

# NO TO WAR ON IRAQ

# Future Socialist



'Revolution at the gates' - see p. 10

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE MOVEMENT FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE  
[WWW.SOCIALSFUTURE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SOCIALSFUTURE.ORG.UK)

WINTER 2002 VOLUME 10 NO.3 £1.50

# A 'regime change' in Britain is the answer to war on Iraq

*The preparations for the invasion and long-term occupation of Iraq are now well advanced in Washington and London. All that is required is a suitable trigger for Bush and Blair to activate their plans for the illegal overthrow of a foreign government, otherwise known as "regime change".*

*By Paul Feldman, the Editor*



A pretext was created some time ago in the shape of "weapons of mass destruction". Any serious investigation shows that Iraq neither possesses such weapons nor poses a military threat to its neighbours. Experts have ridiculed claims that Iraq can build a nuclear device let alone deliver one to its target. It requires imagination of the wildest kind to believe that Iraq is a direct military threat to either the USA or Britain.

So we must conclude that the US-British invasion can proceed precisely because Iraq does **NOT** have the capacity to beat off any attack with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Far from providing a stumbling block to war as many had despairingly hoped, the United Nations is facilitating the Anglo-American plan by agreeing to a resolution which opens the door to a military attack if weapons inspectors find something to complain about. In exchange, Security Council members like Russia and France greedily anticipate a share of the spoils once a new regime is in place in Baghdad.

As the reasons given for a unilateral declaration of war and invasion do not hold water, we must investigate for ourselves the true objectives of the forthcoming Anglo-American military adventure in the Middle East. They are certainly not humanitarian concern for the plight of the Iraqi people, countless thousands of whom have died as a result of punitive UN sanctions.

The US and Britain have happily worked with

Saddam in the past, supplying his regime weapons to fight Iran and saying nothing about the brutal repression of opponents and minorities within Iraq. So the character of the Iraqi regime is hardly the real motive for war.

What is apparent is that powerful economic and political forces are behind the drive to war. A growing energy crisis combined with the emergence of international economic slump makes war on Iraq a necessity rather than an option for Bush and Blair.

Britain's oil production is in decline, and has been since 1999. The nuclear energy industry is bankrupt and the European Union has ruled that New Labour cannot subsidise it. The world's oil reserves will, by some accounts, peak within five to 10 years.

In a report sponsored by the US Council on Foreign Relations and the Baker Institute for Public Policy, it is noted that "the world is currently precariously close to utilising all of its available global oil production capacity". The report warns that the shortages could reduce the US to that of "a poor developing country". It called on the White House to assume a "leadership role in the formation of new rules of the game".

Over the last two years the US government has indeed started to rewrite the rules. In particular, it has grabbed a large share of the Caspian Sea oil reserves and cut out Russia and Iran by piping it

through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Afghanistan. There are similar strategic plans affecting the Middle East, West Africa as well as Central and South America. Iraq has the world's second largest oil reserves and is prone to turn the tap off and on when it wants. Gaining control of this vital resource through a pro-Western government is, therefore, a key objective in any invasion of Iraq.

Both New Labour and the Republican Party in America are united in one crucial mission. They believe that the main function of the modern state is to create the best possible conditions for the transnational corporations to operate in. This change in the role of the modern capitalist state from mediator between classes to facilitator for capitalism began in the Thatcher/Reagan era and finds its completed expression in the Bush and Blair governments.

They therefore are obliged to blaze the free market trail into regions and countries which as yet do not subscribe to the apparent virtues of global capitalism. This is made more urgent by the emerging economic slump and financial crisis. Market saturation is another incentive to incorporate Iraq forcibly in the world market on

behalf of Nike, Exxon, Monsanto, Shell, Microsoft and the rest.

Add in the obvious inability of the White House to deal with the consequences of non-state based terrorist attacks like September 11 and it is not difficult to see why Iraq is the next in what is a long list of targets.

As the futile "war on terror" is submerged into a war for profit, with all the turmoil and upheaval that will bring at home and abroad, the burning issue is: how do we stop the Bush-Blair axis of evil in its tracks?

**H**undreds of thousands have marched in protest against the war plans in Britain and around the world. Their hope was that governments would sit up and take notice and deal with Iraq in a more "rational" way through the UN. This, unfortunately, has made no impression on New Labour or Bush.

New Labour is not in any sense a traditional, reform-minded political party which has adopted right-wing policies. It is not even a party in the traditional sense but more like a managing agency that co-ordinates and facilitates the interests and



values of capitalism. With the Tories in their death throes, New Labour now represents the ruling class and the global corporations that operate in Britain.

There is a marked reluctance on the "left" and the trade unions who founded the original Labour Party to accept this transformation, as Phil Sharpe explains in his article (see page 6). The evidence piles up each day: private financing of public services, opting-out of NHS hospitals from state control, racist asylum policies, the jailing of MI5 whistle-blowers, the attacks on firefighters and other low-paid workers etc., etc., etc.

Yet still there are those who believe that pressure exerted through the unions can bring Old Labour back to life. This is the politics of the séance. Others, like the Socialist Workers Party, even think New Labour has deceived itself with the merits of global capitalism and would do better if it had the courage to break with the "American" way.

This one-sided superficial approach is typical of the political junk food that is in fact handed down to us by capitalism itself. Thus things are separated from the social and historical forces that gave rise to them in the first place. Reality is viewed as static rather than as a process, in which things actually stop being what they were and become their opposite. From Old Labour to New Labour and life to death are suitable examples.

**T**he "enemy" is not Iraq, whose people have the right to determine their own future and be rid of Saddam. No, the threat to humanity comes from Bush and Blair and the regimes they govern. That is why the Movement for a Socialist Future believes it is time to go beyond protest and pressure and work for a "regime change" in Britain and America.

There are those who say this will let the Tories in (as if they were capable of governing anything). This restricts the struggle to the narrow confines of a parliamentary system that is increasingly discredited, judging by the falling turnouts.

Opposition to war is growing in every section of society. There are opportunities to demonstrate that the attack on Iraq is the action of an unsustainable economic and political system.

"Regime change" is not simply about a change of parliamentary scenery. It is more than about ridding ourselves of capitalist New Labour. The strategic objective has to become social control of economic and financial resources and the creation of new, truly democratic bodies for a new society. The trade unions opposed to Blair can play a key role by preparing to break with New Labour and launching a discussion about the shape of a new party. Bush and Blair have left us with no other choice.



A broad spectrum of organisations joined together to form the huge anti-Bush/Blair demonstration in London on September 28 including pro-Palestinian and Muslim groups, CND, trade unions, students, socialists, anarchists and individuals from all parts of Britain. The MSF had a stall on the embankment and carried its yellow banner on the march. Our call for "regime change in Britain" met with a good response.



# Firefighters challenge 'arrogant' New Labour

*'The government may regard the firefighters' union in the same way as Thatcher regarded the miners' union under Arthur Scargill. Our struggle has that much national importance.'*

**Mick Shergold**, London regional secretary of the Fire Brigades Union tells Socialist Future.

## **H**ow far behind has firefighters' pay fallen?

In the new group of workers we're compared with, we have fallen behind the average earnings by £100 a week. We were all shocked when we discovered this. This decline has been going on for years and this is reflected in the fact that for the last six years we have had resolutions at the FBU conference on pay seeking to align us with different groups of workers or re-evaluate the pay formula which has been in place since 1977. Each time the resolutions on pay came up the time for action was not right. But this year was exactly the right time. Because everybody in the last 12 or 24 months before this campaign had been really feeling the pinch, particularly in London. On a personal level, I have a modest house, a modest mortgage and an 18-month old son and I'm overdrawn every month. It's indecent that you have to struggle to survive. It's obscene that firefighters find themselves in this situation.

## **W**e are told that many firefighters have to do other jobs to make ends meet?

There are no figures. But firefighters officially have to register when they want to do other work outside of their shifts. The most recent figure we have is that 1,500 London firefighters are registered and I suspect that there are many more who do other jobs and are not registered. They do it out of necessity. The vote for action of around nine to one reflects the feeling about our pay levels. In my 20 years as a firefighter I've never seen the members so determined as

they are now.

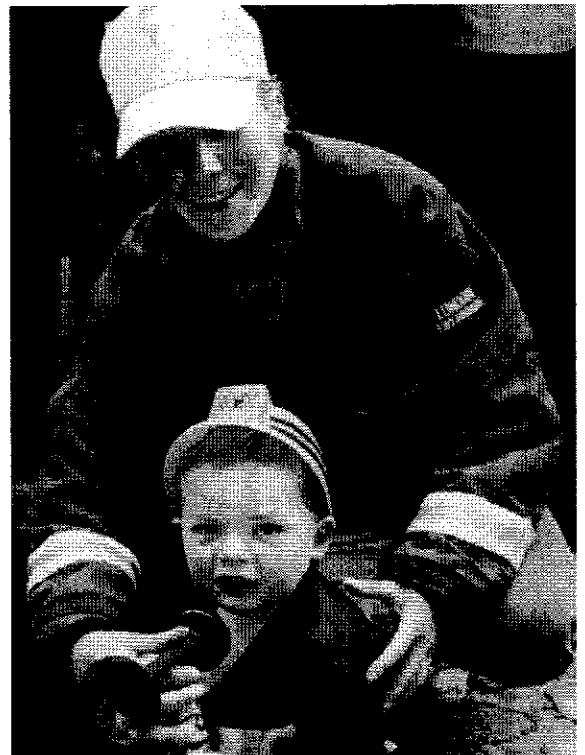
## **W**hy has the FBU decided to boycott the review into pay and conditions?

Some people take the view that the review is reasonable and we should be reasonable people. However, just look at the comments made by one of the members of the inquiry, Sir Toby Young, who in a private conversation with our general secretary said that "you will not achieve what you want" and that this "inquiry will not deliver". He said that before the inquiry had actually started work, before its terms of reference were drawn up. The whole idea of this inquiry being independent, being fair, is totally ludicrous and a sham. The inquiry is in fact an opportunity for the government to intervene in this dispute. We all know what the outcome of the inquiry will be. It will be modernisation for the fire service. We don't need another inquiry to know we need to modernise or that our pay is low. If we sign up to the inquiry, we effectively sign up to its conclusions, so in one way it's a trap.

## **H**asn't the government already interfered by preventing a higher offer being made to you through the employers?

That's the whole absurd thing. As everybody knows, our employers are not directly the

government but the local authorities. In the early stages of this campaign, the national employers went to the government to seek release of funding. The government's view at the time was that the claim had to be settled between the employers and the FBU, which we entirely agree with. However, what we then discovered was that the employers were prepared to make an offer of around 15-16% but the government then intervened prior to the meeting and said they couldn't make the offer. So there they are on the one hand saying it's not appropriate for the government to intervene and then preventing the employers from making an offer. The interim offer of 4% is just an insult and I feel that this government has just lost so



Could this be the youngest firefighter on the demo?



much respect. They have the biggest majority we've seen in a long time. But their arrogance, the way that they deal with that massive majority, the fact that they haven't listened to the people who put them there is going to backfire on them. We're a long way down the road on shutting the lid of the coffin on this Labour government.

**In what sense is the FBU campaign also about defending public services as a whole?**

In the wider political sense our campaign is about having decent public services. Some people have asked me whether firefighters should be made a special case above other public sector workers. The answer is simple: no, it's not fair that nurses and other public sector workers' wages are as low as they are. We are equal with nurses and ambulance crews and other workers in what we do and they should all be paid a decent amount of money. What the firefighters are doing is leading that charge to bring some decency to public sector wage levels. I hope that other public sector workers will embark on similar campaigns as ours. The outcome of this claim is important in a number of ways. There are a lot of people watching what happens. The government may regard the firefighters' union in the same way as Thatcher regarded the miners' union under Arthur Scargill. Our struggle has that much national importance.

**Doesn't the FBU need the practical support of other workers in pursuing its claim rather than other groups of trade unionists waiting to see the**

**outcome?**

What is difficult for workers in this country is that we're not used to doing this. We've seen a resurgence of trade unionism. Suddenly we're back in the news. We saw it in the 1980s, it was almost gone in the 1990s and we are not used as a nation to standing up for ourselves. This is the biggest and most serious campaign I've been involved in the FBU. It's the most important and has the most significance politically. Other workers see it. There is a case for other workers and trade unionists getting behind us and this claim. But it takes time. It took us a long time to get going and get up off our knees and grasp this campaign by the scruff of the neck and take it forward.

**The Prime Minister has described your claim as "unrealistic" and said that it will drive up mortgages and damage the economy?**

We have prepared very, very well for this dispute and the claim. We didn't just get the £30,000 figure off the top of our heads. We can provide documented evidence as to why the

claim is reasonable and what effect it will have on the economy. For Tony Blair to make the comments he did, with the responsibility he has, was clearly irresponsible. They were clearly designed to attack the FBU, to attack and suppress workers and any other claims. The real cost of our claim, without any modernisation package, would actually cost each household in Britain around 41p a week. It's not the stuff to smash the economy. The 41p will not drive mortgage rates through the roof and bring the country to its knees. Once we achieve proper rates of pay for the work we do now we are prepared to sit down and talk about modernisation. We can demonstrate that by achieving the targets about reducing death and the destruction of property by fire this claim will be at nil cost to the country. This evidence comes from Ernst and Young, the same consultants used by the government itself.

Pictures above and below show the enthusiastic support for the pay claim at the demo in Parliament Square, prior to the historic 90% vote in favour of striking.





# Can we have our Old Labour back,

*The Blair government is more than a right-wing version of the Labour Party under previous leaders, or simply a product of spin, says Phil Sharpe. He takes issue with the suggestion that Blairism is a temporary phenomenon and that Labour can return to its Old Labour and reformist roots.*

**D**espite its impressive empirical detail this book\* does not provide a satisfactory theoretical basis for understanding the character of New Labour. Instead, David Osler provides us with descriptive impressions about Labour's links with business, outlined in the most sensationalist terms.

In his introductory remarks, Osler contends: "But from the point of view of business, Labour and the Conservatives are now essentially interchangeable. In some respects, Labour is even preferable." This would seem to suggest that the Labour Party has evolved into a party for business. But Osler ultimately rejects this characterisation in the face of his own empirical evidence.

**O**sler maintains that the Labour Party was evolving into a more pro-business and right-wing entity before Blair: "Long before Blair's leadership, Labour was doing its best to appear business friendly." But Labour under Kinnock's leadership, and even with John Smith at the helm, was having difficulties convincing business that the Labour Party could be a credible alternative government. Relations with business remained at a low ebb throughout the 1980s despite strenuous efforts to mend fences, Osler notes.

It took the debacle and incompetence of the Tory government at the time of the 1992 currency crisis to make business more interested in Labour, as the book notes: "The party no longer had to go in search of business. Business would now come in search of Labour." Nevertheless Osler does

not rule out the possibility that Smith would still have formed an old style reformist Labour government.

In other words, Osler is reluctant to associate Smith with Blair, because he wants to conceive of New Labour as simply a Blairite project, essentially a product of a coup by the controllers of spin rather than a response to new material conditions.

The fact that Osler avoids is that New Labour is not an aberration from the "natural" Old Labour but rather the transformation of the party in conditions where "old style" reformism is no longer tenable in the conditions of the growing crisis of globalised capitalism.

Osler is not sure how right wing Labour would have become if Smith had remained as leader, but he is confident about the difference Blair has made. The dropping of the Clause 4 commitment to nationalisation showed Blair's symbolic commitment to pro-market policies, the book acknowledges.

**Y**et the demarcation made between Old Labour and New Labour is arbitrary and impressionistic. It does not begin to explain how material and social conditions have meant that the Labour Party could only survive as a potential governmental alternative to the Tories by adopting the pro-market and neo-liberal agenda of capitalism. This is why there is no qualitative difference between Kinnock and Smith with Blair, only a difference of individual style and emphasis.

Osler points to increased business influence within the Labour Party. For example, Lord Sainsbury alone has provided £9 million.

Furthermore, the party conference is increasingly supported by commercial sponsorship, which is also a means to increase funds. On the other hand, trade union influence is decreasing, and soon after Blair became leader, trade union contributions for the first time fell below 50%. The unions have become increasingly marginalised in the policy making process.

**R**ecord numbers of party members left the Labour Party within a year of the formation of Blair's government in 1997 because of disillusion with its right-wing policies. Indeed, the book produces evidence to show a long-term decline in party membership.

Furthermore, policy committees were established with a direct business input and the 1997 manifesto had a special business section which rejected expanding the welfare state. Launching the business manifesto, Blair promised: "A New Labour government will work in partnership with business. We want Britain to be a great place to do business. Labour is now the party for business, the entrepreneurs' champion."

Osler does not endorse Blair's own definition of New Labour. This shows the eclecticism of his analysis. On the one hand he has carried out a convincing description of the evolution of the Labour Party into a direct

The best place

Labour's ambitions for Britain's economy



please!

to do business

For Labour  
For Britain



New Labour now directly represents big business while the party in 1910 was forced to issue posters showing workers breaking down the doors of the House of Lords following the constitutional crisis of that year

representative of the capitalist class. Yet his analysis is undermined by impressionism and inconsistency. Osler cannot connect it to the development and change of the Labour Party from a reformist mediator into the expression of globalised capitalism in the 21st century.

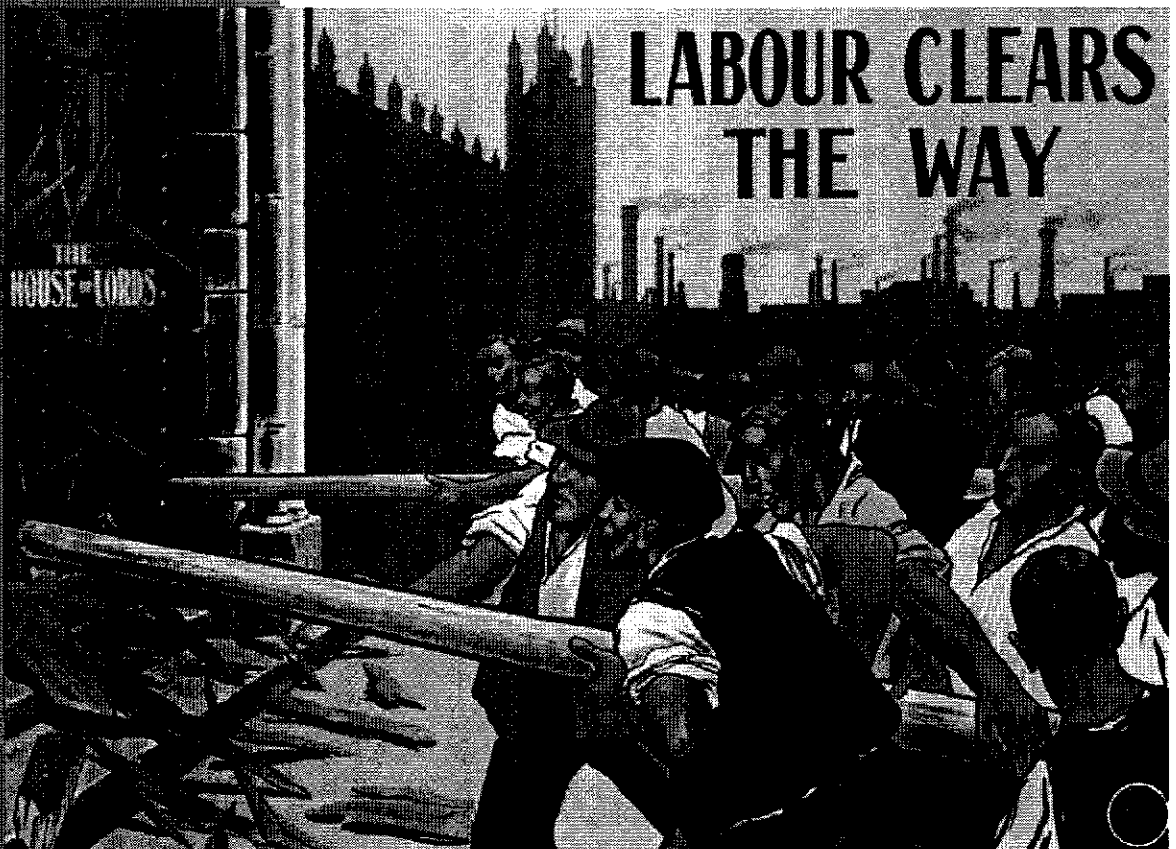
Instead, Osler wants to perpetuate a static image and mythical view of Old Labour, so that it can "recapture" New Labour from interlopers and spin merchants. This eclectic view of the world where nothing really ever changes in a fundamental way is, in political terms, disarming. Strategic political objectives are then reduced to patching things up rather than facing reality and coming up with new solutions.

Osler does not want to face the fact that the so-called Old Labourites from its Bennite left to Prescott and Cook are also engaged in the process of the transformation and reformation of the Labour Party as a party of the capitalists. This is not to say that the Labour left cannot continue to resurface to articulate discontent,

but it has no strategic alternative to New Labour in the context of the global capitalist undermining of the nation state and welfare state.

Instead so-called Old Labour can only provide a gloss and alternative public relations spin on the reactionary politics of New Labour. This is shown by Claire Short's call for UN support for action over Iraq, which means that the question of principled opposition to war is undermined and diluted. Yet it serves to provide ideological consolation that the 'left' can still provide a credible alternative to Blair. The actual character of Short's politics, and those of other so-called leftist "Old" Labourites, is outlined by their vociferous opposition to the anti-capitalist movement and uncritical support for a "benevolent" form of capitalist globalisation.

Rather than tackle these important strategic questions about the political evolution of the Labour Party, Osler is content to provide a pseudo-radical theoretical substitute which is based upon moral outrage about the level of corruption in New





Labour. He shows that New Labour's close relations with business are often based upon patronage, as in the awards and honours system. He outlines in detail how New Labour is supported by a collection of opportunist and corrupt entrepreneurs, which lays them open to accusations of sleaze.

However, this emphasis on the corrupt aspects of the relations between New Labour and business is used to try and show that the links are possibly still shallow and transitory. Hence he indicates that there is still substantial support for the Tories within the business community. Thus the links between New Labour and business are not portrayed as an organic expression of developments within the capitalist mode of production, but rather as an indication of narrow, unprincipled and crude self-interest on both sides. Of course, this suits Osler's view that New Labour has still not definitively become a party of business and the bosses.

When it comes to the policies of New Labour, Osler is bemused. He seems to think that the policy of privatisation is essentially an expression of ideological dogma and the opportunist ties between business and New Labour. Hence he considers privatisation is an irrational policy rather than the expression of the requirements of globalised capitalism. He contends that the Private Finance Initiative is basically nonsensical because it means building public hospitals at great expense and with no real benefit for the community, and he concludes that: "The critique of PFI hospitals focuses on inflated costs, poor quality, inflexibility, lack of accountability and the knock-on costs to other parts of the NHS, as well as the huge profits that are being made."

However, this understanding of privatisation as dogma running amok is inadequate. It does not explain why a seemingly irrational policy is nevertheless implemented. Instead, the suggestion is that New Labour was brainwashed into carrying out these self-destructive and unnecessary projects. What

needs explaining, however, is that it is no longer economically possible to fund expensive capital projects unless it means the most lucrative returns for private capital. It may not fit Osler's rationality test but it sure is profitable.

Osler's critique of the privatisation policies of New Labour is an expression of a desperate and nostalgic call for "New Labour to become sensible" and to therefore return to the "expansionist" policies of "Old" Labour. He is unable to explain why the return to the welfare state under capitalism is an increasingly unlikely project, and why this is reflected in the reactionary pro-privatisation politics of New Labour.

**I**n his concluding chapter Osler writes that "New Labour is institutionally corrupt" and can be "described as in hock to former second-hand car salesmen with an interest in advertising cigarettes". However, the extent of this sleaze is not an expression of a qualitative change in the character of the Labour Party. Instead he concludes that:

"There has been much debate in the left press over whether or not Labour can now be described as in any sense a workers' party. The answer is probably still 'yes'.. but only just. Political and financial links with the trade unions, while much attenuated, remain in place.

"Moreover, despite its best efforts, Labour is not the party of business. Neither are the Conservatives any more. But both can fairly claim to be parties of business. Britain now has a system not dissimilar from the US, where government alternates between two safe pairs of hands, one of them marginally more union friendly.

"Much as it craves the love of a good businesswoman, New Labour's problem is this. The Tories have networks within the establishment that date back centuries. Labour still has no real organic links with the ruling class. After starting almost from scratch, even after a decade its business base is still relatively limited.

Accordingly, most of the controversial donations have come not from the FTSE 100 crowd, but from the sort of business wide boys still anxious enough about their social position to pay to shore it up. In many cases, they still have a definite policy agenda."

So despite the reactionary extent of the policies of New Labour, Osler can still use a crude empirical and sociological method that defines Labour as a supposed workers' party because the majority of the FTSE 100 are still too shy to become open supporters of New Labour!



London tube passengers - victims of PFI

**B**ut New Labour is not a unique and specific phenomenon of the sleazy nature of British politics. Rather these traits are a specific expression of a general trend within reformist politics in the era of globalised capitalism. From Australia, to France, Sweden, and elsewhere, a variety of Social Democratic governments have carried out policies that uphold privatisation and attacks upon the welfare state.

Blair's New Labour is only the most grotesque and degenerate expression of this universal transformation of Social Democracy into the open upholders of the structural requirements of capital

accumulation in this uncertain period for globalised capitalism.

In other words, we need to give up the illusion that we can somehow carry out a miracle and transform Social Democracy into a more benevolent political entity - as if we can turn back and change the events of history through prayer! Instead we have to understand what are the objective conditions for its actions, and why we have to intransigently oppose forces such as New Labour rather than wish for conciliation through the reversal of history.

Osler's approach seeks to uphold this type of idealist reconciliation despite the vehemence of his criticism of the

The aftermath of World War II brought in the most radical of Labour governments



actions of New Labour, because to him it is not too late to go back to Old Labour. That is the real theoretical and political reason why he refuses to call New Labour a party of business, and instead pedantically and semantically calls it a party for business.

The main historical and ideological basis for reformism was to perpetuate the illusion that the interests of the workers were served by parliamentary representation and reform rather than revolution. Thus for Osler to call the Labour Party a workers' party because of continued

trade union support is a crude sociological generalisation. The most active form of union support was and is from the trade union bureaucracy because it too is opposed to revolution. In contrast, workers and rank and file trade unionists have had an essentially passive relation to the Labour Party, except in periods of mass unrest. Today union bureaucrats are essentially trying to uphold their sectional interests, and so prefer to retain the link with Labour rather than oppose its reactionary transformation into New Labour.

New Labour is becoming the most practical and persuasive party of the capitalists because it is seen to carry out the neo-liberal agenda of capital in the most effective and ruthless manner. So even if New Labour is not yet socially acceptable to some of the most important capitalists, the capitalist class in its totality knows in general that Labour has become a party of business. The Tories have become so ineffective because New Labour has replaced them as the most cogent and coherent party of the bourgeoisie.

Why has Osler come to the inconsistent and eclectic conclusion that New Labour is some type of workers' party? Osler is a supporter of the Socialist Alliance, and his book was generously praised in a preface by Paul Foot of the Socialist Workers party, the most prominent section of the Alliance.

In general, the Socialist Alliance does not believe that New Labour is an expression of corporate-led globalisation. On this basis they conceive that the role of the Socialist Alliance is to put pressure on New Labour to somehow return to its Old Labour and reformist roots. Hence the Socialist Alliance is incapable of developing a principled opposition to New Labour because of this idealist and nostalgic wishful thinking. This book, despite its impressive detail about New Labour, is therefore the theoretical expression of the opportunist politics of the Socialist Alliance towards the Labour Party.

\* *Labour Party PLC, David Osler, Mainstream, £15.99*



movement for a socialist future

## JOIN TODAY

OUR KEY AIMS ARE TO:

- \* democratise the ownership and control of major corporations
- \* re-organise society on a not-for-profit basis
- \* open up political and social life to mass participation
- \* encourage creativity, diversity, and full use of people's talents
- \* provide an alternative to existing parties like New Labour

For more information about the MSF, or to join, write to:

PO Box 942  
London SW1V 2AR

or e-mail  
msf@socialistfuture.org.uk

www.socialistfuture.org.uk

# No theory, no Lenin

You can't separate Lenin the revolutionary leader from the Lenin who made a significant contribution to the development of Marxist theory. This is the problem with an important new book by Slavoj Zizek, *Revolution at the Gates*. By Paul Feldman

**A** hundred years ago, in his pamphlet *What is to Be Done?*, Vladimir Lenin wrote in some detail about the need to bring theoretical clarity, organisational shape and discipline to the revolutionary Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP).

The background to his 1902 pamphlet was the emergence in Russia of the international trend that wanted the movement to change

from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms.

In Russia, this took the form of those who, as Lenin put it, wanted to reduce “the working-class movement and the class struggle to narrow trade unionism and to a ‘realistic’ struggle for petty, gradual reforms”.

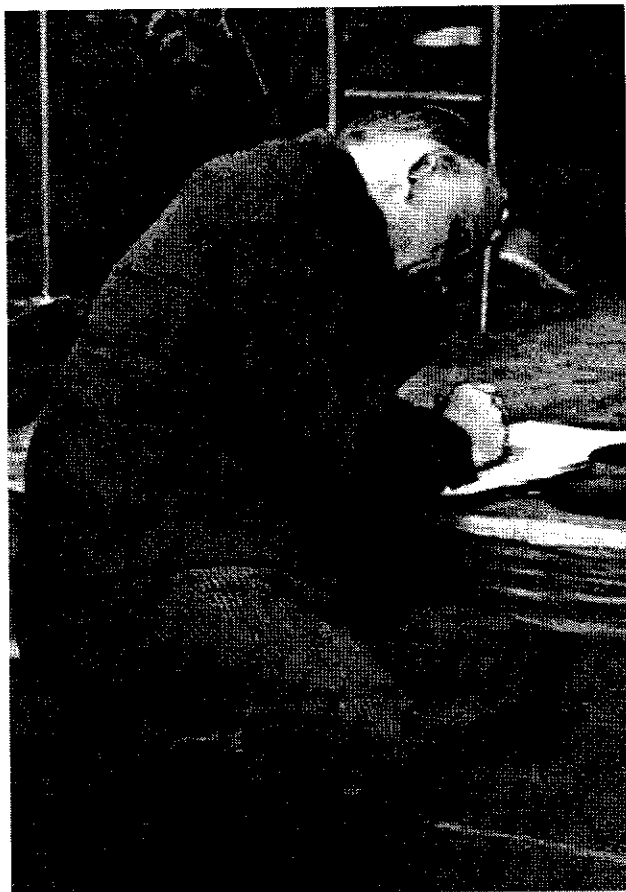
The group in Russia known as the Economists claimed that Lenin’s supporters overrated the importance of ideology. Instead, the real task was to “lend the economic struggle a political character”, they maintained.

To which Lenin replied: “The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals.”

He added: “Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.

“There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology ... for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism ... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy.”

Later he added: “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.”



Lenin making notes at the Third Congress of the Communist International, Moscow June-July 1921

**A** year later, at an historic Second Congress of the RSDLP held in London, the exiled Russian revolutionaries struggled for four weeks over the guiding principles for a revolutionary party in the wake of what Lenin had written. Huge differences emerged that still resonate a century later and demand re-examination in the context of today's vastly different world conditions.

A significant contribution to this contemporary challenge to look afresh at Lenin is made by Slavoj Zizek in his new book, *Revolution at the Gates\**. Refreshingly for an academic, Zizek is a revolutionary. His view is that globalised capitalism is creating the conditions for social revolution and that Lenin's approach in the Russian Revolution of 1917 holds lessons for us today.

The book has many strengths but also considerable weaknesses. In his introduction, Zizek enthusiastically examines how the globalisation process has remade old political forms and become a "shattering experience" for the socialist movement equal to that of August 1914 when social democratic parties throughout Europe endorsed war.

**Z**izek, who teaches at Ljubljana University, Slovenia, shows how Lenin turned the political disaster of 1914 to his advantage. Out of the catastrophe "a unique chance for revolution was born", was how Lenin saw it. Lenin's "settling of accounts" with those who had betrayed the movement was through the policy of destroying the capitalist state, Zizek says.

He writes admiringly of Lenin's *State and Revolution* in which "the vocabulary and traditions of the Western (i.e. bourgeois) traditions of politics was abruptly dispensed with". Zizek adds: "This is the Lenin from whom we still have something to learn."

Lenin resisted the pressures for compromise from inside his own party throughout 1917, rejecting those who argued that there was no guarantee of success or that the objective conditions were insufficient. The question is, what is

the relationship of Lenin's struggle to making the conquest of power the central issue to the world of 2002?

Zizek argues that given the immensely changed social and political landscape, "the only logical conclusion is that we urgently need a new form of politicisation which will directly socialise...crucial issues". He adds:

"The illusion of 1917 that the

our "1917" is fast approaching is equally forward-looking at a time when large sections of the "left" are bedazzled by the apparent power of global capitalism.

**T**he middle section of the book consists of freshly translated writings of Lenin from 1917 as he prepared himself and the Bolshevik Party for the revolution of that year.



Demonstration of soldiers and workers in Petrograd in 1917 supporting the Bolshevik peace program - banners proclaim "Long live the democratic Republic" and "Land & Freedom"

pressing problems which faced Russia (peace, land distribution etc) could be secured through 'legal' parliamentary means is the same as today's illusion that the ecological threat, for example, could be avoided by expanding the market logic to ecology (making polluters pay for the damage that they cause)."

Zizek's statements lend powerful support to the notion that as a result of the globalisation process there is no space for reform-minded politics in the 21st century. His assertion that

Zizek's afterword, unfortunately, is much weaker than his foreword. Alongside some really useful observations about modern capitalism and the inadequacy of the thinking of many of its opponents, there is theoretical confusion and considerable rambling on cultural theory, psychoanalysis, films he has seen and other matters.

He is extremely clear when he analyses the prevailing ideology in capitalist society which, he says, amounts to a "prohibition on thinking". You can say and write



what you like – on condition that you do not actually question or disturb the prevailing political condition. “The moment we seriously question the existing liberal consensus, we are accused of abandoning scientific objectivity for outdated ideological positions. This is the ‘Leninist’ point on which one cannot and should not concede: today, actual freedom of thought means freedom to question the prevailing liberal-democratic ‘post-ideological’ consensus – or it means nothing.”

He is acute in dealing with the role of the universities in reinforcing the concepts acceptable to the global capitalist market. Zizek is scathing about the emphasis on the importance of “narratives” and is illuminating about the role of “reality” TV in maintaining a grip on mass consciousness.

**B**ut in the end, Zizek wants Lenin the great political actor without Lenin the master theoretician, who prepared for revolution through an intensive re-studying of Hegel’s dialectic logic from a materialist standpoint. Lenin’s view of matter (including capitalism) existing independently of consciousness (this was, of course, also Marx’s standpoint) is rejected by Zizek. The theory of reflection – how external objects are the source of all knowledge for the subject – is

described as “infamous”. As a footnote arrogantly puts it: “Lenin did not understand Marx.”

This all rather begs the question: how did Lenin actually lead the Bolsheviks to make a successful seizure of power in Russia in October 1917 if he was as theoretically inept as Zizek claims? Did he just have an eye for the main chance? How did someone whose theoretical approach was apparently “infamous” ever succeed in leading the first successful socialist revolution? We are forced to conclude that improvisation and intuition did the trick. If this is really the case, there is, of course, no need for theoretically-guided practice in the struggle for power against corporate-led globalisation.

Zizek is not the first to repudiate the concepts in Lenin’s major philosophical work, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, in which he examines the dialectical relationship between being and thinking. The work exposes a whole variety of idealist forms of thinking, where the subject is made the source of their thoughts. An excellent guide to this book is Evald Ilyenkov’s *Leninist Dialectics and the Metaphysics of Positivism*.

Zizek’s own brand of idealist thinking leads him into all sorts of dangerous territory. Stalinism, for example, is seen as an almost natural extension of Leninism. The break-up

of Stalinism is referred to as the “collapse of Communism”. In this way, Zizek embraces the very bourgeois ideological approach and language that he criticises elsewhere.

**T**he increasing socialisation of capital, whereby the ownership becomes more and more diffuse leads Zizek to conclude that the “role of property is diminishing” and is no longer a central issue for revolutionaries. The choice for him is between “a hierarchical and an egalitarian post-property society”.

This alleged “disappearance” of the role of property is a superficial reading of the contradiction between the form and content of ownership, something that has developed to breaking point. The masses who are exploited by the global corporations in every part of the world know that the form of ownership is increasingly hard to pin down, but their position as wage slaves has not changed because the role of property is the same. In fact, the ability to move capital freely makes their position more vulnerable than ever. The idea of “post-property” is fanciful to those at the receiving end, as anyone trying to reclaim and occupy an empty property will testify.

An inherent weakness of capitalism is that pure, private ownership cannot sustain expansion.

## Books by E V Ilyenkov

**Dialectical Logic - Essays on its history and theory** Hardback 372 pages £8.50

*Dialectical Logic, the fruit of the author's many years' work on the history of dialectical logic, surveys essential aspects of the Marxist-Leninist theory of dialectics.*

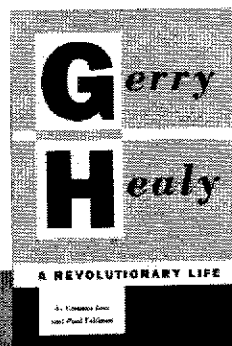
**Leninist Dialectics and the Metaphysics of Positivism** 169 pages £4

*Reflections on Lenin's book Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*

## Gerry Healy A Revolutionary Life

by Corinna Lotz and Paul Feldman

“A revolutionary Marxist who had a massive impact on the working class socialist movement ...”  
from the foreword by Ken Livingstone  
380 pages £13.50



Prices include postage. Please send cheque to:  
Lupus Books, P.O. Box 942, London SW1V 2AR



The expansion of capital in the 21st century assumes investment on such a vast scale that the character of funding takes on an ever broader and more social form. Ever since the joint stock company introduced shareholding in the 19th century, the ownership of capital has become more and more social in its nature. Today, pension funds and other global financial institutions are the major controlling influences.

This conflict inside ownership itself demonstrates how the social has emerged in a profound way within a capitalism based on private property. This itself reflects the fact that while production remains entirely profit-driven it takes the form of a highly complex division of labour based on social collaboration and the use of advanced technology across continents.

For the role of property to “disappear” as Zizek puts it, for it to become truly social and not the major issue for society, we have to abolish its function under capitalism. Social ownership and control of property are therefore the core of revolutionary political objectives. This fully socialised property then becomes the basis of a not-for-profit society. The intensified contradictions within existing property ownership provide us with extremely favourable conditions for doing this.

**I**n spite of his theoretical difficulties, Zizek has one great merit: he is a firm advocate of revolutionary change and the organisational form developed by Lenin. He writes: “How do we invent the organisational structure which will confer on this unrest [anti-capitalist movements etc] the form of the universal political demand?”

“Otherwise, the momentum will be lost, and all that will remain will be marginal disturbances, perhaps organised like a new Greenpeace, with a certain efficiency, but also strictly limited goals, marketing strategy and so on. In short, without the form of the Party, the movement remains caught in the vicious cycle



Lenin in Red Square during a May Day demonstration 1919

of ‘resistance’, one of the big catchwords of ‘postmodern’ politics, which likes to oppose ‘good’ resistance to power to ‘bad’ revolutionary takeovers of power – the last thing we want is the domestication of anti-globalisation into just another ‘site of resistance’ against capitalism.”

He adds: “Perhaps Lenin’s formula of the Party from his *What is to Be Done?* has acquired new relevance today.”

**Z**izek’s is an important and welcome statement. A century has passed since Lenin wrote his

pamphlet. It was aimed at contemporary opportunists and those who masqueraded as Marxists while in practice they tail-ended the movement. Today, the same issues are present, although they take a different form.

Zizek in the end sees Lenin as some kind of saviour with super-human powers. In representing the case for revolutionary theory and practice we are obliged to make a deeper analysis. What Zizek has started others must finish.

\* *Revolution at the Gates*  
Slavoj Zizek, Verso Books, £15

The greater the business involvement in state schools, the more they are opened up to the GATS agreement on trade in services and a future as internationally tradeable commodities. New Labour policies and mechanisms that nurture the business penetration and takeover of schools are opening the doors to GATS. This paper was prepared for the Institute for Education Policy Studies by **Glenn Rikowski**



## Schools: The Great GATS Buy

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the pivotal figure, Jay Gatsby is elusive, hard to pin down. Through Gatsby, Fitzgerald plays off the relation between illusion and reality. Gatsby organises parties and sometimes doesn't turn up for them. He is distanced from his own creations and effects.

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of 1994 seems to have a similar kind of existence. It appears to be a shadowy force, with massive potential to disrupt, undermine and transfigure public services – yet distanced from their privatisation. The substantive impact of GATS is in some doubt, as many governments – especially here in the UK – seem hell bent on nurturing the business takeover of public services, GATS or no.

A common way to approach the relationship between the GATS and public services is to do an "impact" assessment, as the Association of University Teachers has undertaken for UK higher education, and as some Canadian GATS critics have done for Canadian schools. Whilst having tremendous value, such impact assessments are partially speculative – developing scenarios regarding what might or could happen through the application of GATS imperatives and disciplines.

But this is only half the picture, and we should approach the relation between GATS and public services on the basis that it is a two-way

thing, and that government policies affect differentially the nature of the relation for each service, and for each country. This article explores the relation between schools and the GATS in England today, but first a few words on the GATS.

The GATS seeks to open up 160 services sectors to international capital. Specifically, it aims to create a "level playing field", thereby avoiding discrimination against foreign corporations entering services markets. The process of trade liberalisation in services (including currently public ones) is progressive; it will deepen and strengthen over time, and Part IV of the GATS Agreement makes this clear.

In this scenario, "public" services will progressively turn into internationally tradeable commodities. UK government claims that public services are exempt from the GATS have no firm foundation. International trade law lecturer Markus Krajewski has analysed the GATS Agreement in detail. He concluded that the Agreement makes it impossible to tell whether public services are included under GATS. This makes the GATS fiendishly difficult to combat on the basis of what is actually written down in the Agreement

On the one hand, if it was clear that public services were included under the GATS then governments, corporations and pro-GATS

lobbyists could give no assurances that the "GATS has nothing to do with privatisation", as they do currently. Their reassurances to concerned organisations and their patronising arguments that anti-GATS folk are merely scaremongering, would not be taken seriously, as they sometimes are today.

On the other hand, if it were clear that public services were excluded from GATS provisions then two things would be obvious. First, anti-GATS activists and trade unions could defend public services from the GATS monster on the basis of international trade law, and corporations attempting to argue that public services were incorporated within the GATS would clearly be on a loser.

Anti-GATS forces could confront corporations that attempted to use the GATS to further their interests in public services by using the actual Agreement against them. Secondly, it would be clear that New Labour is really keen on the business takeover of public services, and is not being forced or cajoled into it by trade rules framed by some distant, business-friendly institution such as the WTO. The opacity of the GATS is cunning indeed. It has the potential to intellectually disarm GATS critics. Anti-GATS activists have no firm footing for critiquing the Agreement.

The current round of GATS



negotiations at the WTO headquarters in Geneva started up in February 2002, almost directly after the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle late-1999 broke up in disarray following the anti-WTO protests there. An overall deal has to be brokered for December 2004, to come into force in 2005. So for anti-GATS activists, trade unions and defenders of public services there is some urgency.

A good starting point for exploring the relation between schools and the GATS is the GATS Agreement itself, together with the Schedule of Commitments for education in relation to the European Union (EU). The UK's GATS commitments are incorporated within those for the EU, though there are a few national differences. On information gleaned from the EU GATS Infopoint, it appears education has already been lost to the GATS. For primary education, 20 countries committed themselves to GATS disciplines in 1994, and for secondary education 22 countries took the plunge. The EU is GATS-committed for both primary and secondary education.

**T**he GATS incorporates four modes of service supply. Mode 1 is cross-border supply, the "supply of a service from the territory of one Member to a consumer in the territory of another". Mode 2 supply is concerned with consumption abroad, where "the consumer of the service travels to the service supplier". Mode 3, commercial presence is "where the service suppliers establishes in the foreign market as a legal entity in the form

of a subsidiary or a branch".

For all of these modes of supply, the EU's commitments for primary and secondary education are "none" – which is the opposite of what it sounds. "None" means that a country is committing itself to ensuring that there are "no restrictions which are inconsistent with GATS rules covering participation in the market by foreign service suppliers".

**I**n relation to UK/EU GATS commitments on primary and secondary education, there are two aspects to this. Firstly, for the UK, there are no barriers regarding 'limitations on market access' (though a few EU countries have some limitations on market access incorporated into the EU Schedule for either primary or secondary education).

Thus, UK primary and secondary education "markets" appear to be open to foreign suppliers. WTO members committing themselves to opening up primary and secondary education through GATS (as we have), must show any limitations on access for foreign suppliers – and then these can be challenged through the WTO Disputes Panel by the corporations' national governments, if they are WTO members. Only national governments that are WTO Members can participate in the complex WTO Dispute Settlement Process (Rikowski, 2001). Corporations would have to lobby and persuade national governments to go through with this if there was any reluctance amongst trade ministers and officials to pursue the case.

**F**urthermore, as we have signed up to the GATS regarding primary and secondary education, then those services are also subject to the "limitations on national treatment" provision. Under this GATS rule, member states must acknowledge any limitations in the treatment of foreign suppliers that put them in a less favourable position than their domestic counterparts. For example, Edison Schools (from the USA) must be alerted to any differences in the ways they are being treated as compared with UK education services suppliers if they enter the UK schools market. Failure to provide the necessary information might result in the foreign supplier seeking recompense through the GATS via their national governments taking the case through the WTO Dispute Settlement Process. Transparency is the issue here. The UK has no limitations on the national treatment provision in the EU Schedule either.

Finally, only in Mode 4 supply, the "presence of natural persons" from another country, does some limitation regarding foreign primary and secondary education suppliers possibly apply. Mode 4 supply is "unbound" for EU primary and secondary education. "Unbound" means a country is making no commitment either to open up its market or to keep it as open as it was at the time of accession into the WTO.

Practically, what this means for Mode 4 supply is that if Edison Schools wanted to set up operations in the UK, then the company would probably have to use UK employees,

as general immigration rules would still apply. It is likely that teachers from the US couldn't be just flown in to work in Edison UK schools regardless. However, the nature of the "unbound" status on Mode 4 supply muddies the picture, with no clear barrier to US teachers being jettied into Edison UK schools established on the basis of the EU GATS Schedule.

From the above account, it might appear that the UK (via the EU) has a pretty much "open door" policy regarding the foreign supply of primary and secondary education services. It seems that education activists and trade unionists are eight years too late on GATS rules for education services that are technically irreversible. Yet this is a misleading impression, which is exposed as such on deeper examination of the WTO's Schedule of Commitments for education services under GATS (WTO, 1994).

**S**ection 5 of the EU's Schedule of Commitments indicates that in relation to education, the GATS refers to "privately funded education services". From this, it might seem that the only education services in relation to schools under threat from the GATS are independent and private schools. Why should we get too agitated if only Eton, Harrow and Roedean and their ilk are under threat from GATS rules? They are clearly in the "education market", so must take the consequences and face competing foreign providers.

However, once again, the GATS language is cleverly crafted. The schedule does not pinpoint private education "institutions", but privately funded education "services". It is not the case that a whole education institution has to be a for-profit outfit for the GATS to apply. Any of its constituent services – from frontline ones such as teaching, to cleaning, school meals services and the school library – could fall under the GATS if private capital is involved. Furthermore, private sector operators in school improvement, equal opportunities and recruitment and other schools' services, previously supplied by the



local education authority (LEA) also fall under the GATS.

**I**t could be argued this misses the point: are not these services still "publicly funded" even though education businesses like Nord Anglia and school meals providers like Initial Services are delivering the service? It could be argued they are not basically "privately funded" education services.

This argument assumes that "public" money remains "public" even when transferred to a private sector service deliverer ruled by profit-generation. However, it could be argued that once the contract is signed to deliver frontline teaching, school management or school improvement services the "public money" undergoes transformation into private capital.

This is the magic of money, the illusion on which New Labour and GATS protagonists' arguments rest. At a meeting in a church hall in Newham following the Trade Justice Movement lobby of Parliament earlier this year, Stephen Timms, former Schools Minister (now at the DTI), argued the private sector was being brought in to improve standards, and that this was not privatisation as the pertinent services were still being publicly funded. This argument is naïve at least, and positively misleading.

Secondly, for some New Labour schools' policies, private finance

forms an element of start-up capital. In the City Academies (or just Academies now, under the Education Act 2002), for specialist schools and for some Education Action Zones, private capital forms part of the start-up fund. The foundational significance of private capital is even clearer in the case of schools built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), where money to build the school is raised at commercial rates in the money markets by private companies. In all these cases, it would seem that the involvement of the private sector opens up schools to the GATS. These are private education services that have acquired public money.

Thirdly, under the Education Act 2002 school governing bodies can set themselves up as companies. They then have the power to invest in other companies. Furthermore, school companies can merge to form "federations" – chains like McDonalds – to gain economies of scale, thereby increasing profit-making capacity. Schools can enter into deals with private sector outfits. The Act gives the Secretary of State new powers to form companies for involvement in any area of school or LEA life. It provides a de-regulatory framework for the business takeover of schools, and hence also for the virus of GATS throughout our school system. Of course, New Labour can still argue that all this is "publicly funded", but the

previously public finance is transfigured into private capital in the process. Through these mechanisms, schools are exposed to the GATS.

Fourthly, directly after the general election 2001, Stephen Timms and sports minister Richard Caborn promoted a series of "partnerships" between private and state schools. Thirty-four independent/state school partnerships were established in July 2001. Dissolution of the barriers and distinction between public finance and private capital muddy the issue of whether schools services are either state financed or "privately funded". The insurgence of private schools into the state sector could well be dragging the GATS in its wake.

Finally, as Belgian teacher and education activist Nico Hirtt (2000) has indicated, only education systems financed solely by the state and with total exclusion of any commercial operations are excluded from the GATS. This point underscores the previous four: the greater the business involvement in state schools, the more they are opened up to GATS and a future as internationally tradeable commodities. On this account, policies and mechanisms that nurture the business takeover of schools can be viewed as the national faces of the GATS (for more on this see Rikowski, 2002). These are the national, local and school-level

GATS enablers that facilitate the business takeover of schools. In Britain, they include PFI, outsourcing and information and computer technology deals. Ofsted is transfigured into a GATS-facilitator every time it locates a "weak" school ripe for business takeover.

**R**ather than a Geneva-based GATS monster forcing the UK government to embrace GATS, every time the private sector enters, deepens and expands its involvement in our schools it opens those "educational services" to the GATS. The fight against the business takeover of schools is simultaneously the struggle against GATS and our education services being catapulted into international education markets.

New Labour's education policy is virusing the GATS into our schools and LEAs. One day, a company in Detroit or Vancouver that focuses primarily on the bottom-line could control your local secondary school. Now, that would certainly stretch the notion of a "community school" and the concept of democratic accountability!

#### References

- EU GATS-Infopoint (undated) *Opening World Markets for Services: Legal Texts and Commitments*, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> May 2002, at: <http://gats-info.eu.int/gats-info/gatscomm.pl?MENU=hhh>
- Hirtt, Nico (2000) The 'Millennium Round' and the Liberalisation of the Education Market, *Education and Social Justice*, spring, vol.2 no.2: 12-18.
- Rikowski, Glenn (2001) *The Battle in Seattle: Its significance for education*, London: Tufnell Press.
- Rikowski, Glenn (2002) *Globalisation and Education*, a paper prepared for the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, Inquiry into the Global Economy, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, ATTAC Britain, at: <http://www.attac.org.uk>
- WTO (1994) *European Communities and their Member States - Schedule of Specific Commitments*, World Trade Organization, GATS/SC/31, 15<sup>th</sup> April, at: <http://docsonline.wto.org>



Glenn Rikowski teaches in the School of Education, University College Northampton and was previously a supply teacher in east London. He is an Associate of the Institute for Education Policy Studies, a radical Left think tank on education policy, see: <http://www.ieps.org.uk>, and author of *The Battle in Seattle: Its Significance for Education* (2001, Tufnell Press).

He is organising a day seminar - *Marxism & Education: renewing dialogues* at the Institute of Education (London) for Mayday 2003. For details: [rikowski@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:rikowski@tiscali.co.uk)



## Bracing for a 'catastrophe' in the Middle East

By Ramzy Baroud, *editor-in-chief* of Palestine Chronicle

**M**any Palestinians fear that the policy of "transfer" or forced expulsion of Palestinians may be the pinnacle of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's career. "Transfer" has been anything but a fairy-tale idea, contemplated only by extremist Israeli politicians or religious leaders.

It is a concept that has been implemented many times throughout history, going back as early as the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians and the destruction of their towns and villages (418 to be exact), during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, also known as the "Palestinian Catastrophe".

Nationally-syndicated columnist and associated editor of the *Lincoln Review of America's Future*, Allen C. Brownfeld, fears the possibility of more expulsions of Palestinians. In a January, 1989 article for the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, titled *Expulsions Are No Surprise*, Brownfeld discussed the popularity of the concept of "Transfer" among ordinary Israelis, as well as leading politicians.

Brownfeld narrated an episode, described by Rehavam Ze'evi, the founder of the Israeli right-wing movement Moledet, and former minister in the Israeli government. Ze'evi, a young soldier in the Israeli army during "Israel's war of independence", recalled the conquest of the once prominent Palestinian city of Lydda.

"When officers of Ze'evi's unit asked their assistant commander, Yitzhak Rabin, what to do with the Arab population of the town they had just conquered, Ze'evi reports that Rabin's answer was: 'expel them.'"

Expulsion was the norm. It was done "smoothly and simply", Ze'evi said. Ze'evi remained a faithful believer in the practice, which he felt should not be stopped at the border of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He once said: "We came to conquer the land and settle. If transfer is not ethical, then everything we have done here for 100 years is wrong."

Ze'evi was killed on 17 Oct. 2001, by suspected Palestinian men, members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in a tit-for-tat blow in

response to the Israeli army assassination of the political head of the PFLP, Abu Ali Mustafa, on 27 Aug. 2001.

Rabin, then the assistant commander of Ze'evi's unit, who became the Noble Peace Prize winner and Prime Minister of Israel was also gunned down, by an Israeli Jewish militant, on 4 November, 1995, for "concessions" he made with the Palestinians. Since then, numerous mini "transfers" have taken place.

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, MIFTAH, headed by the leading Palestinian politician Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, says "According to Israeli data there are 141 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. However, satellite images show 282 Jewish built-up areas in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and 26 in Gaza. This is excluding military sites."

The Israeli peace group, Peace Now concluded that 34 Israeli settlements have been established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in February 2001. Needless to say, Israeli Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or East Jerusalem are illegal under international law, regardless of whether settlers have obtained a permit from the Israeli government or not, before erecting their walls on Palestinian land.

**T**he UN Security Council reaffirmed the illegality of the settlements, by passing resolution 446 of 1979. According to this resolution, Israeli settlements are illegal, in accordance with article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention. But few are able to see the human face behind the numbers.

Almost every Jewish settlement, whether it is as large as a city or as small as a few mobile homes, has caused the "transfer" of the original inhabitants of the land, the Palestinians. Expelling Palestinians from their farms, particularly in the West Bank is nearly a daily reality faced by the Palestinian population.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, many of them victims of earlier

expulsions are losing more ground to settlers, to Israeli "army zones", to barbed wire, checkpoints and "security walls." Benny Elon, former Israeli tourism minister, also close ally to Sharon, was one of many Israelis who are pondering the idea of "transfer".

He said: "We must not fear bringing up again the idea of a transfer and of open discussion of the various possibilities that it offers." The debate is growing in Israel, and more and more Israelis are voting in favour of permanent Palestinian dispossession.

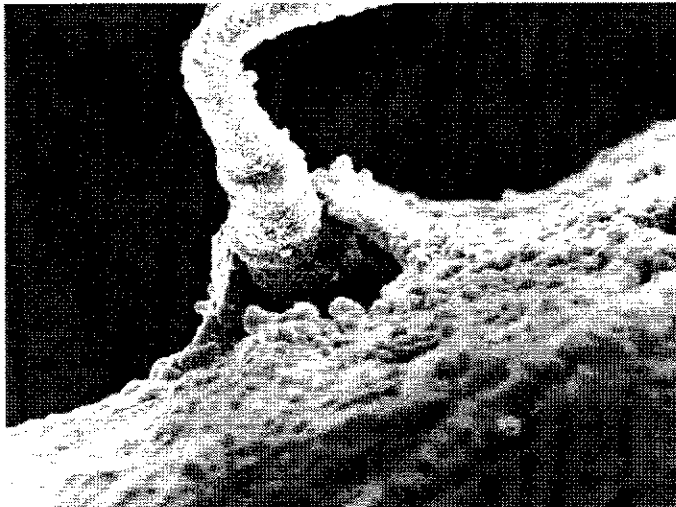
**A** poll conducted by the Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, last March, showed that 46% of Israelis would support the forced expulsion of Palestinians. The idea is there, with much of the political and public support it needs. One thing left, however, is the pretext. Well-known columnist Christopher Hitchens, was one out of many analysts who made the connection between a possible new war on Iraq and the expulsion of Palestinians.

In his article *Appointment in Samara?* for *The Nation*, in September 2002, Hitchens ponders the "moral and political disaster" of attacking Iraq, considering that "there are those around General Sharon who are looking for a pretext to cleanse the Palestinians from the West Bank and expel them onto Jordanian soil".

One lesson however that remains forgotten in all of this. If "transfer" was a successful strategy, as far as Israel is concerned, it would have worked for Israel decades ago. Seeking an easy, yet brutal solution by expelling the Palestinians and replacing them with foreign settlers can hardly establish peace in the war-torn Middle East.

The international community, quick to condemn acts of violence committed by Palestinians, must act now before a new "catastrophe" takes pace, a catastrophe that this time will spill into the whole region, upsetting any chance of real peace to actualise, not only now, but for many generations to come.

This article first appeared on the *Palestine Chronicle* website, [www.palestinechronicle.com](http://www.palestinechronicle.com)



*Twinkle, twinkle, little star  
How I wonder what you are  
Up above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky*

**T**his wistful ditty epitomises our persistent thirst to know the real truths of our universe and beyond - to go behind the appearance and find their essence. To do this, we need help from the sciences. However, we can stop wondering somewhat, as we have learnt a great deal since the Renaissance, when optical lenses were invented and fitted in the early telescopes, which were used mostly for observations on land and sea until Galileo Galilei, a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Padua and, also, an instrument maker, constructed a more advanced telescope and directed it to the skies. In March 1610 he published a 24 page pamphlet called *The Starry Messenger* (Siderius Nuncius) which landed like a bombshell on the learned world. His achievement is best described tersely in his own words, extracted from this pamphlet: "At length, by sparing neither labour nor expense, I succeeded in constructing for myself an instrument so superior that objects seen through it appear magnified nearly a thousand times, and more than thirty times nearer than if viewed by the natural powers of sight alone".

In the past four hundred years since Galileo, science has provided us with infinitely more sophisticated tools to assist our eyes

through which the richest and most varied impressions reach the mind through the brain. There are many other ways of discovering the hidden world other than optical microscopes and telescopes. The entire known panoply of instruments has been used to produce the three hundred stunning images in this magnificent collection, which has been selected by Amanda Renshaw of Phaidon Press, who readily admitted that seeing them changed her understanding of things. No one who sees these images in this book can honestly disagree with her.

**D**avid Malin, the astronomer, scientific photographer and technical advisor on *Heaven and Earth*, said that one of the most important aspects of the book was the sense of scale, from the sub-atomic to the very edge of the universe. Thus we have a picture of protons, neutrons and electrons, the constituent parts of atoms, taken in a bubble chamber and later, astronomical images from deep into space, taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, which shows thousands of galaxies in a tiny patch of the sky in the constellation Ursa Major. The most distant objects seen are small blue irregular clouds, which lie close to the edge of the observable universe. The light began its journey in space over 10 billion light years ago, so we see the clouds, as they were when the universe was only about a tenth of its present age.

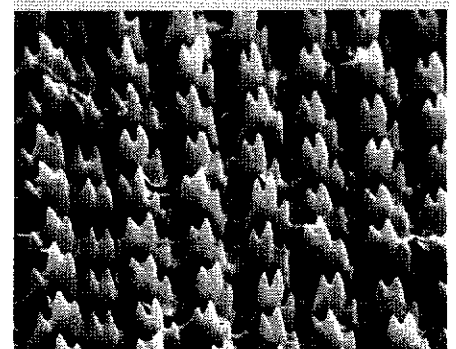
And, to witness an event which

occurs every second of each day, but is nevertheless miraculous, turn to page 26, and gaze at the dramatic image of a single human sperm at conception, penetrating an egg cell, at a magnification of 48,000 times! To see an egg travelling expectantly to the entrance of a Fallopian Tube where it will be fertilized by a sperm is a truly beautiful image.

**H**eaven and Earth is not merely a book of pictures. It is clearly structured with an informative introduction to each chapter and extended captions for the images. The claims made by the Publishers that the book is: "educational and inspirational" and, "a unique guide to the vastness, complexity and beauty of nature" is amply justified.

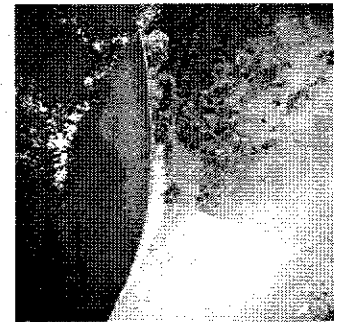
**Heaven & Earth: Unseen by the Naked Eye, Phaidon Press, £29.95 400 pages, 260 colour, 60 b/w photos, www.phaidon.com**

Photos clockwise from top left:  
Sperm at conception, Nilsson/Bonniers  
The Gaza strip at the Egyptian/Israeli border, NASA/Corbis  
Snail's teeth, Natural History Museum



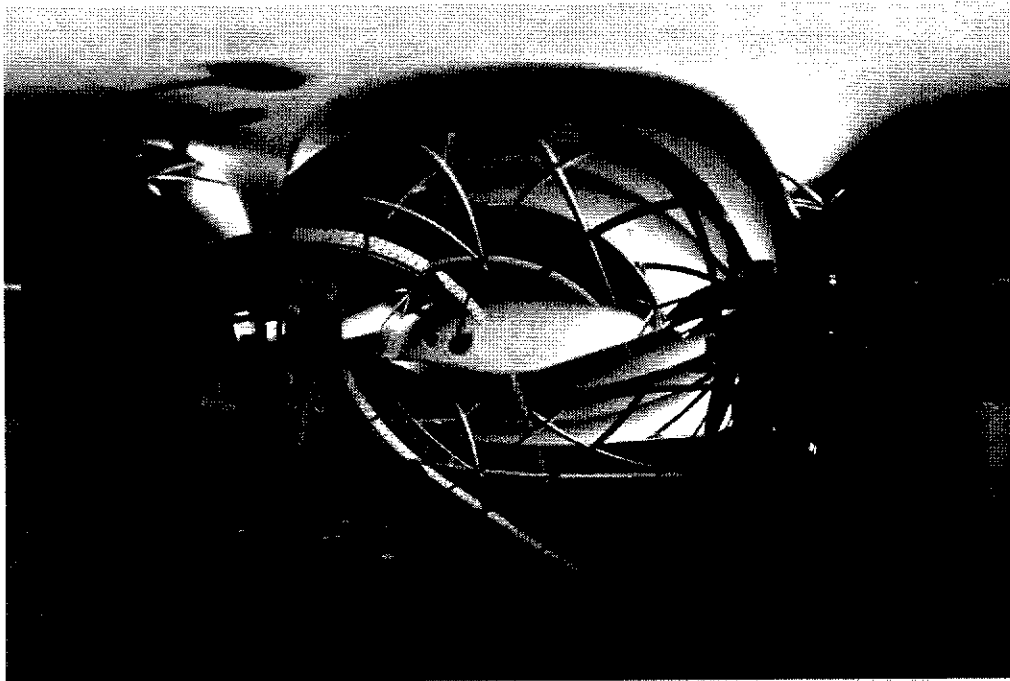
# Heaven & Earth

review by **Adrian Edgar**



# Techno-gothic fusion

By Corinna Lotz



*Terminus - a journey to another aesthetic ... along roads and tracks signposted by the artist*

**T**he River Lea valley in north-east London has its own atmosphere. It is neither London nor suburbia. Industrial estates are interspersed with canals, marshes and reservoirs. Electricity pylons tower over green spaces, populated by birds and canal-boat dwellers who have their own lifestyle.

The bleak North Circular snakes across the valley past supermarkets, D-I-Y shopping centres, and a greyhound racing stadium. The decrepit and abandoned coexist with an intense concentration of human life and activity.

This is the urban landscape that surrounds Michael Bowdidge. He

observes it and photographs the post-industrial relics around him. His “found images” become the starting point for a complex process of restructuring and composition using digital imaging software.

These digital paintings are rich, at times disturbing “mindscapes”, full of mediated references to their origin in the world outside. The viewer is a participant in a journey from the physically present object to another aesthetic and emotional reality, along roads and tracks signposted by the artist.

Bowdidge’s images function as a touchstone between the artist and his audience. The experience

is ambivalent and contains within itself not one but many interpretations. What he creates feels like architectural space, film or stage sets or the multiple universes described by astrophysicists.

**S**ome images evoke the idea of Big Brother surveillance and the post-apocalyptic nightmares of science fiction writer Philip K Dick, familiar through films like *Blade Runner* and *Matrix*. Sci-fi illustrators Chris Foss and Jim Burns have influenced the artist.

The capacity of Bowdidge’s recent digital art works to reflect back a range of sensations and ideas arises from the

artistic manipulation of the original image. An image is moved and altered through a sequence of “filters” which are part of the software.

These allow the modulation of a given image by fading, squashing and squeezing it, or flipping it around. All the changes are incorporated and present within the surface of the result. The original photograph is not lost but is still there with its original colour gradations and its natural palette.

While the final outcome loses the physical shape of the original objects or scene, it retains their colours, tonality and internal textures. The “feeling” of place is there. The beauty of reflections in water remains and even becomes stronger, for example, in “paintings” of the reed-fringed water of the River Lea.

This improvised manipulation of an image to see what can be done with it is both conscious and unconscious, like the seemingly-random splashes of an action painting. The final image is both the end result and the process of arriving at the result. Knowing when to stop, when the new artistic image is complete then becomes a decisive moment.

**B**owdidge pays tribute to his teacher, Jules de Goede, who, he says, made him understand how to recognise the moment when a work was complete – when adding new elements or changes actually became not merely superfluous but detrimental. “When the image is more than the sum of its parts, then it is complete” – this is the dialectical principle which De Goede taught his students at Middlesex University.

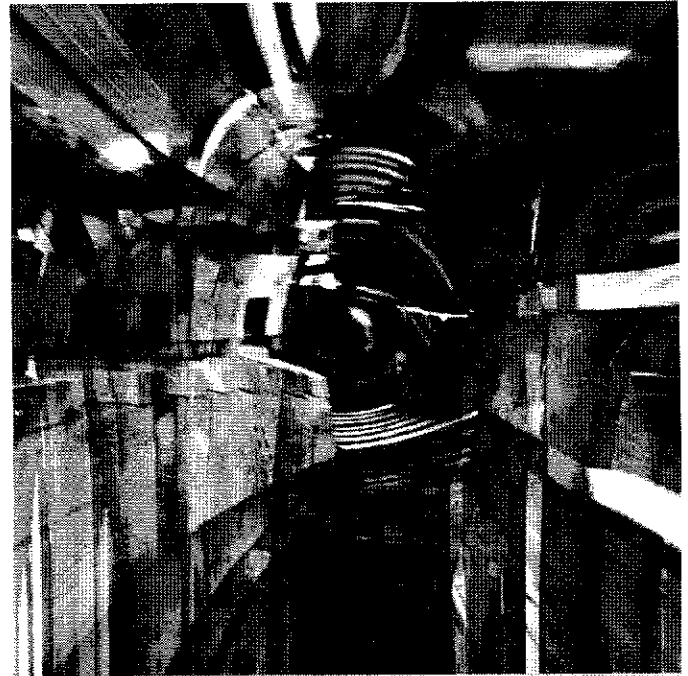
“Reading” an image from a surface into depth is facilitated by depth “clues” – devices that indicate that something is behind or in front of something else. Artists have depicted knives, for example, in a still-life, to take the eye into depth, or black to indicate a void. In these digital paintings, the idea of space and movement is created by multiple converging lines and arches, reminiscent of cathedrals and railway stations. We see references to the Futurist art of the early 20th century.

Bowdidge feels close to the idea expressed by that

archetypal English poet and mystic, William Blake, who wrote: “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.” The artist keeps the viewer in a continual state of not-knowing, not quite able to de-code, so that we can’t quite recognise the object.

Our mind is continually trying to solve the visual conundrum transmitted through the senses, when the image draws you in and pushes you back at the same time. “Once you recognise something, you dismiss it and switch off,” Bowdidge believes.

**H**e deftly picks up themes from the art forms of the last century, using his camera and digital software rather than the more labour-intensive paintbrush and canvas. English painters from the mid-twentieth century come to mind – the acid greens and underground tunnels of Graham Sutherland, for example and Paul Nash’s scenes of wartime devastation. Thus a distinctly English mystical sensibility and empirical



*Inside II - a distinctly English mystical sensibility*

source join together with Max Ernst’s war-torn surreal landscapes and Paul Klee’s jewel-like colour abstractions.

But these are only hints and notions which give added resonance to an artist whose work is nothing if not contemporary. Discarded shopping trolleys are incorporated into techno-industrial gothic as hidden symbols of our times.

Here is a visually acute artist whose eye is informed by all this, but

who for all his “sampling” plays an insistent tune of his own, which is of the 21st century – its past, present and future.

Michael Bowdidge is the latest featured artist on the MSF website where you can see more of his images in colour

[www.socialistfuture.org.uk](http://www.socialistfuture.org.uk)

*Nightshift - layered images, shafting rays, the flow & shimmer of light produce a circumscribed infinity*



# The Other



America seen through the faces of its most famous citizens – as enshrined in its own National Portrait Gallery. Review by Corinna Lotz

One might think this is a formula for only showing the status quo. And yet in this journey through “America’s” history, the different strands are so at variance that they challenge us to think again about the image and reality of “America” itself.

It strikes a blow at the crude anti-Americanism which finds every citizen

guilty of the crimes of those in power in Washington.

The story begins in the days when “America” was still a British colony. It’s surprising, for example, to find Bishop Berkeley, painted around 1727, as one of the first images. Berkeley is described by the curators as an “Anglican clergyman”, and yet he is probably better known to those interested in ideas as the philosopher who told us that things only exist in so far as they are perceived.

After being appointed Dean of Derry in Ireland,

Berkeley despaired of Europe’s corruption and set off to create a utopian college in Bermuda. He only got as far as Rhode Island and ran out of money for his project.

His desire to get away from home – in his case going West – was strangely enough repeated 150 years later, albeit in the opposite direction. By the late 19th century quite a few Americans sought – not exactly salvation – but a kind of cultural freedom, by going to Europe.

Alongside the Founding Fathers like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, scientists, and generals, we find American thinkers, writers and artists who were as often as not at variance with their own society or who sought to right its abuses.

So there is an impressive portrait of Sequoyah, a native American who negotiated on behalf of the Cherokee Indians and created an alphabet which enabled his people to read and write. Another champion of the “lords of the forest” was George Catlin, who abandoned a successful career as a society painter and set out to record Indian leaders.

Campaigners against slavery, William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator* and author



Harriet Beecher Stowe rub shoulders with Civil War generals like William Sherman and Philip H Sheridan.

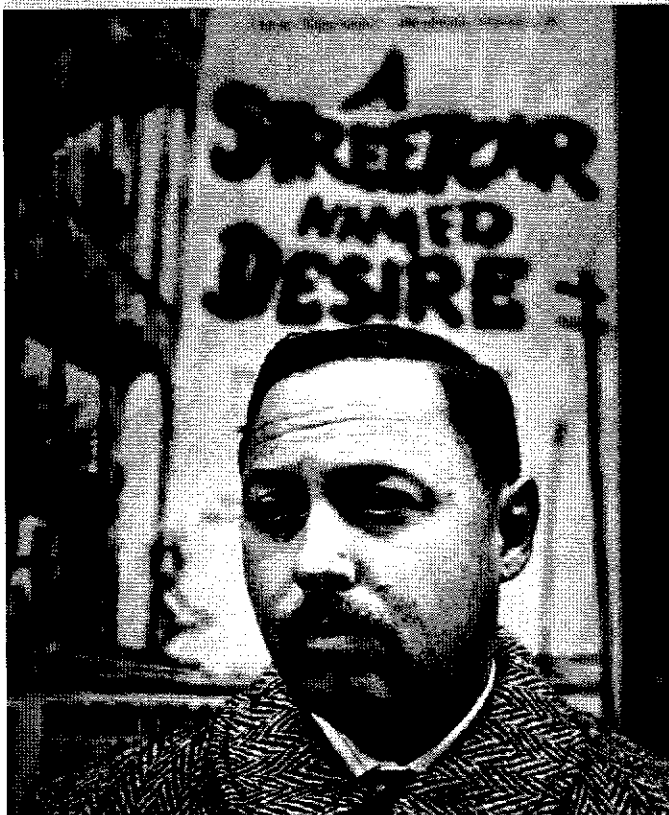
Portraits of or by the best-known American artists are included: James Whistler, John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt along with novelists like Edith Wharton, Henry James and Samuel L. Clemens, better known as Mark Twain.

It is here that the interaction between Europe and America becomes ever more intriguing. One of “America’s” best-known society painters, Sargent was actually born in Florence and lived in Europe more than in America, with a studio in London as well as New York while Cassatt became a respected artist during the 1870s and 1880s, a member of the Impressionist movement in Paris.

Thomas Hart Benton, one of the great US school of 1930s muralists, was born in the Midwest, but was in Paris in his formative years, absorbing avant garde theories.

One of the best aspects of this show is that the person portrayed and the

From below clockwise: Tennessee Williams, George Gershwin, Sequoyah, Gipsy Rose Lee & entourage, Louis Armstrong





# America

portraitist are given equal prominence both on the walls and in the excellent accompanying book (*Americans*, NPG £12.95). The interaction between the painter and the painted adds another dimension to the exhibition.

That's how it is with Arthur Kaufmann's picture of jazz composer George Gershwin. The child of Russian Jewish immigrants, Gershwin brought together the sound of 1920s and 1930s America and made jazz into a serious art form, as the catalogue notes. The artist who depicted him was forced to emigrate from Germany after the Nazis took power. That's when he made friends with Gershwin. His dynamic and yet contemplative study – in modulated tans, greys and pale green, was made only a year before the composer's untimely death at the age of 39.

**T**he real treat in this show comes in the photographic section. For those interested in the technique of photography, a group of daguerreotypes and ambrotypes are of exceptional interest. Under four inches square, the images on them are invisible from one angle. We seem to be looking at a metallic mirror. Then, almost as if in a hologram, the amazingly life-like images appear, like ghosts of the past.

Thus we see the truly haunting image of John Brown, after whom the famous abolitionist song

was named. Brown organised the murder of five pro-slavery settlers in Kansas and the capture of Harpers Ferry in Virginia. He was caught by Colonel Robert E Lee, tried in a Virginia court and found guilty of insurrection, treason and murder and hanged. The daguerreotype was made by Augustus Washington, the son of a former slave.

An ambrotype from 1859, taken of the West Point graduate George Armstrong Custer, best known for his "Last Stand" against the Lakota (Sioux) Indians, looks as if it was taken yesterday.

The original outlaws, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, were captured in a gelatin silver print photograph in 1900, before they set off for Argentina. The outlaw gang pose in bowler hats, sporting three piece suits



with watch fobs, resting their hands elegantly on the carved chairs.

Another remarkable and unmissable print from the same year shows author and passionate socialist Jack London who wrote *The Call of the Wild* and many other famous books.

More photographs of 20th century actors, scientists and political leaders, not least the classic pose of Marilyn Monroe over a hot air grating, take us up to the late 1970s.

**Americans** is at the National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Lane, until January 12  
Admission £6/£4  
Open daily 10am-6pm  
Late on Thursdays & Fridays until 9pm  
Recorded information  
020 7312 2463;  
general information  
020 7306 0055  
[www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)



# Modernism resurgent

A surprise awaits those who visit Somerset House in London's Strand. Not only does it offer a spectacular courtyard and grand view over the Thames, but inside there is now a superb overview of the vanguard art of the last two centuries.

The latest transformation is in the Courtauld Institute Gallery. Its original collection was put together by textile tycoon Samuel Courtauld, in the 1920s. He bought two of the greatest Impressionist paintings of all time, Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* and Renoir's *The Theatre Box*, which are much beloved and familiar to many.

The "old" collection can now be seen in a new context – the development of art from the French mid-19th century

landscape art right through to British Modernists such as Barbara Hepworth. The foundation collection has been augmented by around a hundred 20th century art works from gifts, trusts and foundations.

This makes it possible to trace the continuity of the artistic innovations which gave rise to the Modern Movement.

Famous names like Monet, Cézanne and Picasso are joined by their talented but lesser-known contemporaries so that we get an overview of how the Impressionists broke through barriers and were followed by others who were even more brilliant and shocking in the way they used colour and form to depict.

The sequence of spaces on the top floor of the Gallery gives the visitor a sense of historical coherence. In the



Robert Delaunay *The Racers* 1924-25

first room, Corot's "Woodcutters", for example, is hung next to a portrait by Berthe Morisot, his most outstanding pupil.

Cézanne's greener than green landscapes hang opposite Manet's sparkling image of a young woman serving a customer at the bar, with its intriguing reflections of the girl, her customer and a mass of Parisian pleasure-seekers in the background.

The way in which Degas used sculpture to deepen his understanding of the human body in movement and how this cross-fertilised his pastels and paintings can be studied in a

sequence of ten bronzes by the artist.

The biggest surprise is the group of works by German artists of the "Bridge" and "Blue Rider" groups, whose explosion of colour followed hot on the heels of their French counterparts, the Fauves (Wild Ones), led by Matisse.

A splendid sequence of sixteen Kandinskys, ranging from picturesque alpine villages to total abstraction, including "In the Black Circle", will give Londoners a real feeling of the similarities and the differences between French and German art in the early 20th century, not to be seen elsewhere.



Wassily Kandinsky *Improvisation on Mahogany* 1910

**Into the 20th century**

New Displays at the Courtauld Somerset House Strand

Open daily 10am-5pm  
Admission £5/£4  
Annual ticket £22

020 7848 2526

[www.courtauld.ac.uk](http://www.courtauld.ac.uk)  
[galleriesinfo@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:galleriesinfo@courtauld.ac.uk)

Wassily Kandinsky  
*In the Black Circle* 1923



# Censors keep reality at bay

Phil Walden reviews Ken Loach's new film, *Sweet Sixteen*



First of all it is necessary to lodge a complaint about the certificate given to this film by the censors. The 18 certificate is essentially an insult to the intelligence of the audience and designed to keep young people from seeing a film dealing with issues they can relate to.

Certainly there are unpleasant scenes of violence but this is still unremarkable and understated in comparison to the PG and 15 certificates given to mundane action movies.

It is hard to deny that the censors are penalising Ken Loach's gritty realism because it deals with social issues when compared with the laxity shown to the endless diet of mindless violence in Hollywood gloss.

This film is a tale of tragedy, as exemplified by the relation between son and mother, sister and brother, youth and community. In order to try and kindle an unrealisable love Liam – the anti-hero of the film – becomes a drug-dealer.

Liam enters into a web of intrigue and crime from which he is unable to extricate himself, and the

end result is an almost inevitable descent into violence and betrayal, together with the inability of his mother to reciprocate his love.

This story-line raises a number of political and ethical questions which the fly-on-the-wall style of Loach is often hard-pressed to answer. This approach aspires to tell what is rather than provide value judgements. This has always represented the strength as well as the weakness of Loach's films.

In *Sweet Sixteen*, the tension between the fly-on-the-wall non-committal attitude and the need for ethical direction is visibly acute. This is because for whatever reason, Liam has entered into the world of drugs, and the role he plays is that of a transmitter of the evil of heroin addiction.

Instead the film takes a morally ambiguous attitude towards him, in that it often romanticises the escapades that take place involving himself and his best friend Pinball. Only his sister provides any sense of moral direction in his life.

The film does show the importance of the

friendship between him and Pinball, but what is not explained is that this friendship is insular and ultimately self-destructive because it is based upon the combined selling of drugs. The friendship is a commercial enterprise, and when it ceases to be profitable it is called into question, although eventually salvaged.

Some value judgments are provided by Loach right at the end of the film, in the course of a predictably tragic denouement. But this reviewer found there to be an air of unreality about the way in which Liam's previous downward slide is almost completely unchecked by concerned intervention.

**Socialist**

**One year's subscription (4 copies) by 1st class post to Britain: £6.00**  
**Airmail to Europe: £8.00**  
**Rest of the world: £9.00**

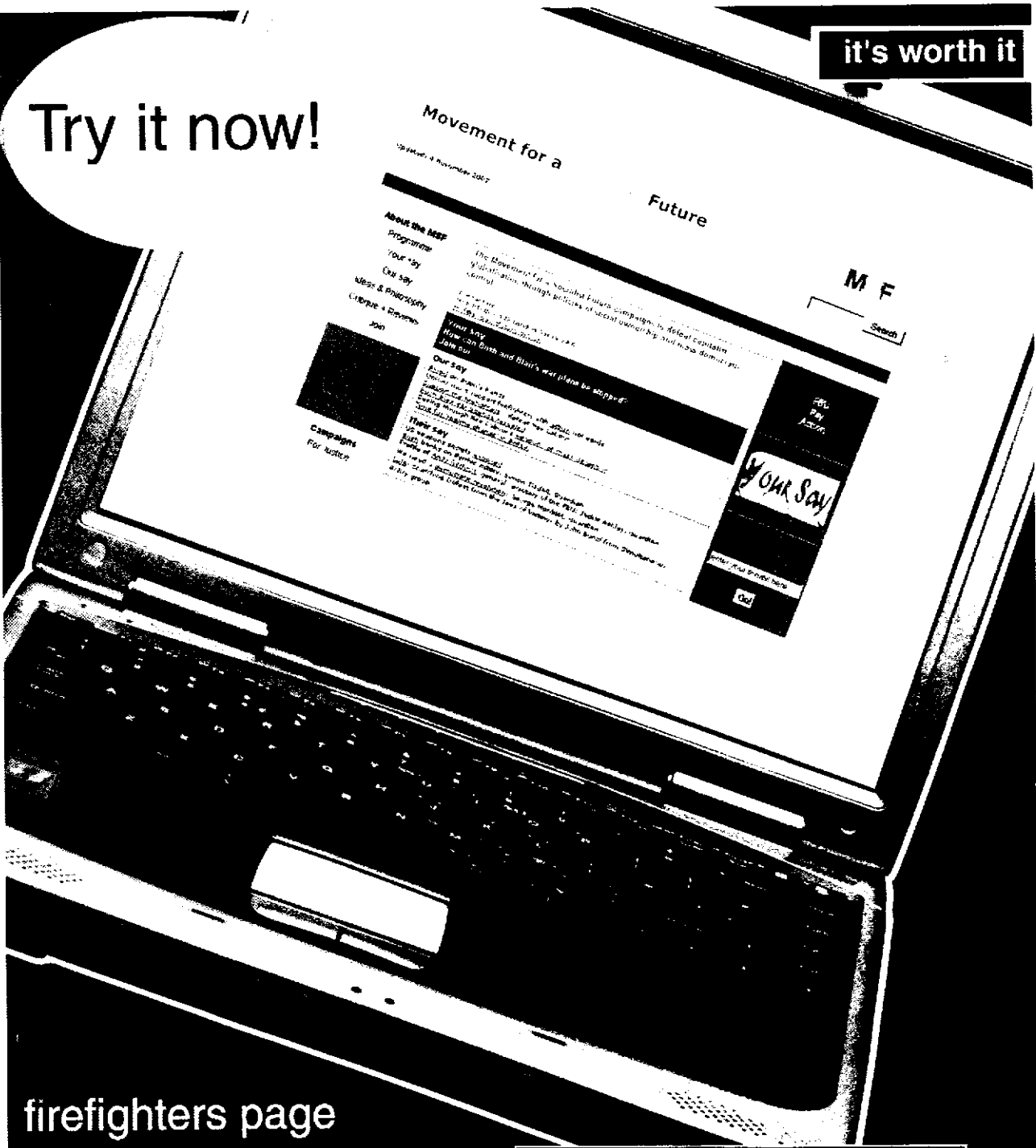
**Send cheques made out to "MSF" to MSF, PO Box 942, London, SW1V 2AR**

**Email: [msf@socialistfuture.org.uk](mailto:msf@socialistfuture.org.uk)**

**Fax: 08700 561504**

it's worth it

Try it now!



firefighters page  
campaigns  
arts  
living planet  
critique  
thinking

break through the spin

[www.socialistfuture.org.uk](http://www.socialistfuture.org.uk)