

CRISIS BRINGS GLOBAL SLUMP

The collapse of the Russian economy is a turning point for global capitalism and a danger signal for workers all over the world.

An international slump of unparalleled severity is unfolding, bringing with it the threat of mass poverty, hunger and unemployment, dictatorship and nuclear war.

"Early warning signals in the US suggest similar problems are emerging as in Asia last year."

Economist Gerard Lyons.

What began in Thailand a year ago has swept through Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Latin America and now Russia. It is knocking insistently on the

doors of Europe and America.

What the situation in Russia shows is that the world's financial and economic markets depend on each other for survival. The meltdown of the rouble reveals that:

- The International Monetary Fund is broke, having spent billions in South Korea and Indonesia, to no avail.
- Capitalism has lost control of the global crisis.
- The slump will be deeper than the 1930s because many more countries are involved.
- World stock markets are vastly over-valued.
- The spread of the crisis is accelerating
- The Russian collapse is a huge blow to capitalist self-confidence

Blair and Clinton have championed the 'free market economy', with its reliance on global trade, rapid movement of finance and domination by a handful of multi-national corporations.

"Russia's collapse has made the global investment climate extremely fragile. The dangers of worsening contagion, and western stock market reaction, are real, and there is little that can be done to prevent either."

Financial Times

But far from ushering in a new period of peace and prosperity, these economic forces have undermined the

capitalist system itself. Russia is bankrupt, not because it broke the rules but because it followed the laws of the free market to the extreme.

"Economic incompetence in Russia...could prove to be a bigger threat to world capitalism than Stalin ever was."

New York Times.

In place of the economic mad-house, run for profit and greed, we need mass democratic ownership and control of society. The alternative is a catastrophe for humanity, as Russia shows. ■

● See page 6 & 7 for an international roundup of the economic crisis.

Join the Socialist Future Movement

Momentous changes are sweeping the world. The capitalist system is lurching into a slump which makes the Depression of the 1930s pale in comparison. In today's Russia we can witness the calamity of the "capitalist experiment", which was supposed to prove the superiority of capitalism over socialism. Despite billions of dollars spent to prop up the Yeltsin regime, the Russian rouble and economy have collapsed.

Clinton and Yeltsin, leaders of two of the world's most powerful countries, have no control over their economies or currencies, and are politically discredited. Blair's Third Way reveals its true nature as his government enacts laws which provide the basis for a brutal dictatorship.

The crisis of globalised capitalism is driving New Labour against the working class, professional people, youth and the dispossessed. But Russia can no more return to the Stalinist dictatorship of the past, than Britain can return to an "Old Labour" style government.

Socialist Future magazine is sponsoring the campaign for a revolutionary socialist party in Britain. A Manifesto was published this summer to encourage the discussion. A steering committee has now been set up to develop the project and it is asking people to join the Socialist Future Movement. Members will have the opportunity to develop the Movement to the point when they will launch the new party next year. ■

For more information, write to Socialist Future, PO Box 942, London SW1V 2AR

The state and terrorism

The Blair regime has rushed through legislation abolishing the democratic right to be presumed innocent. This confirms that New Labour is an authoritarian government which socialists must oppose.

No-one, not even the Opposition, was allowed to see the Bill, which was pushed through on the wave of disgust following the Omagh bombing. Now the word of a senior police officer or an anonymous MI5 agent is sufficient to send a person to jail. The right to silence and to organise against dictatorial regimes will be destroyed. A New Labour spokesman admitted: "Terrorism will be defined very widely. All serious crimes, including damage to property will be terrorist."

Blair's suppression of opposition is also going on within New Labour itself. Its leadership has announced that policy discussion at the party conference will take place behind closed doors. Elections to the National Executive Committee were conducted through a telephone balloting system, which is wide open to abuse and fixing.

While Blair uses the threat of terrorism to destroy civil liberties, the real terrorists are to be found in the governments in Washington and London. Clinton was told that the chemical plant in Sudan manufactured medicines for the country's poor and nothing else. Yet he launched dozens of cruise missiles in a bid to divert attention from his own political crisis. First in line to back Clinton was his poodle, Blair.

New Labour is not for turning. On the contrary, it is creating a super-authoritarian state run by the police and secret intelligence agencies. Socialists should fight to bring it down.

The Editor



Thousands of Eritreans from all over Britain rallied in London recently to protest against the unprovoked attacks by Ethiopian government forces on their newly independent country. The conflict began over disputed border areas and Ethiopia has threatened to forcibly annex parts of Eritrea. The Eritrean government has called for a demilitarization of the area and a peaceful settlement of the differences. Eritrea won its independence from Ethiopia in 1991 after the overthrow of the Mengistu regime. ■

Freedom for Steve Lewis!

by Paul Feldman

The case of Steve Lewis, jailed for 15 years for crimes he did not commit, shows how the dubious use of genetic DNA "fingerprinting" can sway a jury when the overwhelming evidence is in the defendant's favour.

Steve, a painter and decorator from Ilford, East London, was convicted in 1997 of two alleged kidnap and rape offences five years apart. Neither victim's description of their attacker fitted him in any way; there was no corroborating evidence.

The Stephen Lawrence inquiry legal team has shown an interest in the case, along with the TV programme *Trial and Error*. Lawyers have studied the Steve Lewis case and believe there are real inconsistencies in the DNA evidence.

So how did the Old Bailey jury convict a family man, with two sons and an adopted



Above: Steve Lewis. Top: Mary Lewis and supporters campaigning

daughter, who had no previous convictions? They were told by the judge that they could convict on DNA evidence alone, disregarding what seemed to observers like solid alibis. A blood sample was taken from Steve and sent for DNA analysis when he was arrested in August 1996 in Ilford, and accused of wounding a woman in a street fracas.

Despite bail offers totalling £360,000, the police insisted that he was kept on remand. His release seemed imminent when in February 1997 the DNA analysis of his blood apparently returned, six

months after it had been asked for. Yet at the trial, the police stated that a DNA profile of the rapist had been created before Steve was charged, raising questions about why it took so long to allegedly "match" semen samples taken from the two women in 1992 and 1995.

Finally, when the defence asked to make an independent DNA analysis, they were told that there was nothing left of the semen samples taken from the victims. They had, apparently, all been "used up", denying the defence a vital piece of alleged evidence.

In his summing up, the judge told the jury that the prosecution had followed authorised procedures in presenting the DNA evidence. These had been laid down by the Court of Appeal in a case involving Alan James Doheny.

Doheny, 33, spent six years in prison after his conviction in November, 1990 for allegedly raping a pensioner. The Court of Appeal initially increased an eight-year sentence to 12 years, but later it set him free

after accepting defence evidence that a crucial DNA reading had been faulty. Doheny's conviction was quashed on the grounds that DNA evidence given to the jury in 1990 assessed the chances of his not being the rapist as 40 million-to-one. That estimate was reduced to 41,000-to-one when scientific evidence was submitted by the defence.

In the Lewis case, the police said that the rapist took the victim of the 1992 attack back to his empty marital home. Lewis was at a family party at his home at the time. There was no way a violent rape could have taken place at this location. The managing director of a building company testified that at the time of the 1995 attack, Lewis was working for his company, refurbishing a supermarket outside London. Yet his evidence was dismissed.

Meanwhile, Steve Lewis languishes in Wandsworth Prison while his wife Mary organises the campaign to have him freed. Compelled to attend a course for the rehabilitation of sexual offenders, he declined to participate, on the grounds of his innocence. The authorities withdrew his privileges as a result.

"Steve has no previous criminal record and now he has been branded as a serial rapist," says Mary. "How my husband was found guilty, I do not know." ■

The campaign needs support in every way; write to Steve Lewis Appeal, PO Box 1265, Ilford, London IG3 9JD.

OUT NOW!

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Written out of existence

Anna Tate analyses 'New Labour speak'

Working as a communications consultant in Blairite Britain, I am reminded of a report of a Russian journalist who was fined for calling a bunch of fascists, just that – fascists. The judge ruled that the young men, in the town of Stavropol, wearing black shirts, swastikas, greeting each other with a copy of the Nazi salute and spouting anti-Semitism and racial exclusivity were not fascists. On the contrary, he was reported as saying that the Russian National Unity party had patriotic aims. The journalist, Galina Tuz, described the case as Kafkaesque. "I had the impression I was living in an altered state of reality," she said.

The reason for referring to this bizarre and frightening incident, is that here in Britain insidious things are happening with language and I too have begun to get that Kafkaesque feeling, about words devised by New Labourites to mask what is happening. The words give the

impression that policies under New Labour are new and different from the Tories – a "third way". This cleverly disguises the fact that they are in reality a continuation of what went before.

Take the word "partnering", which I had never heard until it came up recently at a London council currently undergoing a massive restructuring. "Partnering" means that each area has to put its housing management service out to tender to a private housing company or housing association. The winning bidder will provide the service at an agreed cost over seven years.

Is this any different from privatisation and the idea that the private sector is better and cheaper? It appears that the council will still set rents and own the homes, but will wash its hands of shoddy workmanship or repairs not done on time.

Accountability for housing management issues will rest with the management company. While council staff will be

transferred to the company/association on the same terms and conditions as at the council, they could end up doing a different job and working twice as hard. The company may make savings by laying off staff, or "downsizing".

No doubt, any long-suffering council tenant will tell you, they can't do any worse. Fair enough, but why not call it privatisation? Or if they won't, we should.

The media quickly absorbs the language of consensus, rubbishing left-wing councils as "loony" in the 1980s and tarnishing socialism. They now talk about "social exclusion" when what is meant is poverty. The connection between thought and language is fascinating. In some languages there is no word for rape, therefore it does not exist. Without the word for privatisation, will it no longer exist even if what is happening is clearly just that? After all, in Russia they would have us believe that fascists are no longer fascists. ■

When science gets its hands dirty

Review article by Penny Cole

The authors of a new book have set out a comprehensive history of the imperative felt by scientists over the centuries to promote an understanding of science – to bring people in general over to the side of science, it might be said. Their success is shown by the fact that millions of people today have a scientific conception of the world and their place in it, grasping the ideas of the development of the cosmos from the big bang and the evolution of life on earth from primitive to more complex forms.

Even religious people in practice accept that we live in a universe governed by physical

laws which science can explain and technology exploit, while relegating God to the role of universal mechanic.

A key area the book examines is the view that scientists create Frankenstein monsters which will damage, not improve, people's lives and the environment. The idea that science leads to uninterrupted progress could not survive the development of the atom bomb, and more recently, the BSE crisis.

In a case study of BSE, the authors show that science does not exist in a vacuum, but in society. As the BSE crisis developed it both reflected the crisis of John Major's government and fuelled it.

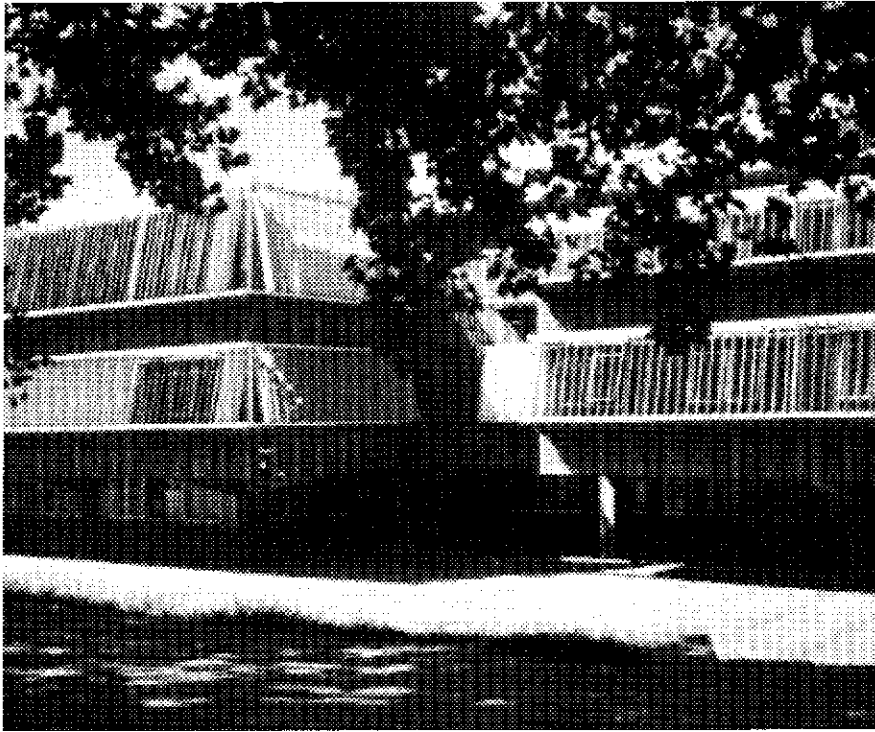
Scientists as government spokespersons were reviled; dissenting scientists praised as whistle-blowing heroes by commentators. Scientific method itself was criticised, as people said "surely it is common sense to see that feeding offal to herbivores would lead to disaster".

The same arguments continue over the development of genetically modified (GM) crops. In recent weeks the possibility of a gene from a GM crop migrating into weeds has been posed, increasing public fears. There is no confidence that scientists employed by transnational giants like Monsanto will proceed cautiously, with the

general good of humanity and the environment at the forefront of their work. Monsanto employs scientists not to feed the world but to increase their profits.

The authors cite the huge audience for popular science books and programmes and the interest in new discoveries in cosmology, to illustrate people's desire to find a scientific key to the world they live in. It is when science gets its hands dirty, serving the motives of power and profit rather than the common good, that it loses public confidence.

Science in Public: Communication, Culture and Credibility by Jane Gregory and Steve Miller, Plenum Publishing £17.99. ■



Profiteering, Filching Initiative

Privatisation threat to Pimlico school

By a local correspondent

The campaign to stop the demolition of Pimlico comprehensive school in central London, and the use of its grounds for luxury flats, has brought pupils, parents and teachers into conflict with New Labour.

Just before the summer break, parents and staff passed a vote of no-confidence in Home Secretary Jack Straw, the chair of the board of governors. At a stormy meeting, Straw and two other governors were called upon to resign in a 73-5 vote.

Straw was a key figure in the governors' decision, by a vote of 10-8, to agree to Tory-led Westminster City Council's plans

to tear down the school and re-develop the site with the use of money from private developers – the so-called Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

The council, with Straw's support, refused to consider a plan to rebuild the existing structure, at much less expense than the cost of constructing a new school. Pimlico is one of London's outstanding comprehensives and attracts pupils from all over the capital.

Leaders of the parents' association are now building up support for an emergency general meeting to overturn the governors' vote.

Parents and teachers accuse Straw of

conniving with the council to steam-roll through the plans as part of New Labour's drive for PFI. This is the same Westminster council that became notorious for spending millions on the illegal sale of council homes to prevent Labour winning seats at council elections.

Michael Ball, the parent association's chair, fears the council will rush through the consultative process to give planning permission. Many councils allow nine months for this process, but Westminster could reduce it to six weeks. This means that the final contract authorising demolition could be signed this term.

Ball told *Socialist Future*: "New Labour is the opposite of what Labour used to be. Everything is decided from the top down and it is profoundly undemocratic. They pretend there is no conflict between the rich and the poor."

National Union of Teachers representative, Steve Barlow, who has worked at Pimlico School for 18 years, said that teaching staff have voted twice on the plans. On each occasion there was overwhelming opposition to demolition.

Under the PFI scheme, a quarter of the school's grounds will be hived off and luxury flats built. Lessons are supposed to continue on the site while demolition and reconstruction go on.

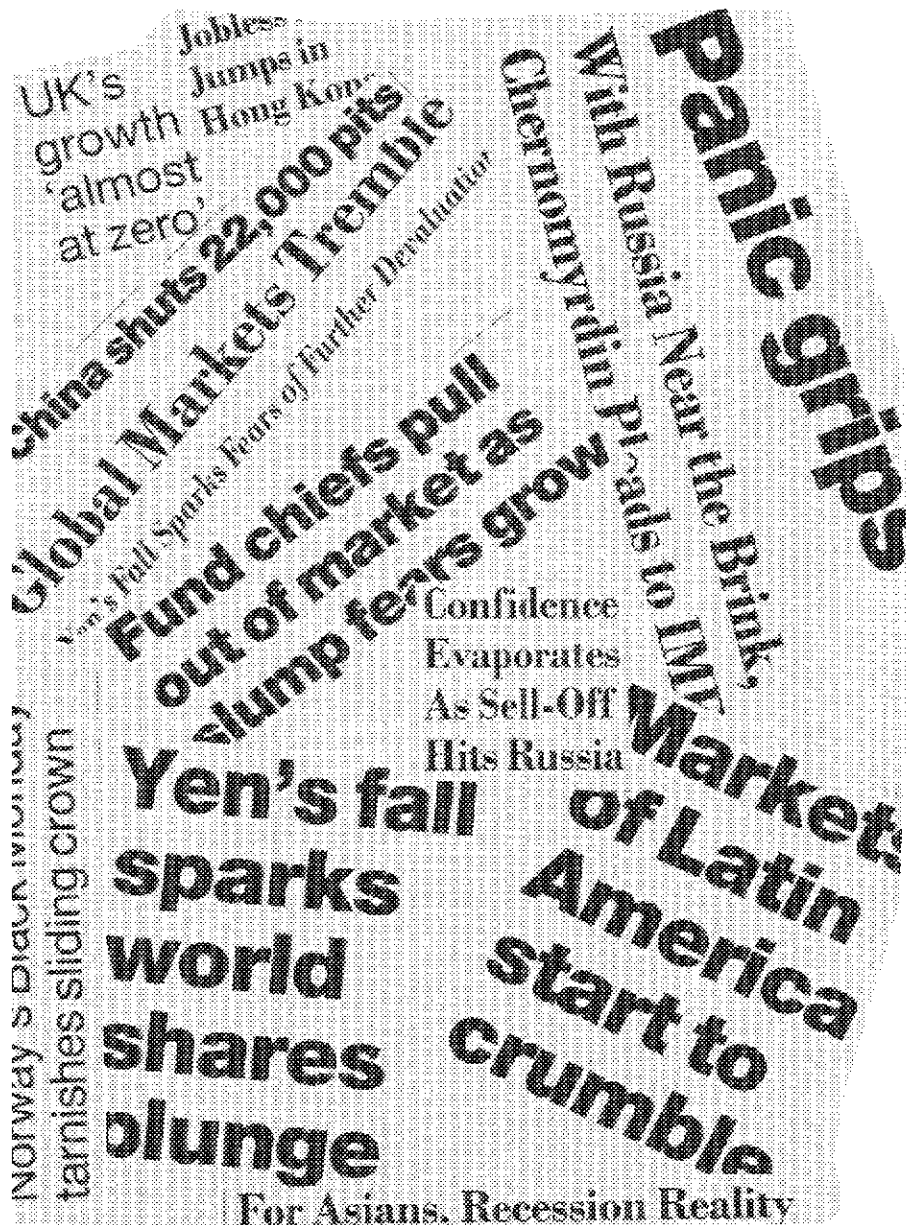
Some of the money from selling off the flats is to finance the construction of the new building. Both the Tory council and New Labour claim there is no alternative to this scheme, which in reality amounts to privatisation of public property.

Opponents say that PFI actually stands for "profiteering, filching initiative", since the building consortium which receives the contract stands to make a profit of between £11m to £30 million, from the sale of flats.

Since the scheme was first put forward in 1995, under the Tory government, it has become clear that entire plan is politically motivated.

New Labour wants to make the Pimlico project a flagship for its entire PFI nationally. The government hopes to generate £7.7 billion through such projects, not only in schools but in the health service and transport. New hospitals being built with PFI will have to reduce staff numbers in order to pay the interest on the private finance. ■

The world economy in crisis



INTERNATIONAL ROUNDUP

1 United States

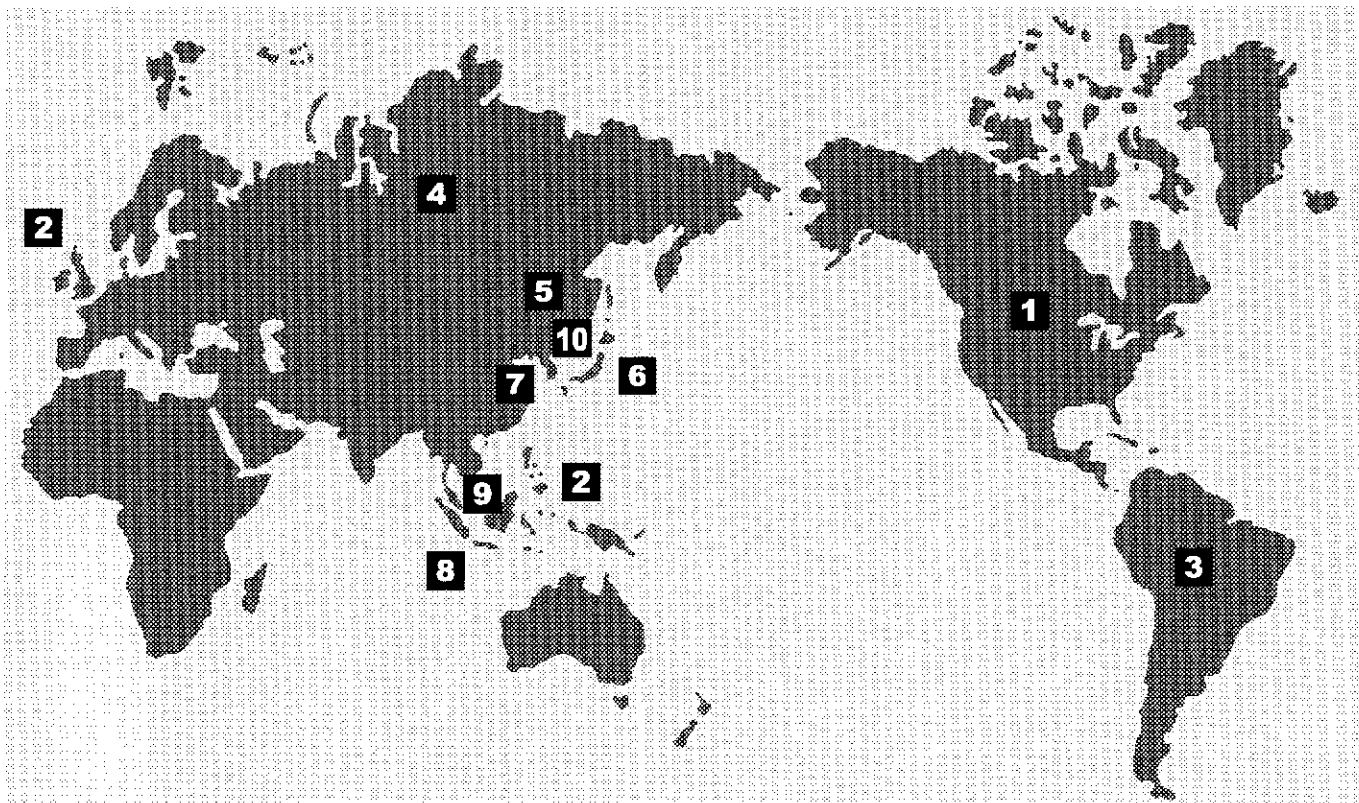
Asia crisis expected to add \$40-\$50 billion to already record trade deficit. Growth slowing, corporate profits falling, especially in hi-tech companies. Exports declined to their lowest level for 15 months because of Asian slump. Violent gyrations on Wall Street.

2 Britain

100,000 factory jobs at risk as recession develops. BOC, Rovers, Siemens, Royal Ordnance, Molins and BP also planning shut-downs/layoffs. By the end of August, the stock market had fallen by over 13%. British Airways earnings dropped 34% in year. Trade gap widens.

3 Latin America

In Venezuela, which depends on oil exports, the stock market has fallen 63% since January, and in Brazil by 33%. World oil prices have slumped to a 25-year low. In Brazil, interest rates have



soared to 20% and the budget deficit to 7%. Mexico's stock market has lost 48% of its value in dollar terms.

4 Russia

Rouble devalued by 50% in one week in August, as financial system collapses. Queues outside banks, which cannot pay depositors. Russia defaults on \$40 billion of foreign debt, not long after receiving new IMF loan. Inflation begins to soar. Yeltsin sidelined by new regime as political crisis grows. Stock market has fallen by 85% and worth less than Sainsburys.

5 China

Prices fall 3% as deflation bites. Economic growth slows. There are plans to shut 22,000 coal mines in response to the global crisis. Unemployment is thought to be at 52 million-plus. The government plans to sack 1.1 million railway workers.

6 Japan

Stock market at 12-year low with property prices 70% below their bank values. Output is falling. Banking system of the world's second largest economy on the edge of collapse. The yen is at an 8-year low. Unemployment is at a post-war high, estimated at 8.5%. Exports falling by 18% a year.

7 Hong Kong

Hong Kong's unemployment rate has jumped to a 15-year high. Output fell 2.8% in the first quarter. Share prices have slumped 50% and property values 40% in the past year. The government has spent \$12.5 billion to prop up the currency since January.

8 Indonesia

Threatening to default on foreign debt of \$145 billion. The rupiah has lost over

80% of its value since July 1997. 40% of the country's 203m people are living in poverty. Unemployment is heading towards 20 million. Output has fallen 12% in a year.

9 Malaysia

Shares at a 10-year low. The economy contracted by 6.8% in the second quarter. Construction was worst hit, falling by 22%. The governor of the central bank resigned.

10 South Korea

The economy shrank by 5% in the first half of 1998 as living standards plunged to an 8-year low. Hyundai reported a net loss of \$908,000, its first loss since 1981. Workers engaged in a bitter strike against job cuts. Chip maker LG Semicon reports a net loss of \$187m for the first six months.

The case for a new International

Sixty years ago, in September 1938, 30 delegates representing organisations in 11 countries took part in the founding conference of the Fourth International in Switzerland. The Third International, which was launched by the Bolsheviks after the Russian Revolution, had degenerated into an instrument for enforcing Stalinist methods and politics on the international communist movement. In particular, it had betrayed the German workers into the hands of Hitler and sabotaged the Spanish Revolution. Then, as now, a new revolutionary International was needed.

ROBERT KNIGHT traces the history of the Fourth International and examines the conditions for the building of a Fifth International.

The present world-wide social, economic and political crisis throws into sharp relief the urgency of constructing an international leadership capable of uniting the working class for the overthrow of capitalism. Important lessons for the struggle to build that leadership are contained in the founding and history of the Fourth International.

In September 1938, the capitalist system teetered on the edge of world war, while in Moscow the frame-up trials were destroying the last of the Old Bolsheviks as well as the leaders of the Red Army. Workers in Italy, Germany and Spain suffered under fascist rule. To the impressionist, it hardly seemed the time to talk of socialist revolution and new internationals.

The founding document of the Fourth International, which is known as the Transitional Programme, took this



Lenin addresses the Comintern Congress 1920

challenge head on. It declared: "Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now

to the proletariat, i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."

The conference set “the building of national revolutionary parties as the sections of the Fourth International” as “the central task of the transitional epoch”.

The Third International was founded by Lenin and the Bolsheviks after the successful 1917 revolution and attracted widespread support. Its first five congresses were tremendously rich in discussion and analysis. The perspective of world socialist revolution dominated the agenda and communist parties were launched in many countries. But the defeat of the German revolution of 1923, and the death of Lenin the following year, produced conditions in which the conservative wing of the Bolsheviks, led by Stalin, took over the leadership. Stalin championed the “theory” of “socialism in one country” which, in practice, meant that world revolution as a strategic perspective was abandoned.

By 1926, the Third International had become a conveyor belt for transmitting this policy. Early results were a disaster. In Britain, the Communist Party gave unconditional support to the TUC General Council as it betrayed the 1926 General Strike. In China, the consequences were more bloody. Stalin compelled the communists to subordinate themselves to the nationalist Kuomintang. When this alliance broke up in 1927, tens of thousands of communists were massacred.

The struggle against Stalin and his subordination of the party to the state bureaucracy, raged throughout the 1920s, with its outcome in the balance. The expulsion of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in 1928 signalled a consolidation of power by the Stalinists.

Trotsky’s exile in 1929 was followed by a violent lurch to the left known as the “Third Period”. Social democrats were branded as “social fascists”, a tactic which split the German working class and allowed Hitler to take power in 1933. “After Hitler, Our Turn” was the disastrous perspective of the Communist Party leadership. They became the first inmates of the Nazi concentration camps.

A qualitative change had occurred and was reflected in Trotsky’s analysis. It was no longer possible to reform the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International. The power of the bureaucracy in the



Trotsky at his desk during his period of exile in Turkey

USSR would have to be broken by political revolution. The Third International had gone over to the side of counter-revolution as the experience of the Spanish civil war would soon confirm.

The essential continuity of Marxism could be assured only by breaking from the Third International and founding the Fourth. This was Trotsky’s greatest historical contribution, considered by himself as superior in significance to his role in the October Revolution and as leader of the Red Army.

Lenin’s struggle to develop the theory and practice of Marxism in opposition to bourgeois methods of thinking, was central to the success of the Bolsheviks. Trotsky fought many battles to develop Lenin’s work, exposing the impressionistic and empirical method which simply sees this or that series of events as confirmation or refutation of set ideas or “theories”.

Within the Fourth International, the first great conflict took place in 1939-1940 against the right-wing opposition of James Burnham and Max Schachtman. This centred on basic political questions, from the class nature of the USSR to the revolutionary party and democratic centralism. Trotsky demonstrated how the sharp differences flowed from the failure of the opposition to break from idealism and pragmatism.

Trotsky’s analysis of the Soviet Union in *Revolution Betrayed* remains one of the great examples of Marxism in practice. He showed the essential contradiction between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the socialised property relations established in 1917. This allowed the Fourth International to defend the USSR against imperialism while rejecting Stalinism. For formal, non-dialectical thinkers it was all too much, and Burnham later went over to fascist politics. The documents of Trotsky’s continuing struggle for Marxism in the early years of the Fourth International can be found in *In Defence of Marxism*.

The assassination of Trotsky in 1940 in Mexico by Stalin’s agent Mercader, robbed the International of its leader and chief theoretician. A changed political situation at the end of World War II presented great analytical challenges and sharp differences in perspective emerged, leading to an historical cleavage in the movement in 1953. The majority formed the International Committee (ICFI), electing Gerry Healy of the British section as its leader.

This was done in order to break from the method and politics of Michel Pablo (who emerged from the war as secretary of the Fourth International) and his followers in the International Secretariat – Pierre Frank,



3rd congress of the ICFI, April 1966 Standing Michael Banda & Cliff Slaughter; seated left to right Pierre Lambert, Gerry Healy, M. Rastos & Stefan Juste

Ernest Mandel and Livio Maitan. This group had succumbed to superficial impressions of the growth of Stalinism and social democracy, the relative stabilisation of European capitalism following the betrayal of revolutionary movements in Italy and France, the establishment of Bretton Woods and the huge flow of capital into Europe from the US under the Marshall plan.

These idealists rationalised the betrayals of the Stalinist bureaucracy. They rejected the revolutionary role of the working class and the need for a revolutionary party, substituting a panorama of despair consisting of atomic war and "centuries of deformed workers' states". Pablo and his followers liquidated their organisations into Stalinism or Social Democratic parties.

Subsequent events, however, were to verify the famous phrase of Trotsky's that "the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus". In February, 1956, Nikita Khrushchev shocked the delegates to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) with an extensive denunciation of Stalin's crimes against the party and the Red Army.

Khrushchev revealed that Stalin had refused to believe warnings of a Nazi invasion in June 1941, and was responsible for the mass deportation of minorities and the rewriting of Soviet

history. There was uproar when he reported that Stalin had sanctioned "in the name of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) the most brutal violation of socialist legality, torture and oppression, which led as we have seen to the slandering and self-accusation of innocent people." This statement was accompanied by the publication of Lenin's last testament in which he had called on the party to block Stalin's rise to power. Khrushchev had virtually admitted that the Trotskyists were right.

The ICFI's defence of the Marxist method led to particular opposition within the leadership of the American Socialist Workers Party. Although it had formally rejected Pabloism, the SWP refused to discuss the theoretical background to the split. By the 1960s, SWP leader Joseph Hansen had declared that Marxism was nothing more than "consistent empiricism". In 1963, the SWP reunited with Pablo and his supporters and left the ICFI. Subsequent investigations by the ICFI revealed that Hansen had collaborated with the Soviet secret police in the assassination of Trotsky.

By the early 1980s, the rapid and often violent movement of political and economic events left no room for propaganda politics. This tendency revealed itself internationally at the ICFI's 10th Congress in London, which opened on January 6, 1985, and concluded over two weeks later. Profound problems quickly emerged in the Congress and on several occasions differences came close to ending in a split.

The British section, the Workers Revolutionary Party, at one point withdrew from the Congress, underlining its determination to break with right-wing opportunism. The political cornerstone of the resolution adopted foreshadowed the globalisation of the 1990s, declaring: "The objective laws of capitalist decline now operate without hindrance...it is the open dominance of these objective laws of capitalist historical crisis, on a world scale, that characterises essentially the situation in every country."

An analysis of the different national sections' practice immediately revealed the considerable gap between their work and the resolution they had just voted for.

The Australians freely admitted that state funds were sought for participation in an election, while in Greece there was nationalist support for the government over the issue of Cyprus. In West Germany, delegates admitted the presence of a clique directed by a close comrade of the secretary.

A letter drafted by Healy, summing up the work of the Congress, explained: "This retreat is guided by a theoretical outlook and method which restricts the sections to day-to-day spontaneous development dominated by bourgeois relations and bourgeois ideology. Their method, which is impressionistic, cannot penetrate the formal appearance of political events which in the present period contain the most explosive economic and social contradictions. In a revolutionary situation this leads not to a revolutionary practice but to scepticism, paralysis of will and false estimation of the bourgeois state and the labour bureaucracy."

Having exposed the nature of the explosive contradictions, and criticised the inadequacy of the response within sections of the ICFI, Healy himself became the target of an unparalleled attack. After 58 years in the revolutionary movement, his unique position in the leadership embodied an historic continuity which those hostile to it needed to destroy.

The pressure on the ICFI and the WRP to abandon Marxist dialectics as a guide to practice was at its greatest. Qualitative changes in world economic and political conditions had rendered the old leaderships of the workers' movement impotent in the face of state attacks on both sides of the Atlantic. Reagan and Thatcher signalled a new type of regime. Impressionists were deeply moved by the all-powerful appearance of the state.

New media techniques pumped out the image and message from Washington and London. Only through dialectical logic could the contradictory sides and aspects of the changes be analysed and the movement's course maintained. Those who opposed that approach floundered, leaving themselves, the leadership and the whole movement open to the most reactionary bourgeois ideas and state

attacks. In 1985, the WRP split as the great miners' strike came to an end.

The ICFI's inheritance passed into the hands of the Sheila Torrance-led News Line group, of which Healy became a part. But Torrance's disdain for dialectical thinking led her to deny Healy his constitutional rights. He and his supporters, including Corin and Vanessa Redgrave, left to form the Marxist Party in 1987, winning the support of the Greek and Spanish sections of the ICFI. To this day, the Torrance group insists that the Stalinist bureaucracy is still in charge of the former Soviet Union. It also supported the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the re-emergence of the political revolution in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China vindicated Trotsky's analysis. Encouraged and led by Healy, the ICFI intervened, making trips to the USSR, establishing many contacts and launching the campaign for an international Symposium on the Historical Truth of the USSR, which took place in England in 1990. Discussion on the rehabilitation of Trotsky was under way just as Gorbachev was being forced out by the coup which brought Yeltsin and the IMF to power.

By 1990, the contradictions within the perestroika process were enormous and its future course uncertain. This coincided with a period of political reaction in the major capitalist states as the globalisation process intensified. Post-modernism, with its emphasis on subjectivity, image and presentation, established itself as the new form of bourgeois ideology.

Following the death of Healy in December 1989, the ICFI leadership responded to a struggle to continue the development of Marxist theory with the expulsion of Corinna Lotz, and other members of the Marxist Party. In carrying out these actions, the ICFI destroyed itself just as great opportunities for working together with anti-Stalinist forces in the Soviet Union were opening up. The expelled members went on to found the Socialist Future Group.

On January 15, 1991, the ICFI – which had embodied the continuity of Marxism and the essence of the Fourth

International's outlook – decisively repudiated its history. It issued a pacifist resolution on the US-led war against Iraq, thus rejecting the ICFI's tradition of siding with former colonial states when attacked by imperialism. Corin and Vanessa Redgrave joined the motley collection of dogmatists who claim the form of the Fourth International and Trotsky's historical authority to cover their own reactionary petit-bourgeois politics.

The disorientation of the leadership of the ICFI led, inevitably, to it becoming transformed into its own opposite. On April 22, 1993, the ICFI declared its complete support for Yeltsin, the representative of capitalism in Russia and soon to be the butcher of Chechnya. This was despite acknowledging that his "government's reforms are centred on its intention to privatise the state industry and return the land to private ownership". In the last known statement from the ICFI issued on October 30, 1993, there is further support for Yeltsin following his tank attack on the Russian parliament.

The Socialist Future Group concluded that the ICFI – which embodied the continuity of the Fourth International – no longer functioned for the purposes of revolution. Historical changes – notably

the ending of Stalinism – posed new challenges. The history of the Fourth International had to be negated into something new, not lost or rejected, but taken forward, into a new International.

December 14, 1994, marked the beginning of the construction of the Fifth International of Communists. A joint statement signed by the Russian Party of Communists and the Socialist Future Group set out the ideological framework for the new international. Whilst "based on the revolutionary legacy of the Ist, IInd, IIIrd and IVth Internationals," the document "decisively rejected bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology as well as the dogma of Stalinist and Trotskyist varieties".

It added: "Life in the 21st Century can be guaranteed only through the victory of the working class in the revolutionary struggle for social ownership and control of the means of production. All the conditions are present for a giant leap forward for humanity. It is only the liberation of the means of production through socialist revolution that offers a way forward."

This project has many obstacles to overcome. But if its supporters stand by the theoretical legacy of Lenin and Trotsky, continuously developing the theory and practice for the construction of the new leadership, it will surely succeed. ■

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A view from the bridge

By Corinna Lotz

Forget about the blockbusters, credit cards, advance bookings and queues. This jewel of a show is perfection. You can visit it for two hours or 20 minutes, and go back as many times as you want because it is free.

Giovanni Antonio Canal, better known as Canaletto, was born and bred in Venice. He painted views of his native city which became famous around the world, especially in Britain.

Two of his most dramatic visions currently on show in the National Gallery belong to private owners. For most people it could be the only time they will see them.

These masterpieces are complemented by another view, also of the Grand Canal, which belongs to Hull City's Ferens Gallery.

All three were made in the artist's early period, the 1720s. In contrast to the delicate and almost infinite detail of his later regatta scenes, they have a more austere drama, created by the contrast of large blocks of dark and light.

"When political memories are growing increasingly short, it is good that the effort has been made to record the life of Gerry Healy, a revolutionary Marxist who had a massive impact on the working class socialist movement, in Britain and internationally."

Ken Livingstone, MP

Gerry Healy: A revolutionary life

by Corinna Lotz and Paul Feldman
Introduction by Ken Livingstone.
Published by Lupus Books (1994)
380 pages paperback.
£13.50 including postage.

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The entire surface is orchestrated for mood, rather than the glitter of a festival in the midday sun. In his view of the Rialto Bridge from the north, the touch of Canaletto's brush is the equivalent of rays of light striking various surfaces, with the long shadows of the late afternoon.

His depiction of the "fabbriche vecchie" (old factories) shows workmen precariously balancing on scaffolding and the very ridge of the building's roof. We see the terracotta tiles and the builder's white blouse caught in the evening light.

In a lively sketch the artist wrote the word "sole" (sun) on the water before the dark facade of the factory building. In the completed work we see the light actually painted on the canal.

Canaletto's oil paintings are displayed together with many intriguing sketches, some of buildings and others of the humorous figures who populate the city streets.

He made numerous drawings, based on close studies of Venetian architecture. When composing the paintings themselves, his most successful creations combine a variety of viewpoints. The final panorama is both dynamic and atmospheric, rather than a pedantic form of description.



Top: Grand Canal looking from the Palazzo Balbi to the Rialto Bridge.
Above: Venice, Piazza San Marco

An excellent 25-minute video accompanies the exhibition. Written and narrated by curator Gabriele Finaldi, it features music by Vivaldi and can be seen in a small viewing room next to the show. Don't miss it. ■

Venice through Canaletto's Eyes at the National Gallery until October 11; travelling to York and Swansea. Admission free. Open Mon-Sat 10am-6pm (Wed to 8pm) Sunday 12-6pm.