

# *f*uture

---

# IT'S TIME TO BUILD A NEW PARTY

**W**e must draw the political conclusions from the rapidly emerging slump in global capitalism and act upon them urgently. For it is clear that the processes that earlier this century produced war, social revolution and fascism are present again as the millennium approaches.

Far from giving capitalism a "new lease of life", globalisation has intensified the built-in tendencies to slump and mass unemployment alongside social and political upheaval.

## BY THE EDITOR

The South-East Asian "Tigers" are biting back with a vengeance following the collapse of their currencies and financial systems. In the United States, imports are rising and exports falling as lower prices from Asia take effect. "The US economy is about to slow sharply," says Merrill Lynch, the leading financial analysts. They add: "Given the uncertainties of the global economy, and a

slowdown in earnings momentum, there are significant downside risks to capital spending in 1998."

In Japan, unemployment is at an all-time post-war high and the banking system is on the edge of a precipice.

In Britain, despite the downward trend in wages, production in manufacturing is falling, and consumer spending is only maintained by credit. Unemployment will rise sharply this year.

The slump is reinforced by the crisis in international finance, which may

---

**Inside this issue:** *Economy* Socialist solutions to global slump ■ *Special report* Industrial diseases on the increase ■ *Review article* Yeltsin's dirty war ■ *Art & Artists* Photographic spring - Henri Cartier-Bresson and Donald MacLellan ■ *Jazz* Street musician's powerful new language ■

*Theatre Flight* - Bulgakov's masterpiece at the National Theatre

*Continued from page 1*

have started in Asia but will engulf the major economies next. Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve, spoke in February of need to avoid the "vicious cycles of ever-rising and reinforcing fears" which had brought the Asian markets down.

As head of the US central bank, Greenspan chooses his words carefully. He warned that "short-term interbank lending, especially cross-border, may turn out to be the Achilles' heel of an international financial system that is subject to wide variations in financial confidence".

Warnings of this kind disguise the fact that countless millions of lives and futures are at stake and at risk in every country. Because global capitalism is careering out of control, a super-machine with no one at the controls, workers everywhere are being lined up to pay the price.

Capitalism has clearly outgrown the restrictions of its own social system – as the dominance by multi-nationals over states and governments clearly demonstrates. Now it threatens to destroy livelihoods and living standards in every country.

To put an end to the capitalist nightmare scenario of slump and war, we must redouble our efforts to build a socialist party which makes working people

conscious of what has to be done.

It has to explain how New Labour has emerged as a capitalist party within Old Labour. It is a government that puts up prescription charges while hospital waiting lists grow, but which can find extra money for rich farmers who have helped destroy whole areas of the countryside.

For anyone who doubted it, the real face of New Labour was revealed in Blair's enthusiastic support for the American plan to bomb Iraq back to the stone age.

Blair accepts that global capitalism calls the tune, and his government is a kind of management team which facilitates their interests. So when Rupert Murdoch rejects new laws banning price-cutting newspaper wars, Blair instructs his MPs to oppose them. Murdoch's company pays just 10% tax on its huge profits.

Blair's management team relies on hype and PR to obscure the fact that they have nothing to offer except a cheap-labour, flexible working economy. That is why the Millennium Dome is to be filled with pulp imagery and "experiences" sponsored by the multi-nationals.

There can be no support for this government. Those like the Socialist Workers Party who repeatedly call on people to "Tell Blair this" and "Tell Blair that", lend credibility to an already discredited government by implying that

pressure can make it serve workers' interests.

Blair's group was successful in seizing control of the party because the conditions for reforming capitalism no longer exist. Socialists, too, must acknowledge this fact of political life. *Socialist Future* is not, therefore, in favour of putting pressure on New Labour but of building an alternative, revolutionary party.

The conditions for this project are favourable. Globalisation of the economy has destroyed old certainties and undermined existing loyalties. A new party must see, for example, how the undermining of "national interests" can help win workers to internationalism, away from the nationalism that has held them back in the past.

Real political change is already under way. When Clinton and Blair tried to act as imperialist global policemen by threatening Iraq, for example, they were rebuffed in Britain, America and throughout the Middle East.

A questionnaire survey by *Socialist Future* reveals that the overwhelming majority of people asked are acutely aware that the major corporations dominate our lives. Most people support the idea of a new party to end the rule of profit. We must make 1998 the year when the idea becomes a reality.

*"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.

Send cheques or postal orders made out to: **Lupus Books at P.O.Box 942, London SW1V 2AR**

### **Car workers jobs under threat**

European unions have warned that tens of thousands of car and auto-component jobs are under threat because of over-capacity, stagnant demand and foreign competition.

The European Metalworkers Federation says that between 1992 and 1995 nearly 200,000 jobs were lost in the vehicle and body-assembly sector in Europe as employers cut costs and increased productivity. In a report on prospects for the year 2000, the EMF says: "Economic expansion will go hand in hand with a

decline in the size of the workforce." They accused manufacturers of being obsessed with price wars, and job cuts – all while new capacity is still coming on stream.

There are an estimated five million people employed directly and indirectly in the European car industry.

### **UK job exclusion zone**

Britain is the "jobs exclusion capital of Europe", according to a TUC report, which says unemployment is higher than in France and Germany, when those who are excluded from the

active labour market but want to work are added to the official jobless total.

The proportion of those classified as "inactive" but who want to work is 13% – the highest rate in the European Union and more than double the average.

The figures show that Britain's job creation record is "mediocre", the report says.

The exclusion of people from the official figures partially accounts for the fall in the official rate.

At the same time, the report adds, a high proportion of men over 25 have been unemployed for more than two years.



**Stay in touch**

We need a government which is more in touch with the people and their needs. A new party that takes account of what people want is a good idea.

J.D., Welwyn Garden City

**Formulate your own policies**

Whilst it would be unwise and highly foolish to ignore the present government and existing political entities, any new political organisation must be careful not to fall into the trap of merely reacting to government policies.

It must instead seek to formulate its own policies and not be afraid to back policies – in those rare cases where they make any sense – as well as fight them. Otherwise the group will never be able to grow or make significant changes to life in general.

Labour seemed to react to what the Tories had done, but in the end they've just become a copy of the Tories with a new name.

In the case of the Millennium dome, initially the exhibits were to be created by the people in different parts of Britain, but now they are being created just by favoured multi-national corporations.

In their present form the multi-nationals cannot be controlled by the people. They must undergo radical change. At present, they are set up to provide large amounts of money to small numbers of people. It will take some time, and must be carefully done, otherwise they will never give up their power.

C.S., Milton Keynes

**It's a one-party state**

New Labour is no longer a socialist movement. It's as if the Tories had infiltrated them. It's a one-party state really.

J.S., Luton

**Labour Party has failed**

We need a new party to represent those with left ideas, which the Labour Party has failed to do.

M.H., Leyton, E. London

**Live up to your beliefs**

I am all for the idea of a new party. I really hope you can live up to your beliefs.

J.S., Luton

**S**ocialist Future is sponsoring a project for launching a new party in 1998. The need for an alternative to New Labour has become more urgent as disillusionment with the government's policies increases rapidly. To start a discussion about what kind of party is needed, *Socialist Future* has put forward a number of basic principles upon which it would be founded.

- a commitment to socialist principles and the historical achievements of workers and revolutionaries in every country
- a commitment to lead a struggle for power as the only way to end capitalism
- a constitution that places obligations, as well as conferring democratic rights, on its members
- an understanding that Marxism as a living theory to guide political action is central to the party's work
- a leadership that is decisive, responsive and prepared to develop policies as situations change
- a united front with all those inside and outside the Labour Party who come into conflict with the Blair government
- an agreement that building a new socialist International is the way forward to meet the challenge of global capitalism
- a party programme that appeals to working people, which is based on their having control of economic, social and political life, freeing resources and technology from the profit frenzy.

On this page we publish some more responses to the idea. Why not have your say – send your views for publication in the next issue to: *Socialist Future*, PO Box 942, London SW1V 2AR or email: [sfg@sfuture.demon.co.uk](mailto:sfg@sfuture.demon.co.uk)

*Socialist* **future**

One year's subscription: 12 issues plus postage £9.50

Two year's subscription: 24 issues plus postage £17.50

Supporter's subscription: 12 issues £15.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose cheque/p.o for £

Send your orders to Socialist Future, PO Box 942, London SW1V 2AR

**The socialist alternative to Blairism**

- *global perspectives*
- *developing socialist ideas*
- *science, philosophy*
- *art, music, film, books*

# Why work makes you sick

*Industrial illness is on the increase, and even hi-tech industries can damage your health. Penny Cole reports*

**C**hanges in the economy have led to a decrease in occupational injuries but an increase in occupational illness, as employers continue to put profit before workers' health.

And because of changes in the labour market – self-employment, sub-contracting, contract and agency work – it is often no longer clear who is legally responsible for the health and safety of workers.

A series of recent court cases show the continuing dangers.

In January, Britain's miners won a historic claim against their former employers British Coal, formerly the National Coal Board. More than 100,000 former colliers with bronchitis and emphysema caused by inhaling coal dust will be seeking compensation for loss of earnings, pain and suffering.

The cost of the judgement, combined with last year's ruling in favour of miners suffering from vibration white finger, is expected to be over £1bn. It will eat up the entire proceeds from the sale of British Coal's land holdings. It is possible the government will then dip into the surplus from the miners' own pension funds, which the Tories took back into the Treasury when the mines were privatised. **Miners could, therefore, end up paying for their own compensation.**

Many of those who registered cases have died while the legal battle went on, though the miners' union has made sure their families are still able to benefit from the claim.

Some may think that industrial diseases are a hangover from Britain's industrial past but a report from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) cites increased hazards

arising from modern industrial processes using carcinogens and complex chemicals, polymers and solvents.

"These chemicals have in particular caused problems because their effect may not be seen for many years after exposure (or only after many years of exposure) and in the changed labour market, people exposed to a substance many years ago may be working in a completely different field than they were when they contracted the disease or were exposed to its cause," the report states.

As an example, the report points out that one of the job categories where there is a growing number of deaths from mesothelioma is teaching, because teachers are exposed to asbestos dust in Britain's crumbling classrooms.

**F**our thousand people die every year as a result of exposure to asbestos alone. Not only those who work with the deadly substance, but those living near where it is manufactured, or living or working where it has been used as a building material, are at risk.

Even the families of people working with asbestos are not safe. In January Susan Delancey, from Hull, backed by her union UNISON, won compensation from Newalls Insulation Company.

She took them to court when she discovered she was suffering from asbestos-induced mesothelioma. Her husband was a lagger at Newalls and she got the disease from washing out his work overalls. Newalls did not provide personal protective clothing or showering facilities.

Susan's father, uncle and brother also worked at Newalls. She said: "My life has been blighted by this deadly dust. I have

watched my brother die of a horrific lung disease and watched my sister-in-law try to bring up two children on her own. My uncle has died. My health has been damaged and my husband's health has been damaged, just because the company failed to protect us."

Another group of chemicals now found to be responsible for long-term health damage are organo-phosphates, where again UNISON has won a recent compensation case.

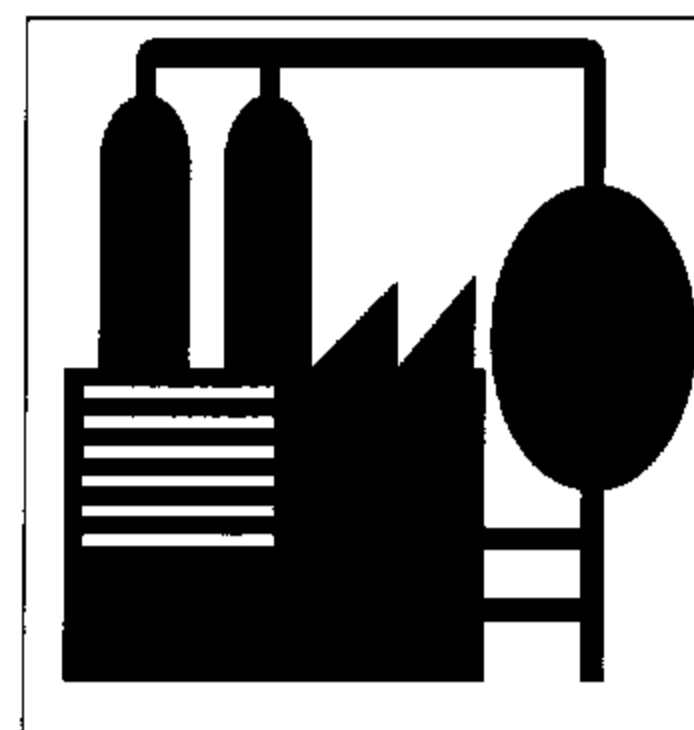
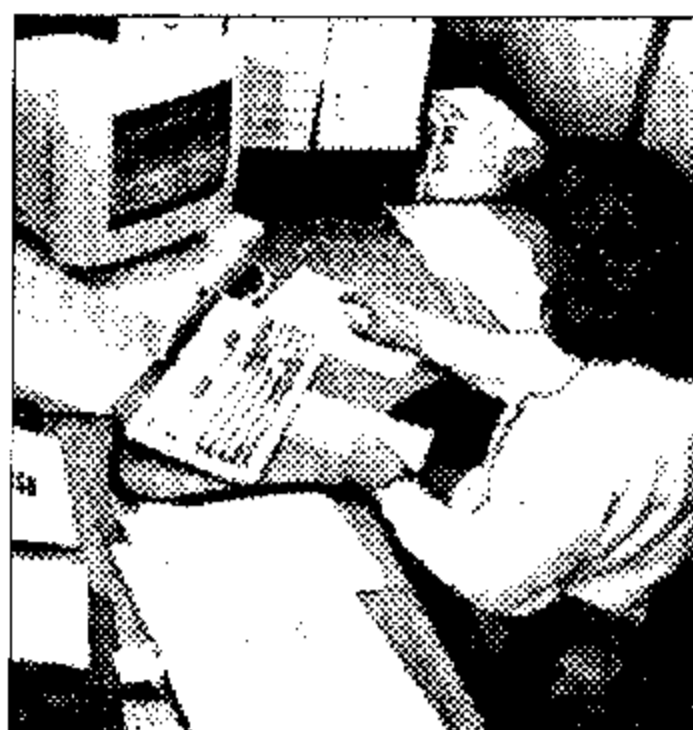
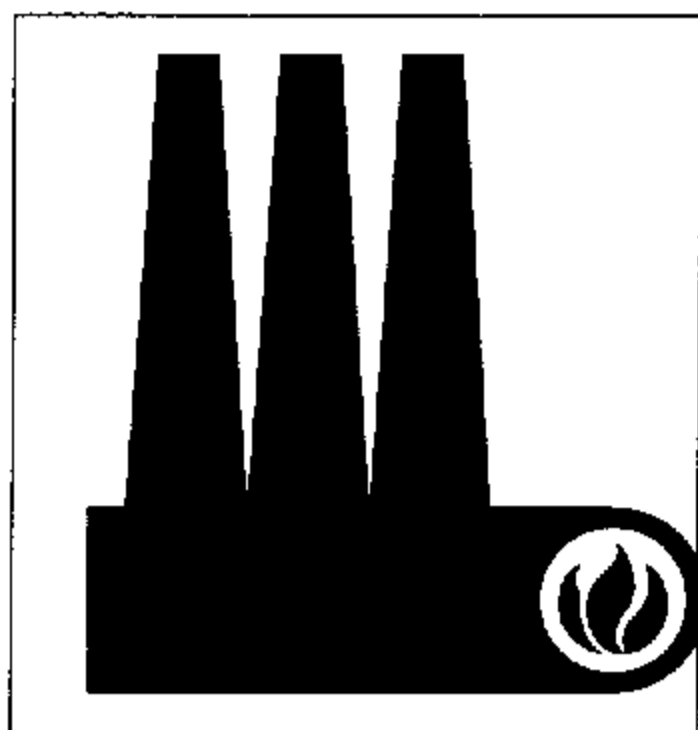
Robert Shepherd, a farm manager at Lancashire College of Agriculture, was awarded £80,000 in February after showing that exposure to sheep dip had ruined his health.

He suffered from tiredness, lethargy, irritability and loss of concentration to such a severe degree that he was unable to work. He had damage of the peripheral nerves in the extremities caused by the long-term effects of exposure to organo-phosphates.

Sheep farmers are particularly likely to suffer these ill effects, because they were required for many years by law to dip sheep in organo-phosphates every year and were not told of the health risks.

They worked without protective clothing, often becoming saturated in chemicals. The highest rate of suicides in Britain is amongst sheep farmers, and some experts believe this is largely due to the effects of exposure to sheep dip.

Shepherd said: "My job was a way of life to me and suddenly it all came to an end. I would like to see the damn stuff taken off the market. I don't want to see anyone else suffer the way I have. The manufacturers should be brought to justice. I don't feel that they have given



proper safety advice or warnings about what symptoms to look for."

It is not just industry and agriculture that damage health. New hi-tech industries are no better for those working in them. A new set of industrial diseases has arisen with the computer age.

Service sector workers are particularly at risk of musculo-skeletal damage, for example Repetitive Strain Injury. In a landmark case last year, electricity worker Coral Foster, backed by UNISON, won £42,000 in compensation.

**S**he developed epicondylitis when her workload in the mail room at National Power plc doubled in the run up to privatisation. The work involved collating piles of documents for up to seven hours a day. Mrs Foster was left with both arms in splints.

She explained: "Before privatisation I was working constantly collating documents and the pain in my arm just got worse and worse. It was only when it started in the other arm that the doctor suspected it could be work related. Management knew about my condition but despite promises did nothing to help me."

In a survey of UNISON members doing manual work, 69% reported high levels of musculo-skeletal pain.

UNISON also conducted a survey of its members in the careers service who use lap-top computers when conducting interviews and found that 62% of them were using their lap-tops for between one and five continuous hours a day.

The survey found back strain and injuries were common: 61% of careers advisers suffered from back pain, 66% from

neck pain, 68% from eyestrain, 63% from headaches, 55% pains in their arms and hands (RSI).

A process is under way where jobs which were formerly looked on as "white collar work" are being transformed into industrial, mass production processes with damaging health effects for those working in them.

Call centres, described in a recent report as "the new sweatshops", are the clearest example of this process.

"The possibilities for monitoring behaviour and measuring output in call centres are amazing to behold," says the report by Sue Fernie of the Centre for Economic performance.

"The 'tyranny of the assembly line' is but a Sunday school picnic compared with the control that management can exercise in computer telephony. Indeed, the advertising brochure for a popular call centre software package is titled *Total Control Made Easy*.

"Critics refer to them as new sweatshops and battery farms. Agents' (telephonists) activities are monitored in real time by the supervisor, whose screens display status information, such as the number of existing calls in the queue, how long the oldest call has been waiting, how many agents are on calls and how many are logged out as unavailable.

"Schedule adherence monitoring allows the supervisor to see whether agents are adhering to what they are scheduled to be doing at any given moment. There are also, in most centres, the large LED display looking down on the agents as a further reminder of their aims; the number of calls waiting to be answered in 6-inch-high letters is a Big Brother from which no-one

can hide."

Responding to the publication of the report, Sarah Adamczuk, wrote to the *Guardian* to say that when she worked as a BT call handler, "it was not unusual to receive 50 calls in one hour, with the telephone programmed to bring in a call within one second of a finished call. This work was very tiring, particularly as we had to read from a computer screen. Each call was supervised and if you didn't get in the 'closing salutation' you would be assigned to retraining".

One call centre in a London borough employs 27 agents and deals with over 400,000 calls a year. Calls must be answered within 15 seconds and the caller persuaded to part with a credit card number within 170 seconds.

The result of this pressure is that whilst wages in call centres (mostly located in the north of England and Scotland) are higher than outside, staff last no longer than 18 months before suffering "burn-out".

There are over 200,000 computer telephonists working in 7,000 call centres in Britain, half of all the call agents in Europe. There are 30 times more call centre workers in Britain than miners, steelworkers and car workers put together.

The Call Centre Association says that by the year 2000 half of all transactions will take place through call centres, and they will employ one worker in 50.

One call centre in the North East of England has an exact duplicate building situated a short bus ride away. It is silent and unused, but fully equipped with computers which could become operational in minutes. It is there just in case the other is closed down by a power cut or industrial action by workers.

# The new world disorder

*Robert Knight proposes socialist solutions to the threats posed by global slump*

**T**he global economic slump that is rapidly developing in the international economy is producing riots in Indonesia, mass demonstrations and strikes in Germany and France and resistance to lay-offs by South Korean and Brazilian workers.

All the features of the slump of the 1930s are present today: rising unemployment, falling prices, declining real wages, increased political and military tensions, the resurgence of populist and nationalist politics and deep social confrontation.

There are important differences, however. The 1930s' slump followed the defeat by fascism of the German working class, the most powerful in Europe, the triumph of Stalinism and the defeat of revolution in Spain. Today, although cruelly betrayed by its old political and trade union leaders, workers internationally are not defeated or living under dictatorship.

Capitalism has also changed. Today a few hundred giant corporations dominate the world economy, alongside an international finance system based on rapid electronic transfer of vast amounts of speculative and fictitious capital.

To grasp the global slump is to understand how it is rooted in the contradictions of producing commodities for profit alone. It is also important to understand that



*Electronic transfer of fictitious capital*

this process has an objective existence and logic, a life of its own which does not depend on individual actions or thoughts.

The onset of slump arises from the crisis of over-production of goods for sale on the open market. This tendency is built into the system because companies only survive by out-selling and eliminating rivals in the economic jungle.

Speculative investment in the 1980s and 1990s produced a glut of productive capacity and a supply of commodities far exceeding the demand world-wide. Now the crisis of over-production obliges global companies to destroy the plant and infrastructure of their competitors, large and small.

This increases tensions between trading blocs, leading to the threat of economic and eventually military conflict. Current clashes over trade between the USA and Japan are an expression of this.

Competition for profit drives forward the concentration and centralisation of capital seen in the continuing process of globalisation, through foreign direct investment, and in

mergers and acquisitions which produce ever larger trans-national corporations.

Each of these TNCs can establish ownership and control over tens or even hundreds of self-contained companies, making them more powerful than nation states. A new international accord – the Multilateral Agreement on Investment – will let TNCs sue national governments for any profits lost through laws which discriminate against them.

But the pressure to sell the increasing mass of commodities tends to drive prices down on the world market. There has been a general eight-year decline in wholesale prices for manufactured goods.

The price of oil has fallen by one third since the Asian financial crisis, to a level in real terms only slightly above that in 1974, when the oil-producing countries of the Middle East tripled their prices in response to a fall in the dollar's value.

Falling prices, in turn, oblige the producer to fuel over-production by increasing productivity. This means a

continuous revolution in the productive process, best seen in the tumultuous development of computing and telecommunications in the last decade.

Between 1990 and 1998 the improved technology for production and growth in productive capacity created oversupply conditions in the market for D-RAM chips, components at the heart of practically every computer.

With huge, but short-life investment, manufacturers are obliged to run their plant at maximum output rates, even if it isn't profitable. As a consequence, prices are at historic lows, at about half the cost of production. Prices have dropped for 16 Mbit chips from \$350 in 1990 to around \$2 in 1998.

South Korean producers hold 35% of global output, and in common with other Asian D-RAM makers are now obliged to scale back planned expansion. Mitsubishi is halting fabrication of 4 Mbit D-RAM chips in the US.

**I**n the year of the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto, the work of Marx and Engels has been completely vindicated. By establishing the historical necessity and theoretical basis for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois class system they showed that: *“Modern bourgeois society*

*with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells."*

They demonstrated that the development of modern industry and commerce "is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production", resulting in crises in which "a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces are periodically destroyed".

This tendency to self-expansion – to growth – is driven by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Marx revealed that in buying the ability to work from workers through the payment of wages, the capitalist buys the entitlement to all the value produced by those workers.

He showed that the labour of the workers is the source of all value – both that which is returned to them as wages, and the value over and above that, called surplus value, which is distributed in the form of profit for the capitalist, rent to the property-owner and interest for the financiers.

The rate of profit is calculated as the ratio of surplus value to total capital, which is made up of variable capital (the cost of labour) and constant capital (plant, machinery and infrastructure). Under competitive pressures, in the search for increased productivity, the rate of profit is continuously undermined as the amount of fixed, or constant capital increases in relation to the amount of variable capital, or labour.



**Korean workers resist the IMF**

So the capitalist is obliged to use all the means available to him to offset this tendency for profit to decrease. For example, they try to reduce the cost of fixed capital – which speeds up the search for new technologies. They may also attempt to lengthen the working day and hence increase the amount of surplus value; to increase the intensity of labour through speeding up of machines, and thus increase the number of commodities produced in a day; and to reduce wages below the value of labour-power.

**I**n search of higher profits they move capital around the world, to where production might temporarily be cheaper. In February, Delphi Automotive Systems, the General Motors' components arm, announced the closure of one of its UK plants with the loss of 500 jobs. Production is to be relocated to Portugal because the high value of the pound has caused "declining competitiveness".

All of these are no more than temporary "solutions" to the declining rate of profit since they create problems of their own.

Growth driven by credit now dominates the world economy. The vast expansion of credit has created the inter-related financial and capital markets necessary for the operation of TNCs. But digital communi-

cations networks are electronic transmission belts which are spreading financial contagion from crisis-ridden South-East Asia to the rest of the world.

The greatest shock of all facing international capitalism is in Japan, where the major banks do not have assets to cover outstanding bad loans. On February 26, the heads of three vehicle components companies hanged themselves in a Tokyo hotel. Their companies were loaded with debts and could not raise further funds from the banks.

In the 18th and 19th century the insatiable demand for the growth of capital surpassed the limits of ownership of individuals and families. This was superseded by collective, social forms of ownership such as share holding and the emergence of joint-stock companies. The process of amalgamation and predatory take-overs has produced the trans-national enterprise.

The contradictory development of capitalist society means that within its framework it has been obliged to develop highly interconnected, interdependent systems of production and distribution. These operate with sophisticated strategic planning. This socialisation of production stands in complete contrast to its narrow ownership and control.

The deployment of modern technologies and the invention and adoption of increasingly

sophisticated management techniques has enabled the rapid evolution of efficient, stripped down global companies, which are ripe for social ownership and control. Replacing the profit motive with the motive of fulfilling human need would liberate the productive forces from the anarchy of market capitalism. Instead of becoming victims of the economic process, humanity would for the first time in history become its conscious master.

**N**ew economic and social forms would emerge – collective forms of ownership accompanied by democratic control by elected boards of directors and managers, accountable to both producers and consumers.

These new social forms will have the task of planning production to satisfy the needs of the whole population of the world. A speedy reduction in the working week with no loss of pay would become possible once profit was no longer the aim of production.

Under capitalism, the market dominates the economy, leading to tremendous amounts of waste, duplication and artificial demand; under a socialist, planned economy, the market would play a supportive rather than decisive role.

Democratically-accountable planning committees will allocate the national surplus from socialist enterprises to public projects like schools, hospitals and the arts.

Capitalism is plunging inevitably and uncontrollably to slump, environmental degradation, mass starvation and war. The time has come to liberate society from the grip of this profit-feeding frenzy.

# Yeltsin's dirty war

REVIEW ARTICLE BY JOHN EDEN

This book describes the events that led to the military defeat and ultimate humiliation of a former super-power, post-Soviet Russia, by a tiny guerrilla force of Chechens in fighting that took place between late November 1994 and the summer of 1996.

It was in November 1994 that Boris Yeltsin, whose popularity as Russian president had sunk to a new low, decided to crush Chechnya's self-declared independence of 1991. A swift victory, he was told by his advisors, would boost his popularity and ensure him re-election as president in 1996.

The war against the Chechens, he considered, would be supported by the Russian masses. Caucasians, and Chechens in particular, were blamed for Mafia crimes and black marketeering. After 1991, Chechnya became a virtual free economic zone, a gateway for Western goods to enter Russia itself. Yeltsin rightly believed that reaction to a war against Chechnya from the Western powers would be muted, as they had invested so much in his regime.

But the hoped for quick victory over the Chechens proved elusive. The Russian masses turned against the war, as many young conscripts needlessly lost their lives to the determined Chechen resistance.

The mood changed to one of hope for peace and an end to the war. Yeltsin's regime then played a deadly double game – posing as peacemakers while in actual fact stepping up the terror in Chechnya, especially after the 1996 presidential elections.

It was only after the Chechen forces had defeated the Russian army in the late summer of 1996 that Yeltsin conceded the war had been a "mistake". It had led to a barbaric slaughter by the Russian army of 50,000 civilians, mainly in the capital Grozny, but in other towns and villages too.



Russian soldiers in the lunar landscape of bombed Grozny - illustration from *Chechnya, a small victorious war* Carlotta Gall and Thomas De Waal, Pan, £6.99.

Many thousands of ethnic Russians were killed in the total destruction of Grozny by rockets, as well as vacuum and fragmentation bombs, which are specifically designed to kill people.

But despite their overwhelming military superiority, the Russian army was defeated. Facing brutality was nothing new for the Chechens. Many recalled the deportation by Stalin in 1944 of the entire Chechen people to the Central Asian republic of Kazakstan.

Herded into cattle trucks, many thousands died during the journey. More died in the sub-zero temperatures when they arrived. It was only in 1957, during the Khrushchev "thaw", that the Chechens were allowed to return to their homeland.

It was this sense of injustice and the desire for national independence, which for the Chechens was a 200-year struggle, that made them such fearless fighters. Over 6,000 Russian soldiers died, and thousands more were wounded.

Many issues were involved in the war. The oil reserves of the Caspian area still compels Russia to try and dominate its neighbours, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. But its defeat in Chechnya has

weakened its presence in the area. The Chechens have *de facto* independence now, although they agreed to suspend a referendum on the issue until 2001.

Both the authors were often in the thick of the fighting and met many of the leading political and military figures on both sides. These included Shamil Basayev, whose daring raid in south Russia brought Yeltsin to the negotiating table.

The authors also met mothers of missing and dead young Russian conscripts, and survivors of brutal Russian torture camps. Their book is an excellent study of the war and offers a brief historical survey. They remain pessimistic about the future and it is clear that Chechnya's future development still depends to a large extent on the course of events in Russia itself. While it remains under the control of the pro-IMF capitalist Yeltsin regime, the prospects for economic, political and social developments in Chechnya are weakened.

Stalin's brutal nationalities policy has been replaced by Yeltsin's equally chauvinistic big power mentality. Supporting Yeltsin are Stalin's political heirs, the reactionary Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its nationalist leader, Gennady Zyuganov.

In the early years of Soviet power, Lenin insisted that the small nations and peoples of the former Russian empire had the right to complete independence, in every sense. The Chechens for a brief period enjoyed this right to self-determination.

Only a party that embraces this outlook can win the support of the masses, inside and outside Russia, and restore the struggle to build socialism in the former Soviet Union. This would undoubtedly encourage the workers of Chechnya and the whole of the Caucasus to deal with their own pro-bourgeois regimes that have emerged since 1991.



# The struggle for a Palestinian state

By our own reporter



The outcome of the struggle for a Palestinian state will not be determined by the relative strength of Israel alone, but also by the way in which the Palestinian people struggle and deal with their own internal issues, said *intifada* veteran and journalist Hisham Sharabati, speaking during a week of activities around "disputed territories" organised by the students' union of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University.

"The peace treaty signed by the PLO – the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and my representative – talked about land for peace, yet Israel is permitted to expand its settlements and extend its grip on Jerusalem."

Sharabati called for a re-evaluation of the Palestinians' method and strategy:

"The leadership of the *intifada* was part of the PLO and if the people participate more in decision-making we will make an advance," he said. "It is difficult to build a civil society in our situation. In the past, the PLO was a military leadership, and it is not easy to change."

George Rishmawi, a student from Bir Zeit university and another *intifada* veteran, spoke of being able to see Jerusalem from his village, but being unable to go there. "From Bir Zeit I can see the coast, but I can't reach it. Gaza is meant to be part of our state but I can't visit it. Yet at Har H'oma the Israelis plan to build a settlement for 40,000 immigrants. They are building two hotels there for visitors to the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations.

"Even the water on the West Bank is not

under our control. Every Israeli settler has access to seven times more water than every Palestinian. And if the Palestinian National Authority wants to dig a well, it needs a permit from the Israelis."

But without the Palestinians there can be no peace in the Middle East, he said, and the struggle must continue.

The PLO's representative in the UK, Afif Safieh, said the Palestinians had made a historic compromise in accepting that Israel should retreat to its pre-1967 border. But it is clear that Israel still wanted to have peace without making any concessions or recognising Palestinian rights. Safieh warned: "No society on earth likes to play the eternal loser", and added that the PLO would take military defensive measures if Israel tried to take back areas of the West Bank.

## Mexican government prepares fresh attack on Zapatistas

The massacre of 45 Tzotzil indigenous people by para-military groups connected to Mexico's ruling party, the PRI, in the village of Acteal in Chiapas on 22 December was "a horrifying reminder that there is still no real democracy, peace or basic human rights in Mexico", says a statement from the Zapatista Action Project. The massacre was part of a "low intensity war" against the EZLN, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, and its mainly indigenous supporters, who

rebelled against the threat to their land and communities posed by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), on January 1, 1994.

At least 150 indigenous people have been killed, dozens of villages ransacked and burnt, and 7,000 displaced since a one-sided "cease-fire" was agreed in early 1994.

While promising the world community that it will apprehend those responsible for the massacre and disarm the paramilitary groups, the PRI government has instead

taken advantage of the situation to launch an offensive against the EZLN, advancing deep into Zapatista-held territory. Over 200 foreign human rights activists and observers have been expelled, which suggests the government is preparing a major assault.

These actions are in breach of the government's own Law for Peace and Reconciliation of 1995 which specifically ruled out military intervention against the EZLN while negotiations continue.

The European Union has said a free trade agreement with Mexico will not be ratified unless the government improves its record on human rights. But there is no indication of increased pressure on Mexico by the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, though Britain currently holds the EU presidency.

There is a picket at the Mexican Embassy, 42 Hertford Street, London W1 on the first Friday of every month from 12.30 - 2 p.m.

# Photographic spring

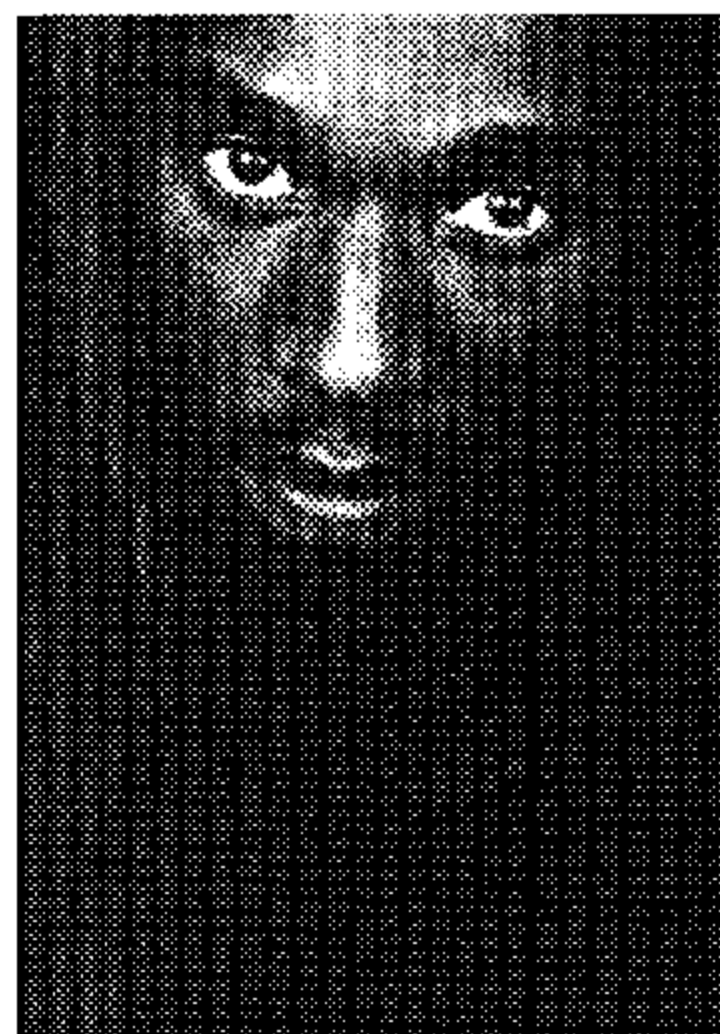
*By our arts correspondent*



London's galleries have lots of treats this spring for those who love black and white photography. The season is dedicated to the great French master, Henri Cartier-Bresson, who is 90 this year. The largest of five shows of his work is called *Europeans*, with work from over a 50-year period. Cartier-Bresson's personal style first came together in the 1940s, when he depicted a continent recovering from the war. His images span the whole of society, from the rich to the poor. He shows the Liberation of Paris in 1944, how workers enjoyed their first holidays before

and after the war, poor children on Dublin streets, rural poverty in Spain, Italy and Poland. He discovers not only documentary evidence, but the poetry and power of special moments in the people's lives. His individual portraits of famous writers, actors, musicians and political leaders captured them in relaxed moods, surrounded by familiar objects. The special qualities of each person are revealed not only in the face and body, but by the tools of their trade. Perhaps his picture of the aged Matisse holding a dove is the most touching of all.

Scottish-born Donald MacLellan's famous black Britons have a fascination of their own. This special display is being shown in the run-up to the Windrush Festival, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of the first 5,000 settlers from the Caribbean who arrived in England on the troopship MV Windrush in May 1958. Looking at MacLellan's sensitive brown on black portraits of figures like Lenny Henry, Bill Morris and Sonia Boyce, it seems we can read something about each of their lives and backgrounds through their faces and hands.



**Europeans** is at the Hayward Gallery until April 5; Henri Cartier-Bresson **Portraits** at the National Portrait Gallery until June 7; **Drawings** at the Royal College of Art until April 9; Elsewhere at the Victoria and Albert Museum until April 12. **Films** at the French Institute.

**Black Power** by Donald MacLellan at the National Portrait Gallery until June 14.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

Above: Cartier-Bresson's *Sunday on the banks of the Marne* 1938; *Dublin* 1952. Left: Donald MacLellan's portraits of Benjamin Zephaniah and Ian Hill

# Maps of the Mind

A sense of freedom as well as oppression appears in Freya Payne's etchings and constructed boxes. She delves into the recesses of her personal feelings and images that stand out in her mind. Once she visited a colliery and heard how miners once had to carry lit candles in their mouths. She has, she says, dragged this image down to the paper, and it recurs many times. It becomes a symbol for a subterranean search, for light-giving that destroys while it gives life, for gagging and loss of speech, at times the sexually suggestive.

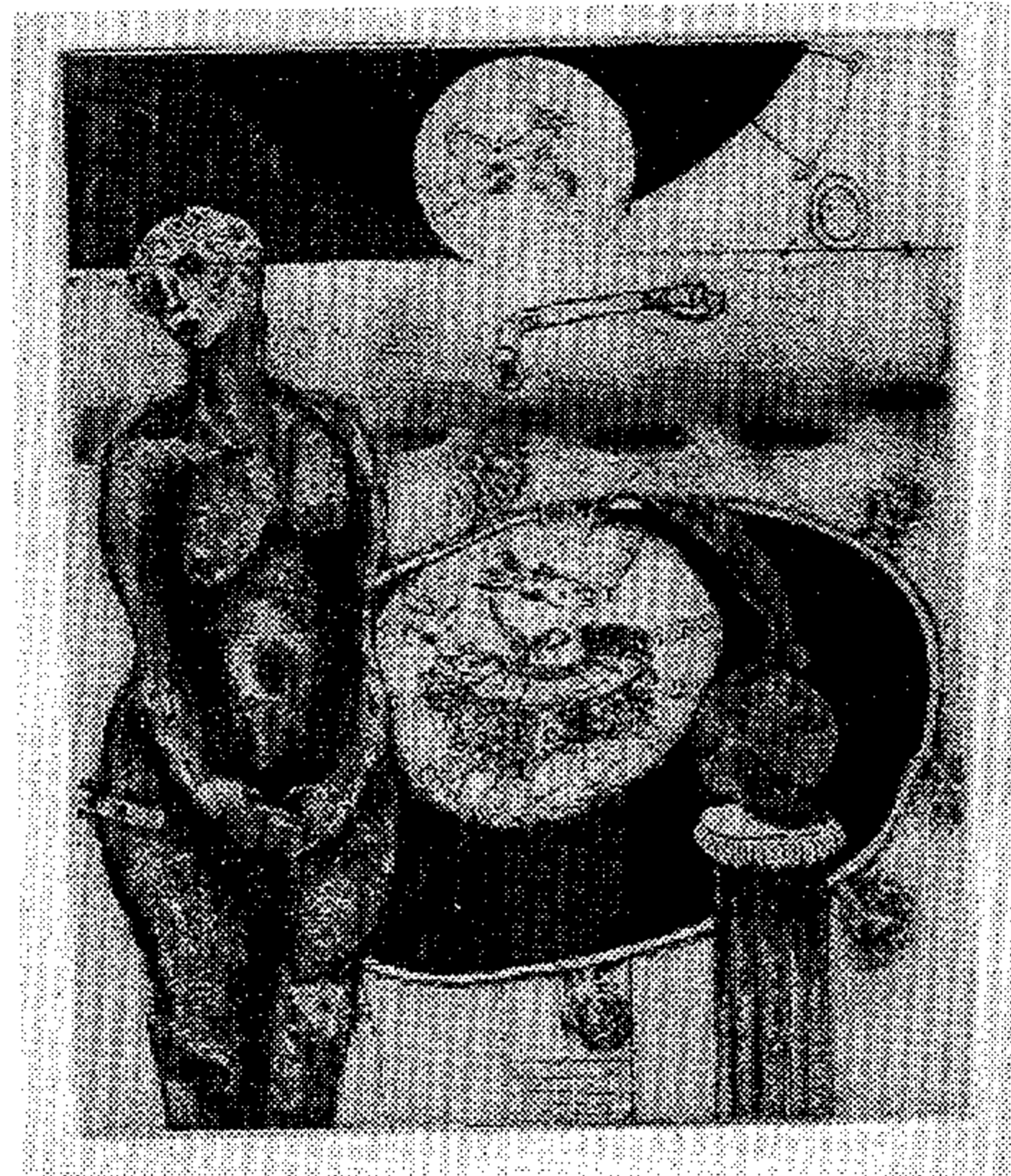
Her finely-worked etchings have a wonderful detail and intricacy, combining delicate touches with sinister forms, the brutal with the fragile. There are echoes of Goya's dream sequences: Goya also showed victims of the Inquisition with their mouths bound up.

Payne creates a map of her mental interior, a "stream of consciousness", on densely-worked plates and layered plates. Each mark acquires a greater resonance as the eye traces its way around strange spaces and places within spaces, half-physical, half-mental.

In her own words:

*"I hoped to make spaces which would consume me, taking away, fleetingly, the need of I, the maelstrom of uncertainty. As such they embody an impossible desire, something basic, intangible, sexual, spiritual and human.*

*The imagery is of nets, nests, webs and reflections. Although they speak of the concealed and protected, they also speak of the vulnerable and the caught."*



**The Fear of Getting Lost** Freya Payne. Etchings and Mixed Media at Flowers Graphics, 199-205 Richmond Road, E8 3NJ Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-6pm, until March 29. Above: *The continuing fall* (etching)

## Descaling humanity

Stephen C. Middleton reviews

*Berlin Movement from Future Years* Charles Gayle. PMP CD 90

Former street musician Charles Gayle has erupted onto the scene, thanks in part to this championing by FMP. Taking the spiritual purification rituals of Ayler and Coltrane as his starting point, Gayle wants to descale humanity and break down old edifices: "When the building is still standing at the end, we've failed," he says.

This, though, is not the mere noise of some art-rock: this is religious protest music played by a man who scuffled, homeless, on New York's streets, bringing his message to the people.

*Berlin Movement From Future Years* sees him, and his trio, play a three-movement piece. The first begins on

unrelenting tenor playing over a shifting barrage by Vattel Cherry's pulsing double bass and Michael Wimberly's thunderous drums.

The force is monumental, whether broken and bluesy or repeated upper register configurations. Whispers of Coltrane, declamatory, emerge and Ayleresque structures are audible. An extraordinary bass feature – plucking, bowing, battering – a drum solo, and hollering precede Gayle's blistering return.

*Second Movement* utilises the full squawking range of the bass clarinet – and its beautiful unison with double bass. There is a ferocious control about Gayle's playing here.

Another drum solo ushers in Gayle's startling return on tenor, with a dance, high note and fractured, then Ayleresque and alone, to a close.

*Third Movement* begins as squealing high note chaos over running bass and tumultuous drums, growing in ferocity as lower note (and hoarser) passages intrude. After remarkable bass and drum solos, Gayle returns stratospheric and shivering. It is amazing that he is able to be lucid at this altitude and both Cherry and Wimberly are heroic in accompaniment.

There is nearly 80 minutes of music on this CD – all of it astonishing. This is prayer with a sword in its hand. My flat is still attached to the house, but only just.

JAZZ

# Master of dreams

*Flight by Mikhail Bulgakov is reviewed by Corinna Lotz*

**T**he harsh reality of the Russian civil war crashes through in the first of Bulgakov's eight "dreams" in *Flight* at the Olivier Theatre. A vast building with charred walls and wiry cables springs to life, as windows fly open and lights switch on.

Civilians scuttle backwards and forwards, tossed about by gunfire and shells. They hurtle across the stage, thrown from side to side, as though dragged by the tide.

They seem helpless victims of forces they do not understand. Those responsible for the military conflict, Major General Charnota (Kenneth Cranham) and Chief of Staff Roman Khludov (Alan Howard), are even less in control, though they order hangings and shootings.

The despair and hopelessness of the White Army leaders who know they cannot win over the revolutionary Reds is the underlying force in Bulgakov's play. They are in retreat, but like the Nazi armies who followed them over 20 years later, no less vicious or cruel in defeat.

Historic change on a colossal scale is the canvas against which individual destinies are played out. It is a complex story, unfolded, not through a plot, but through eight dreams, each conjured up in Tim Hatley's superb designs.

Painfully a kind of humanity emerges through the gallows humour. It is a simpler and more naive message than one would expect, having been shown the horrors and depravity of civil war.

Black humour and irony are integral components, not cheap frills, in all Bulgakov's work. He contrasts the crazy paradoxes and accidents of fate to the simple soul of his anti-hero/hero, the dopey idealist Sergei Golubkov (Michael Mueller).

The character of Golubkov, a master of indecision, seems inspired by Voltaire's *Candide*: an innocent young man who wanders through life searching for his

lover, constantly amazed by the monstrosities of war and human life.

Bizarre accidents of fate prevail. Golubkov, who is a philosophy student, is simply returning a library book when he is caught in the crossfire between the Red and White armies.

As a medical officer, Bulgakov fought on the side of the Whites in the Russian Civil War. But his depiction of the Whites does the counter-revolution no favours at all. They are devoid of any purpose in life, living on the shell of appearances.

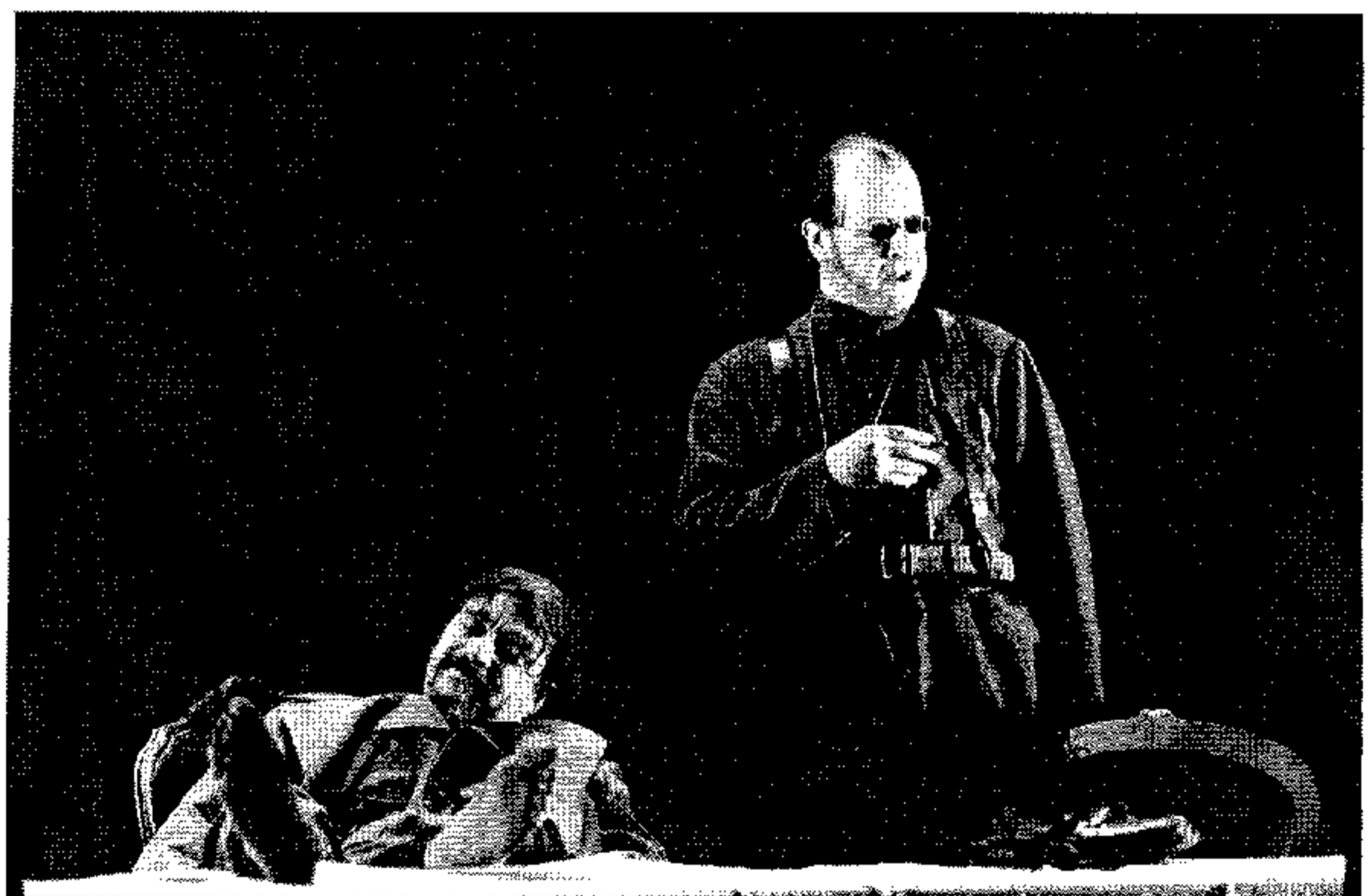
Obsessed with their own image and the mere form of things, the White leaders are more concerned with card-games and prose style than the fate of the millions of lives and deaths they were responsible for.

The White general's passion for whist is behind a major White defeat. When another officer is challenged about a phrase, he responds: "But it sounds appropriately military and all we have left is appearances." When a priest begins a prayer for the Whites, he is interrupted by someone who asks if it is really "worth bothering the Almighty?"

The ironies come thick and fast, reaching their climax in a brilliantly staged scene set in Paris. The perfidious millionaire Korzukhin and Charnota (Nicholas Jones) engage in a surreal gambling match, before a vast safe.

It is the millionaire, safe in his luxurious palace, who lets slip the truth about the war, in words which have a special resonance as the US presses for war in the Gulf. For the rich it is nothing more than "a dreadful dinner party". The suffering millions who are thrust before the guns and pressed against barbed wire, are only pawns in the service of the dollar.

*Flight* should have been first staged in Moscow in October 1928. Its daring form, and the playwright's chequered past, however, brought vicious attacks from the champions of "proletarian culture". It was pilloried by Stalinist hacks and banned. It was not staged in the Soviet Union until 1957, seventeen years after Bulgakov's death. By another quirk of fate, Bulgakov's earlier play, *The White Guard*, received protection from Stalin, and ran throughout the 1930s.



*A scene from Flight, directed by Howard Davies at the National Theatre on the South Bank, Waterloo, London until May. L to r: Richard O'Callaghan and Alan Howard*