particular course of action cannot be taken, like as not they will invoke 'human nature' to settle the matter. (Ending war? Equal pay for equal work? Paternity leave? Production for need? 21st Century Socialism? But you overlook human nature!).

No wonder the neo-Darwinist genome - specifying in advance what it is to be a human being - has been so favoured by establishments and their media trying to block radical social change as a response to radical social ills.

But 'human nature' is merely an abstraction since it cannot be determined outside of the specific and vastly varied social and environmental contexts into which people are born and in which they live their lives.

This is where neo-Darwinism is instructive in spite of itself. The extravagant claims it makes for partial and purely imaginary components of human experience, and the reactionary uses to which such claims are put, prompt renewed attention to what is really going on.

In making sense of 'lifelines', or of anything our species gets up to, do we really need a distinction between form and substance, mind and body, nature and society, for example? But that's another adventure.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) Full title: *The Origin of Species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*. The subtitle is unfortunate since the words 'favoured' and 'struggle' suggest to the casual reader an idea of purpose which Darwin never meant. For a brief note about ideas of the unfolding of a pre-existing order, see the entry under 'Evolution' in Raymond Williams' *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London, Fontana, 1976, pp. 103-105), and for a much fuller discussion Steven Rose, *Lifelines: biology, freedom, determinism* (London, Penguin, 1997).

(2) The original text is available in cheap editions for readers tolerant of poor print quality and the risk of missing the wood for the trees. A good illustrated and abridged edition, with a helpful introduction by Richard E. Leakey, was published in London in 1979; but the best available scientific commentary on what Darwin wrote is Steve Jones's *Almost like a whale: The Origin of Species updated* (London, Anchor, 2000). There are several biographies, the longest Janet E. Browne's in 2 volumes (London, Cape, 2003 [1995, 2002]), but perhaps the best is Darwin by Adrian Desmond and James Moore (Penguin, 1992). The most readable of all Darwiniana is Alan Moorehead's *Darwin and The Beagle* (Penguin, 1971). Peter J. Bowler (ed.), *Evolution: the history of an idea* (3rd revised edition, Berkeley, U of California Press, 2003) is the best one-stop summary of evolutionary arguments and controversies up to the present. ; and Jonathan Miller's *Introducing Darwin* (Cambridge, Icon, 2006) is as erudite as you can get in comic-book style.

The Wikipedia entry for Darwin is a

brilliant resource for those with internet access, though it is less helpful on critiques of science and politics which evolutionism brings to the fore. For these, the reader is referred to Thomas C. Patterson, Karl Marx, anthropologist (Oxford, Berg, 2009, ch.3); Ted Benton, 'Engels and the politics of nature' in Christopher J. Arthur (ed.), *Engels Today: a centenary appreciation* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996, pp.67-93); Steven Rose, *Lifelines*, cited above; Hilary and Steven Rose (eds.), *Alas, poor Darwin: arguments against evolutionary psychology* (London, Cape, 2000); and Tim Ingold, *Evolution and social life* (Cambridge U Press, 1986). The latter is a challenging read for non-specialists; a more accessible introduction to Ingold's ideas is his 'Evolving skills', chapter 14 of *Alas, poor Darwin*, cited above (pp.225-246).

(3) Quoted by Hugh MacDiarmid in John Carey (ed.), *The Faber book of science* (London, Faber & Faber, 1995, p.211).

(4) Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx* (London, 4th Estate, 1999, pp.368-369). Wheen helpfully reports the demolition of another of the apocryphal tales that bedevil scientific historiography (but which thus remind us that all science is social science): in this case one whose repetition has long served an anti-Marxist bias: that Marx asked Darwin's permission to dedicate *Capital* to him, and that this was refused (pp.365-368).

(5) One difference between interacting groups of, on the one hand, most animals or plants (Darwin) and, on the other, most human beings (Marx), is that in our own species the behaviour of individuals - and therefore the fortunes of the group as a whole - may be influenced by an awareness of themselves and others as group members. Regardless of how sharply humans can be distinguished from other organisms

on this criterion (or why we should want to do so), the founders of Marxism rightly insisted that 'collective self-awareness' is a key factor in the struggle between different interests, and later classes (hence 'class-consciousness'), in the history of human society.

(6) Frederick Engels, 'The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man', appendix to his *The origin of the family, private property and the State* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1972, pp.251-264). This unfinished essay was written in 1876.

(7) Karl Marx, 'Letter from Marx to Frederick Engels, 18 June 1862,' in Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 41 (New York, International Publishers, 1985), pp.381-382.

(8) Frederick Engels, 'Letter from Engels to Pyotr Lavrov, 12[17] November 1875,' in Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol.45 (New York, International Publishers, 1991), pp.106-109.

(9) Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's revolution in science*. (Moscow, FLPH, 1959, 2nd edition, originally published 1885 [1st edition 1878]), pp.13-14. If a reminder was needed of the politics of English empiricism, ex-Labour deputy leader Roy Hattersley recently boasted that although he once started reading *Anti-Dühring*, he never finished it (review in the *Observer*, 26 April 2009, of Tristram Hunt's *The Frock-coated Communist: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels* [London, Allen Lane, 2009]). At least Darwin, who wasn't even a politician, managed over 100 pages of Marx's German. *Alas, poor Hattersley: alas, poor labour movement*.

(10) Quoted phrases are from Ingold's chapter in *Alas, poor Darwin*, cited above (p.244).

Hung, drawn and quartered

Ken Gill, Communist and trade union leader, died in May 2009, very shortly after his book, "Hung, drawn and quartered: the caricatures of Ken Gill", was launched, in his presence, at an event in the TUC building.

GEORGE HEARTFIELD reviews the book.

There are some 80 drawings, most of which are accompanied by text about the individual caricatured. The subjects range from Tony Benn to Margaret Thatcher and include Nelson Mandela and Leonid Brezhnev.

In his Introduction to the book, Rodney Bickerstaffe writes, "...Ken's supreme gift is to draw a cartoon which invariably pleases the 'target' and amuses everyone else. In these images, old friends are returned to us, past times brought to mind, the famous gently mocked – and the pompous deflated."



Neil Kinnock

Neil Kinnock, former Labour Party leader, is described in the text as having been "rewarded by Tony Blair and eased into a lucrative job as a UK Commissioner in the EU from 1995 until 2004 before being given a peerage..."

Tony Benn, who relinquished his Viscount Stansgate title, left Parliament in 2001 'to spend more time in politics', and is quoted as posing questions to be asked of anyone in power: "What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you use it? To whom are you account-

able? How do we get rid of you?"

One of those who could have been posed these questions was Lech Walesa, former leader of Solidarnosc and then President of counter-revolutionary Poland from 1990 until 1995. Ken Gill recalled:

"At a TUC dinner given in Walesa's honour in 1989, before the demise of the socialist government in Warsaw, he unexpectedly told us, in private and and rather embarrassingly, that Britain should take advantage of the abundance of cheap Polish labour once the Communists had been overthrown. How prophetic?"

Rodney Bickerstaffe, former General Secretary of the trade union UNISON, said at Ken's 80th birthday celebrations, "We all knew Ken was good at drawing and there were a number of trade union leaders who would have loved to see Ken drawn too, but only



Tony Benn



Rodney Bickerstaffe

after he had been hung and quartered!"

This is an interesting and amusing book, which captures personalities, events and issues of a particular era. Steve Bell, the cartoonist wrote, "I knew Ken Gill drew cartoons, but I



Lech Walesa

never realised his caricatures were so good."

"Hung, Drawn and Quartered: the caricatures of Ken Gill", edited by John Green and Michal Boncza, is published by Artery Publications. It is available from Artery Publications, 11 Dorset Road, London W5 4HU, priced £12. (Permission to reprint the caricatures has been received from the publishers)