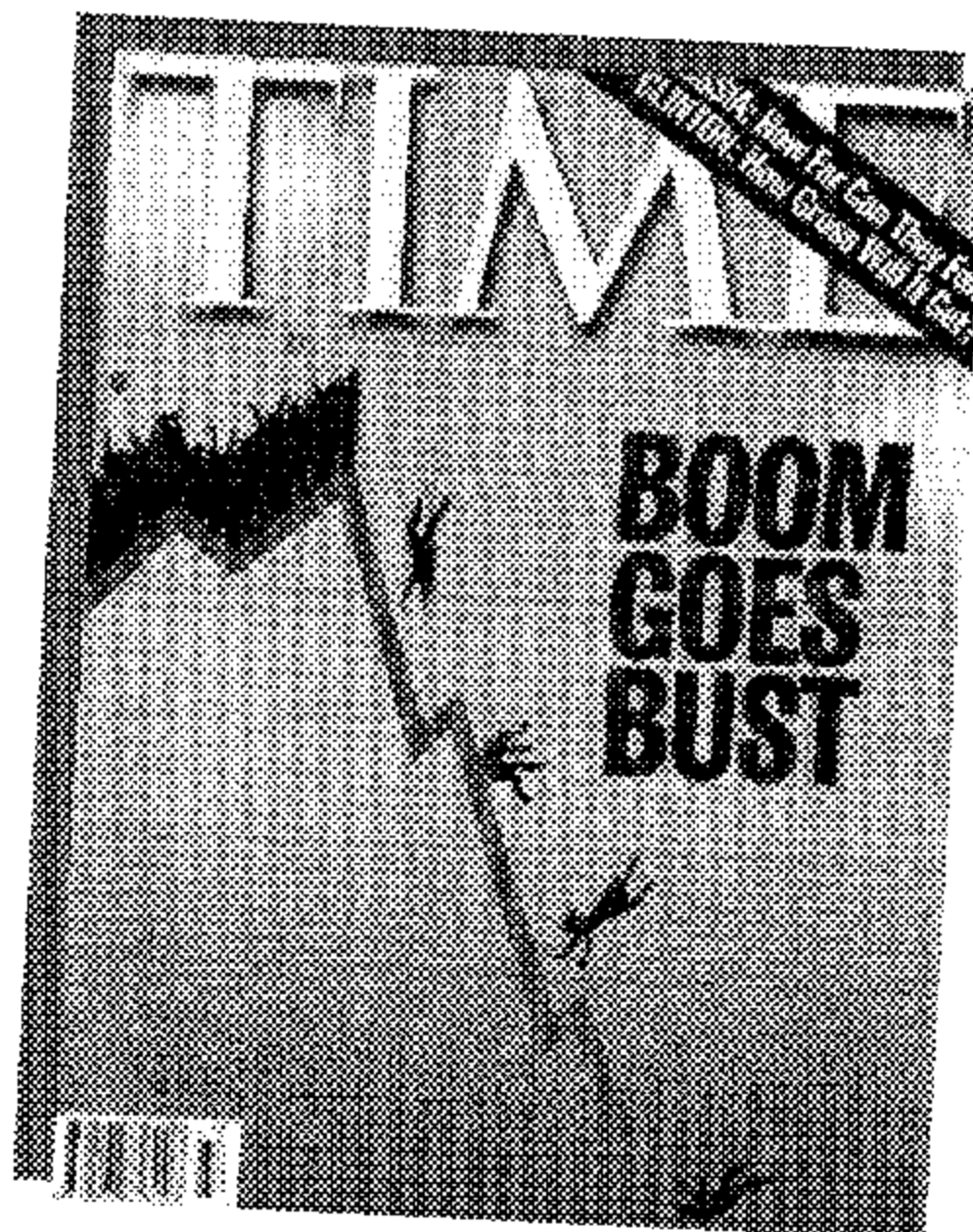


socialist future

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GLOBAL CRISIS BITES



Behind the apparent “recovery” in share prices after their September collapse, is the headlong plunge into slump in Britain and the United States as the global crisis bites.

What Chancellor Gordon Brown describes as a “slowdown in growth” is in fact a sharp reduction in both manufacturing and service sectors which has a momentum of its own.

Britain’s trade deficit has grown to record proportions while job losses are mounting in hi-tech computer industries as well as among finance and commercial workers, especially in the City of London.

The crisis is seen most clearly in car industry, where BMW has threatened to close its plants unless workers produce more, while Ford workers are already on short time and facing job cuts.

Ford chairman Sir Alex Trotman

BY THE EDITOR

blamed global overcapacity. This amounts to 80 modern assembly plants sitting idle. By 2002 surplus capacity world-wide is estimated to rise to 22 million cars.

He was speaking at the bosses’ annual conference organised by the CBI. At the same meeting, Peter Mandelson, the Trade Secretary, showed which side New Labour is on when he declared to applause: “This government is determined that ‘us and them’ will never return.”

In the United States, a growing financial crisis has left one “hedge fund” - which gambled and lost on interest rate movements - with “commitments” of up to \$900 billion. Many US banks have posted record losses as a result.

US exports have collapsed and imports have soared because Asian goods are much cheaper. The trade deficit is running 50% above last year’s levels and could reach a staggering \$300 billion in 1999.

Credit is beginning to dry up while US manufacturing has growing over-capacity. Corporate profits have fallen 2-3% in the third quarter, fatal for a system whose existence is based on continued expansion and profit maximisation.

Meanwhile, the crisis has spread to China. One of the country’s most prominent investment companies has defaulted on an international bond payment, the first time this has happened for 50 years. The company used to borrow money from Japanese and Korean banks to pay its debts. “But then the Japanese stopped lending, so there was no way for us to repay.” ■

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The social 'cohesion' fraud

MULTINATIONALS HAVE A NEW WEAPON IN THE FIGHT FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE MARKETPLACE, REPORTS SANDY SUTTON

Last month, EU President Jacques Santer, launched a Website featuring 500 case studies of corporate community involvement. BP, British Steel, Glaxo Wellcome, Johnson & Johnson and Shell are just some of the multinationals whose good works you can read about on the site.

According to the site host, the European Business Network for Social Cohesion, these corporate measures, from helping redundant employees to set up their own businesses to supporting local community groups, are designed to promote "social cohesion" across Europe.

And advocates of corporate community involvement will assure you that it is in companies' self-interest to care about "social cohesion", because their long-term success depends on it.

But some companies are more clear-cut about the short-term benefits. With pressure groups and consumers demanding ethically-grown coffee beans and oil extracted without damaging the environment, it makes business sense to do a bit of good and let the world – or at least the opinion leaders you want to influence – know about it. It's an effective way of achieving competitive advantage, an investment which will pay off in increased sales and that all-important higher shareholder value.

Take US multinational, Johnson & Johnson, which produces medicines and surgical equipment as well the famous baby toiletries. It invests more than \$300 million a year worldwide in community involvement.

In Europe its \$24 million community investment supports four areas: children, community healthcare, mental health and building management capacity within health-care organisations. J&J believes the investment helps it to achieve many business objectives, from pulling together different strands of the company to attracting and retaining high calibre employees who want to work for a company that is seen to be doing good.

More importantly, J&J's community investment is a demonstration to governments of its commitment to use its own resources to help solve social and economic problems.

These are the same governments who have to approve many J&J products before they can be sold in their countries and the same governments who are tightening their spending and looking for corporate partners to make up the shortfall.

J&J's proposed community healthcare fund for Portugal, for example, will complement government funding for community healthcare for the poor, the unemployed and immigrants.

It will pay the salaries of up to 20 healthcare professionals in local community centres and produce and distribute publicity material. The pay back for J&J's \$500,000 investment will include: brand visibility for J&J products; enhanced corporate reputation; improved links with politicians and civil servants; a

deeper understanding of key healthcare concerns of local communities; better relationships with a group of key customers – healthcare professionals.

And of course all its products will be licensed by the Portuguese government. After all what government is going to refuse to license the products of a company it is dependent on to help to deliver its healthcare services?

SmithKline Beecham, Glaxo Wellcome. They're all at it. Funding "community" and government projects all over the world that open doors to bigger sales than any advertising campaign could ever dream of – and at half the price. The UK government needs no such persuasion. It welcomes big business partners with open arms. Shell and British Aerospace and are just two cuddly companies involved in Educational Action Zones. Many more are signing up for Health Action Zones and the New Deal for Communities. It is all part of New Labour's "third way" – helping big business to help themselves. ■



MIDWIVES DELIVER DEMANDS

Midwives from King's College hospital, London Barbara Mickleburgh (left), Toni Linington and baby Becky, on their way to Parliament to campaign for better pay and conditions for themselves and their colleagues throughout the country.

Schroeder rides to the rescue

The election defeat of Kohl in Germany by the Social Democrats and the coming to office of former Communist Party leaders in Italy was greeted by the *Financial Times* under the headline "Europe's Red October". It commented: "It is symbolic of a remarkable change in the political complexion of the continent: the centre-left is back in power in 13 of the EU's 15 states."

To soothe the worried brows at the *Financial Times*, it has to be said that there is nothing socialist about the new governments. What the changes do manifest, however, is the political crisis in ruling class circles and the coming social upheaval.

The old capitalist parties are discredited because they tied their policies to



Schroeder

monetarism and the free-market forces of global capitalism. Workers and professional people all over Europe have now rejected these reactionary governments and what they stood for. To the rescue of European capitalism ride

Schroeder in Germany, Jospin in France and D'Alema, the ex-Stalinist now blessed by the Pope and the Christian Democrats in Italy.

They want to return to the pre-globalisation days of Keynesian economic policies, reflating their economies with public spending to boost employment. This is a doomed perspective in the context of a world slump and financial crisis. It has already drawn opposition from European bankers concerned about the fate of the single currency due to be launched on January 1. What the shifts in Europe herald is not a new dawn for reform-minded governments, but deepening social and political instability. This is producing real opportunities for revolutionary change.

Paul Feldman, Editor

The end of an era in Sweden

Our correspondent in Stockholm, Pär Engholm, comments on the election results

"We continue to govern" was Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson's first comment on the results of the recent general election.

He had just led the Swedish Social Democrats to their worst result since the 1920s, but seemed content with the result. With only 32% of the votes, the SDP has come a long way from the time when it attracted support from nearly half the electorate.

Apart from the collapse of the SDP vote, two other major electoral shifts are worth noting – increased support for both the former Communist Party, now called the Left Party, up from 6.2% to 12% of the vote, and the Christian Democrats, up from 4.1% to 11.8%.

The parties of the "middle ground" were virtually wiped out – the Centre Party and the

liberal People's Party gained only just over the 4% threshold required to enter parliament.

This polarisation and the fact that so many people chose not to vote at all, may be interpreted as a general distrust of politics. More significant is that the distance between the public and the more established parties has now reached breaking point.

The phenomenon is most obvious in the SDP, which in many respects is a Sweden in miniature, where the leadership constantly abuses the mandate of its members. On nearly every question of central concern the leadership chooses some form of "pragmatic", and more business-friendly policy.

In many cases this has left the Social Democrats unable to reach important decisions, most conspicuously on the

question of the EMU and the European currency. The leadership supports Swedish entry but, since a majority of the SDP members and voters are against such a membership, the decision is pushed into the future. The breakthrough for the ex-Communist Party and the Christian Democrats can be seen as expressing the weariness of the public with the hollow speeches of politicians who do not listen, and a protest against political issues being reduced to a matter of manipulation and manoeuvres. The pseudo character of the electoral debate was noticeable: the crisis in the international financial markets was hardly discussed, the crisis for democracy in America was not mentioned nor the turmoil in the former Soviet Union.

It seems the elections mark

the end of an era. The long reign of the Social Democrats, beginning in 1932, has now definitely come to an end. The so-called Swedish or Scandinavian model, the "third way", has run into the ground.

Furthermore, the elections are part of a more comprehensive pattern in European politics, where the architects of the top-down managed European Union increasingly are losing in confidence and in country after country, voters are searching for something new.

On the whole the Swedish elections were a powerful sign of a lack of confidence in the established parties, a vote of censure against a despotic and arrogant political and economic élite deciding socio-economic and political policies over the heads of the people and often against their will. ■

Watch what you buy!

The extreme instability of financial markets and the attempts of world leaders to control them have raised burning questions about the viability of the capitalist system itself. Not too surprisingly, this has led to a renewed interest in Marxism.

Karl Marx, the German revolutionary who wrote his monumental work *Das Kapital* in the last century, was the first thinker to reveal the basic laws underlying the system.

He showed how capitalism functions, especially the role of labour as the only source of value, and its need for constant expansion and profit maximisation. Marx also demonstrated how capitalism arose historically from an earlier social system and it was full of contradictions that undermined it and created the conditions for social revolution.

As more and more people question the basis of capitalist society, thirsting for new ideas and explanations, a group of political fraudsters hailed by the media as "Marxists" has suddenly reappeared.

Marxism Today magazine was founded in the 1950s by the British Communist Party and used to put a gloss on Stalinism in the USSR. In the late 1970s it was taken over by a group who rejected Marx as a revolutionary and themselves moved sharply to the right. Leading this group were historian Eric Hobsbawm and writer Martin Jacques.

After the Tory election victory of 1979, they trumpeted the "end" of the working class movement, hailed the "success" of Thatcherism, and set out to re-make Labour as a party which could appeal to anyone. This outlook influenced Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, whose views were close to those of Jacques. In a 1983 interview in *Marxism Today*, Kinnock talked of the "need for modernisation in a lot of attitudes in the Labour Party".

Kinnock, who described Hobsbawm as

Marxism Today is in clear breach of the Trades

Descriptions Act, writes Anna Tate

"this most sagacious scholar", carried out a sweeping witch-hunt within the Labour Party to "cleanse" it of members of the Militant group. It was the beginning of the road to New Labour.

The dust had scarcely settled on the violent attack on trade unionism at Rupert Murdoch's printing plant at Wapping, when Jacques was already taking the media baron's shilling, writing for the *Sunday Times* and *The Times*.

From being admirers of Thatcher it was not a big step to becoming the most servile apologists for capitalist triumphalism when Yeltsin overthrew Gorbachev in the autumn of 1991. *Marxism Today* saw Yeltsin's coup and the subsequent break up of the Soviet Union as the right moment to shut down their magazine. They agreed with the Tory press that it was "the end of communism".

The destruction of "Old Labour" first put forward by the editors of *Marxism Today* now became the explicit agenda of the Blair group, and in 1993 Demos, the "independent think tank" was set up to help facilitate the emergence of New Labour.

Its director was Geoff Mulgan, who had been a leading writer for *Marxism Today*. Demos operates by receiving "sponsorship" from a number of top global companies, including Cable and Wireless, Tesco, National Westminster Bank, Pearson, Shell, Northern Foods and British Gas.

Mulgan is now pursuing a career at the heart of the New Labour government. He has a post as a leading member of the Number 10 policy unit, which advises Blair and his Cabinet. Other Demos researchers also work directly for the government in a variety of capacities. They include Tom Bentley (special advisor to David Blunkett), Benn Jupp (pensions review), Norman Warner (special advisor to Jack Straw), Michael Barber (Department of Employment and Education).

But Hobsbawm and Jacques are now disappointed with some of the actions of the political monster they helped create, and a one-off issue of *Marxism Today* in October received widespread publicity for its mild criticisms of New Labour.

Hobsbawm's complaints got star billing in *The Guardian*, which ridiculously described him as "Britain's foremost Marxist". Yet Hobsbawm's open apology for the status quo has made him the Establishment's most lauded historian. He has a special knack which is to twist "Marxist" ideas in such a way as to render them harmless.

In his article, Hobsbawm harks back to a mythical "Golden Age" of post-war capitalism and recommends a return to Keynesian economics as a solution to today's global crisis of capitalism. More cynically, Hobsbawm tries to lull his readers into a false sense of complacency.

"Let's not use the rhetoric of extremes," he says soothingly. "The worst economic scenario is not 'catastrophe', and the best is not paradise," claims the man made a Companion of Honour by the Queen.

But wasn't Thatcherism a catastrophe which pauperised millions? Perhaps things are not catastrophic from where Hobsbawm is sitting, but tell that to the

worker who has just lost a job at Fujitsu or Siemens. Tell that to the homeless, to those who suffer outrageous mistreatment by the British state, or survive on meagre state benefits. Is it not dishonest that a historian of the 20th century does not warn about the social and political consequences of economic crash and slump? After all, the Wall Street crash of 1929 was followed four years later by Hitler's seizure of power in Germany.

Hobsbawm pretends such "extremes" cannot recur in today's world. How Marx

would turn in his grave to read this kind of nonsense under the title of "Marxism". What do Hobsbawm and company want from New Labour? Not much, as Jacques makes clear. He describes the government as "competent" and "compassionate" and insists: "The scale of this government's achievements is impressive."

All Jacques wants is for Blair to take the plunge and abandon the idea that "globalisation cannot be controlled or tamed". What faith in capitalism! Jacques will show how to tame the anarchy and

chaos that makes capitalism what it is.

All in the name of Marx, whose whole life was dedicated to demonstrating the need for capitalism to be overthrown, not reformed. *Marxism Today* is a clear breach of the Trade Descriptions Act!

Hobsbawm and Jacques have set out to turn Marx into a reformist like themselves. No wonder they are the darlings of the media. Meanwhile, despite their sterling efforts, global capitalism is plunging irresistibly into slump.

The real Marx will have his day yet. ■

GET YOUR COPY OF THE PROGRAMME AND JOIN THE MOVEMENT

The Movement for a Socialist Future was launched on October 1 and brings together all those who support the plan to launch a new Party in 1999 to take away the power and privileges of the minority who control our lives.

Who can join the Movement? Anyone who supports its draft policies, which are aimed at securing mass democratic ownership and control of economic, social, cultural and political life.

The founding document says: "We have reached a turning point in global history which brings with it grave dangers for humanity as well as great opportunities to take control of our lives and create a new future for society."

It describes the global economic crisis and the collapse of the "free market economy", and demonstrates how production could be reorganised for need and not profit.

Members of the Movement will have the chance to take part directly in the founding of the new Party next year. In the meantime, they meet locally and elect committees to take charge of building up support for the Movement in their area.

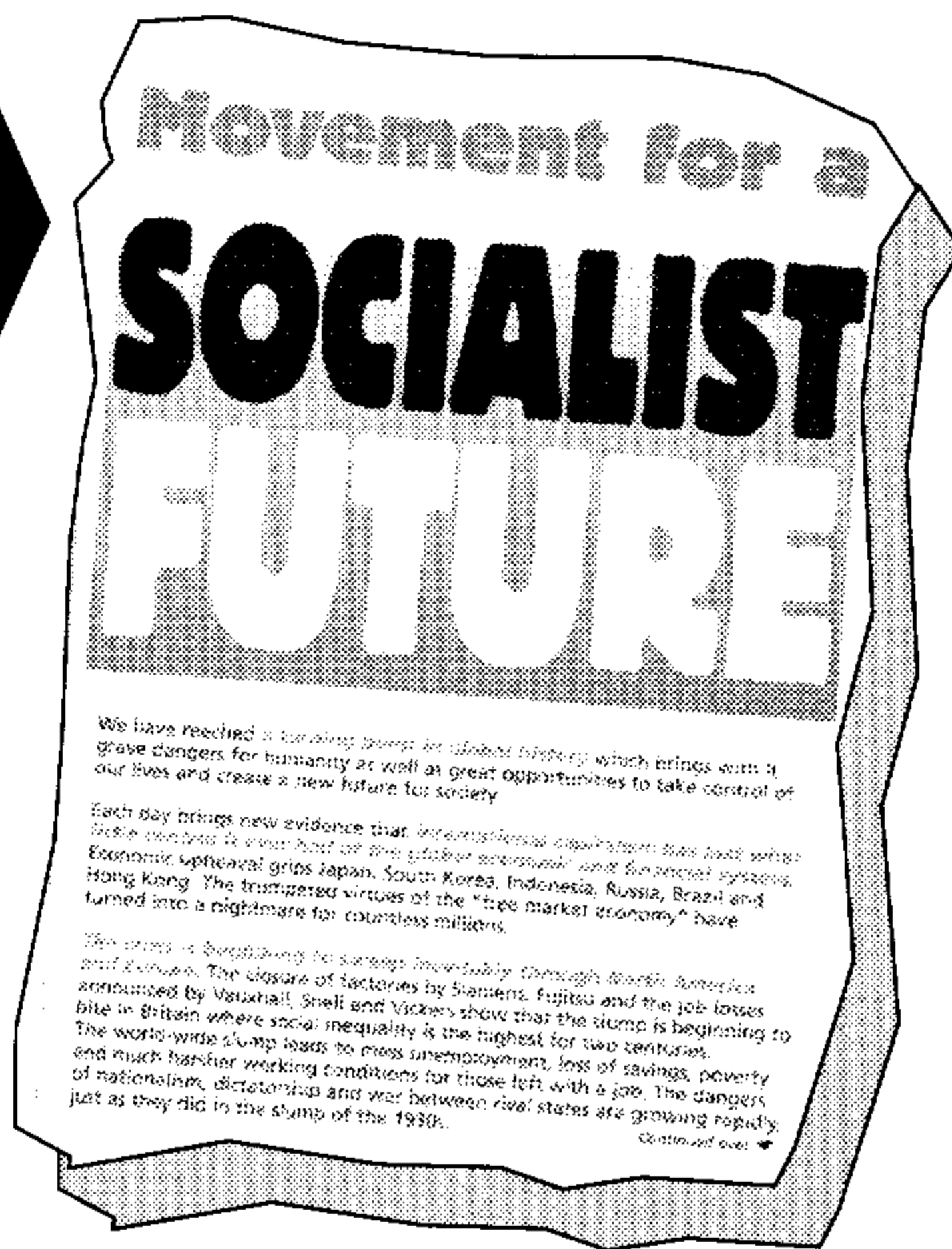
Each area sends a representative to a national Steering Committee, which has overall responsibility for the project. The Steering Committee will help you set up local branches.

A monthly subscription based on what members can afford goes towards financing the campaign for a new Party, which already has a magazine, *Socialist Future*.

Members of the Movement have equal rights in discussing what kind of party should be launched, its aims, constitution and programme.

A national conference of the Movement for a Socialist Future will take place in 1999 to make the final decisions about the creation of the new Party.

The Movement will also seek allies in other countries to form



an international organisation to campaign for global socialist change. Capitalism deliberately fosters doubts about the possibility of social change, with its emphasis on the individual and the permanence of the system. The Movement challenges this scepticism by developing its own ideas and theories. By encouraging independent ideas and policies, it will win the support of the vast majority to take power into their own hands.

Write today to: Movement for a Socialist Future, PO Box 942, London SW1V 2AR or e-mail msf@sfuture.demon.co.uk
Visit our Website at www.sfuture.demon.co.uk

UPRISING CHALLENGES GLOBAL OIL GIANTS

An armed uprising is challenging the grip of the oil multinationals on the Niger river delta. Shell, the biggest operator, now admits it can no longer guarantee supplies of Nigerian crude oil.

In the most recent action, protesters seized two helicopters from a Shell-owned helipad and also took control of a nearby oil rig belonging to a foreign contractor working for the company.

Groups of youths armed with automatic weapons, boarded 10 relay stations which pump oil to export terminals. Over a fifth of the country's oil output of two million barrels per day has been halted.

This month sees the third anniversary of the execution of writer and environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was hanged on trumped-up charges by Nigeria's military government with eight other leaders of the Ogoni land movement. Shell could easily have saved him, but did nothing.

Saro-Wiwa had seen the Ogoni's territory destroyed by pollution and demanded an end to the ruthless exploitation of oil and compensation for the Ogoni. Protests have now spread from Ogoniland to other parts of the Niger delta, where impoverished communities are demanding a greater share of the oil wealth that accounts for more than 90% of Nigeria's export income.

The youth groups who are leading the



armed actions are demanding an end to their exclusion from the country's political process. Although rich in oil, the Niger river delta states are among the poorest and most neglected in Nigeria. Within sight of multi-million dollar oil installations, villagers live with no water, no power, no schools and no roads.

Horrific explosion

The horrific results of this poverty were seen last month when 700 people were burnt to death after a leaking pipeline exploded. They were filling containers with petrol when an accidental spark set fire to it.

The Nigerian government has said there will be no compensation for the victims, and claim the fire was started deliberately. Some of the most seriously injured people from the village of Jesse did not go to hospital, fearing they would be arrested. Others have discharged themselves from

**Rebel youth groups are demanding a say in their government and a share in the oil wealth pouring out from their land –
Kate McCabe reports**

hospital while still very sick.

BBC correspondent Hilary Andersson found one woman, hiding behind her hut with half her body covered in burns, a breeding ground for infection. When the Red Cross finally convinced her to go to hospital it was too late. Outside the hospital Andersson heard a man who had lost three sisters and his mother, scream: "I want to die too. There's no one left."

The dead were buried in a mass grave. Doctors lack medicine and hospital beds for the 300 survivors and some of the injured were not treated for days. Few offers of help have come from either inside Nigeria or abroad.

Environmental damage

The Niger delta fans out into hundreds of square miles of swamp, threaded with waterways and ringed with fishing villages, some of which can only be reached by boat.

Oil has brought very little development in its wake. Once a new pocket is found, a well is sunk, a pipeline is laid and the taps are turned on; the oil flows out under its own pressure. Roads, railways and a local workforce are not required.

But over the years the industry has devastated the delta's land and communities. Leaking pipelines have spoiled farmland and polluted fishing.

The areas of swamp the pipelines pass through are isolated and communications

are poor, so that it may take days before the oil companies even know about a leak. Food crops are damaged, farmland made unusable, and communities suffer health problems caused by continual gas flaring.

The oil companies and government claim money is reinvested in the area, but residents say that while a little may reach their state capital, it stops there and they see no benefit.

Oil-rich, but petrol-poor

It is not only the population of the delta who receive no benefit from Nigeria's oil wealth. Incredibly, the whole country is currently suffering terrible fuel shortages.

Soldiers used force last month to keep order at petrol stations in the capital, Lagos. Queues of cars stretched outside filling stations with fuel to sell in this city of eight million people.

Civil servants held a protest march when the bus company ran out of fuel and police used tear-gas when youths burned tyres on the road in protest at the shortages. Troops now escort petrol tankers to filling stations and transport costs have rocketed, pushing up the price of food. Business is grinding to a halt.

Nigeria has four state-owned oil refineries which are badly-maintained and run-down through lack of investment. Managers say that lack of government funding means they are unable to cover the cost of production, let alone maintenance of plants.

The refineries are owned by the giant Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), which holds the state interest in all sectors of the oil industry, from exploration and production to refining, pipelines, marketing, foreign sales and petrochemicals. It is widely seen as riddled with corruption and a political tool. Its main role is channelling cash from the multinationals to the ruling elite.

Now the military government is under pressure from the World Bank to sell off the oil production sector to the private sector, scrapping subsidies and allowing prices to be regulated by the market.

Riches pass by the poor

Since independence, military regimes have ruled for 25 out of 36 years. They have failed to ensure any lasting benefit to the country's poor from oil, though it is



Ken Saro-Wiwa

the 10th largest producer in the world, with 90 million tons of crude per year flowing through its pipelines.

Oil was first discovered in the Niger delta in 1956 by Shell-BP, which at that time had the sole exploration concession. Other oil companies quickly moved into the area, both on and offshore.

The civil war in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, when the eastern province of Biafra tried to break away and form a separate country, disrupted production. But the end of the war coincided with the rise in the world oil price, and income

from exports soared.

Nigeria joined OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in 1971, and the Nigerian National Oil Corporation, now the NNPC, was set up. The government acquired equity shares in all the international oil marketing companies and took over the oil refineries.

This took place at a period when the struggle for self-determination was still advancing, and newly-independent countries sought ways to support their national interests against the interests of imperialism.

But the collapse of oil prices and the globalisation of the world economy have coincided with the development of ruling classes in the developing countries whose interests are identical with those of imperialism.

Since the death of dictator General Abacha, the new military rulers have tried to change tactics, promising a return to civilian rule. The new draft constitution proposes increasing the proportion of revenues which go back to the producer areas from 3% to 13%.

Shell and other oil companies welcome the idea, hoping it will put a stop to the unrest. What the movement in the delta shows, however, is that is time to end the exploitation of the region by the oil giants once and for all. ■

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Springtime of a revolutionary

How it all began by Nikolai I. Bukharin, Columbia University Press, \$28.95,
with an introduction by Stephen F. Cohen

Reviewed by Penny Cole

In Russia, manuscripts have a life of their own and the story of the suppression, preservation, discovery and publication of this novel is an adventure in itself.

For this is the famous "prison novel" of Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin, the youngest of the Bolshevik leaders and "the darling of the party", according to Lenin. He was 29 years old in 1917. After the revolution he was editor of *Pravda* and President of the 3rd International.

The book's existence was rumoured, but nobody believed it could have survived. It was written during the year Bukharin spent in the Lubyanka prison between his arrest in February 1937 and his execution in March 1938, after the last and most horrific of Stalin's show trials.

How was he able to write not only this tale of his childhood and youth, but also a philosophical treatise, a review of modern culture and a book of lyric poems under these terrible conditions? How was he able to persuade his jailers to let him have pen and paper? And how did the manuscripts remain hidden for nearly 50 years, only to re-emerge, as he had hoped, to speak to a new generation?

Professor Stephen Cohen's introduction gives the answers, and is almost as gripping to read as the novel itself. Amazingly, the books were found in Stalin's personal archive, where they were "suppressed and preserved" by order of the dictator.

Stalin's papers are now part of the Presidential Archive, which is increasingly difficult to access: "Sometimes called the Kremlin Archive, it passed in 1991 from Gorbachev's control to Boris Yeltsin's... none of its unique remaining materials... can be seen except on instruction of the president or his chief of staff. Nor does this zealously



guarded citadel of secrets make known a list of its full holdings..." writes Cohen.

When Yeltsin seized power in 1992, archives opened for the first time during glasnost were slammed shut. Instead of historical truth, crude state-sponsored myths are propagated, for example that Lenin was the "cause" of Stalin, or that the Old Bolsheviks were corrupt and ambitious in-fighters.

Bukharin's main purpose in his prison writing was to send a message to the future dispelling such myths, and explaining what kind of people the Bolsheviks really were and what they set out to achieve.

Bukharin was allowed to write in prison because of a letter he wrote to Stalin saying he simply would not be able to function if he could not. Cohen correctly interprets this as a threat by Bukharin that he would not co-operate in the coming show trial if he was not given pen and paper. He wrote late at night, and in the early morning, between interrogations.

What he wrote was sent straight to the dictator, as were thousands of other

bloodstained manuscripts. Cohen notes that Stalin would write on them: "Send to the archive", or more chillingly "Let this material lie deep in the archive". Cohen adds: "Thus his personal papers grew year by year and decade by decade into a vast and long impenetrable repository of forbidden history and culture."

Four letters to Stalin are, of all the Bukharin material found in the archives, the most painful to read, says Cohen: "Filled with lachrymose professions of true devotion and love for his persecutor, along with fantasies of being freed to live under a pseudonym... the long, densely rambling letters can also be interpreted more complexly, particularly in the light of other evidence that Bukharin remained a fighter to the end, as part of a cruelly inequitable negotiation."

This is a perceptive and correct analysis of Bukharin's strategy in relation to Stalin, not only during his imprisonment but throughout the 1930s, right up to and during his trial.

The letters are the last, and most desperate examples of attempts by



Bukharin and his supporters to persuade Stalin to permit them to act as some kind of "loyal opposition".

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin backed Bukharin's political line in return for his support on organisational and party questions. The main conflict was how to deal with food shortages and hunger. Trotsky and his supporters called for a planned development of collective farming and tighter control over existing food production and distribution.

It is a terrible irony that Bukharin thought of himself as a "humanist socialist" and believed Stalin would pursue a more conciliatory path in relation to the peasants than Trotsky. Having expelled Trotsky and his supporters from the party, and imprisoned many of them, Stalin was forced by the growing hunger in the cities to recognise that a new farming policy was essential. He carried through a ruthless and violently distorted version of Trotsky's policy. Millions of peasants were jailed and shot, and famine killed around around 10 million people during forced collectivisation.

Bukharin was horrified, but continued his relations with Stalin, accepting ever more shameful compromises and greater personal humiliation in the hope of keeping some influence and preventing some deaths. This policy of remaining an opponent of Stalin's in private, but an ardent supporter in public, only served to strengthen the dictator's grip on the country and party.

During his trial, Bukharin's strategy



Opposite Bukharin is third from the right, second row, with a group of exiles in Arkhangelsk, 1911. Above left Bukharin with his father Ivan and brother Vladimir in the mid-1920s. Above with Stalin and Voroshilov with conference delegates, 1927.

took on an aspect of heroism it did not possess in earlier struggles.

In his evidence he agreed to the words "counter-revolutionary" "terrorist" and other terms of abuse heaped on him by the prosecutor Vyshinsky, but denied every specific crime invented by his persecutors, saying he had no knowledge of them. Finally in one devastating aside, he sent a clear message to the world that the whole trial was a witchhunt, saying: "The confession of the accused is a medieval principle of jurisprudence."

By the time of his arrest, Bukharin was weak from the effects of a hunger strike and it is amazing he was able to write at all. Unable to write about his present, he wrote instead about his past.

He was the son of two teachers. His father was a romantic, Chekhovian figure – the kind of man who "goes out for sausage and comes back with a canary". He was driven out of teaching because of his liberal atheist views.

Bukharin describes his father's desperate attempts to make a success of a career as a civil servant in a distant and backward province, joining the compulsory drinking and gambling bouts of local worthies and drinking ever more to stifle his disgust.

In spite of these attempts to fit in, he is accused of being sympathetic to the Jews – dangerous liberalism in a period of

officially-sponsored pogroms. Replaced by an enthusiastic anti-Semite, he returns with his family to Moscow and terrible poverty.

The young Bukharin is a brilliant scholar but nature is his passion. His bedrooms are constantly filled with animals, birds and plants. The Russian countryside, teeming with vibrant life in summer and refreshing chilly beauty in winter offers relief from the suffocating poverty at home.

Bukharin writes with a touching attention to the detail of family life and the tragedies of poverty and sickness. He communicates the urgent necessity his generation felt to take up the fight against Tsarism. They saw themselves taking up the struggle from where earlier democratic movements like the Decembrists, and then *Narodnya Volya* (the People's Will) had left off. But they went far beyond the old liberal dream of parliamentary democracy in Russia and struggled instead for socialism.

As they move into adulthood, Bukharin and his friends enter the debates between Marxists and Social Revolutionaries about the respective roles of workers and peasants in the coming revolution; they read illegal literature and then write it. Bukharin is drawn to the work of Lenin and to Marxism – and there the book ends.■

Far more than just pretty faces

by Corinna Lotz

John Singer Sargent led a nomadic life. Born in 1856 in Florence to American parents, he grew into a man whose only real home was the world of art.

He spent his life in various parts of Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East. In later years he travelled back and forth between Europe and America.

Thanks to this display his whole career can be seen and evaluated for the first time.

Sargent is perhaps best known for his magnificent portraits of high society personalities. He had an acute perception of individuals created through a dazzling painterly technique. But there are other facets to his achievement.

A tantalising opening, the early *Wineglasses*, is a sparkling example of the artist's "Impressionist" style, painted in France at the age of 19.

Sargent learned quickly from his contemporaries how to paint light falling and shimmering on different surfaces, penetrating through leaves, lattice-work and reflecting off silver and glass.

He was only 22 when he made an accomplished scene of women collecting oysters on a beach, capturing the effects of light and water on different surfaces. He went on to probe the extremes of white and black, in a number of highly experimental compositions.

Sargent's view of Venice in a grey mist from the early 1880s by itself makes this show worth a visit. He loved the city for the uncertain mystery of its inhabitants, its narrow streets and palaces and the shimmering water of its canals.

Still in his early 20s and by now living in Paris, Sargent began to paint a series of breathtaking society portraits. His study of an American adventuress in black and white – *Madame X* – caused such a scandal that he left Paris for London in 1886.

He had a genius for capturing the nuances of his sitter's personality, not only in his or her face, but by way of gestures, clothing and surroundings. This is



orchestrated with a constantly varied positioning of his subject's body on the canvas.

He did not repeat formulae, but constantly invented different approaches. This ability, together with his control of oil as a medium, makes him one of the truly outstanding artists of the late 19th century. His work could be described as gilding the lily of the rich and famous. But he has a piercing psychological insight

and sharp wit as well as a virtuoso technique. He gives the exclusive world of the upper classes a fragility and tension which takes us beyond their luxurious silks and satins. Sargent made an image for itself of the powerful new ruling class in the United States which challenged that of Europe.

As the 19th century drew to a close, Sargent evoked the decadent opulence of his clients in group portraits.



He infused these masterpieces with a baroque dynamism and rhythm, in strange contrast to the laid-back disdain of the aristocracy he depicted. *Mrs Carl Meyer and Her Children*, for example, spiral through the canvas and seem to burst out of the picture plane.

But for Sargent all this splendour was not enough. He was not satisfied with showing the face of high society, whether in Paris, London or the United States of America. He made intimate studies of friends and fellow painters, including Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James and Monet. His impression of French painter Paul Helleu sketching, for example, is deceptively casual. The rapid but relaxed

touches of the brush are underpinned by a powerful structure as well as sharp humour.

The last 30 years of Sargent's life were devoted to a grand mural project for the Boston Public Library. It is difficult to judge his success without seeing the original. But his struggle to try something so different and challenging is admirable in itself.

Sargent's desire to express a great political and historical theme did succeed brilliantly, however, in his vast canvas called *Gassed*. A complete departure from his society portraits, it shows the artist's shocked reaction to the suffering he saw after a mustard gas barrage hit soldiers in

World War I. It goes far beyond his personal feelings and is a great indictment of war itself. ■

John Singer Sargent at the Tate Gallery, Millbank until January 17. Admission £6/£4. Open daily 10am-5pm.

PICTURES

Opposite page top *Paul Helleu Sketching with his Wife 1889*, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Museum Collection Fund. Opposite page below *Madame Gautreau Drinking a Toast c. 1883*. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. This page above *Gassed 1919*, Imperial War Museum, London.

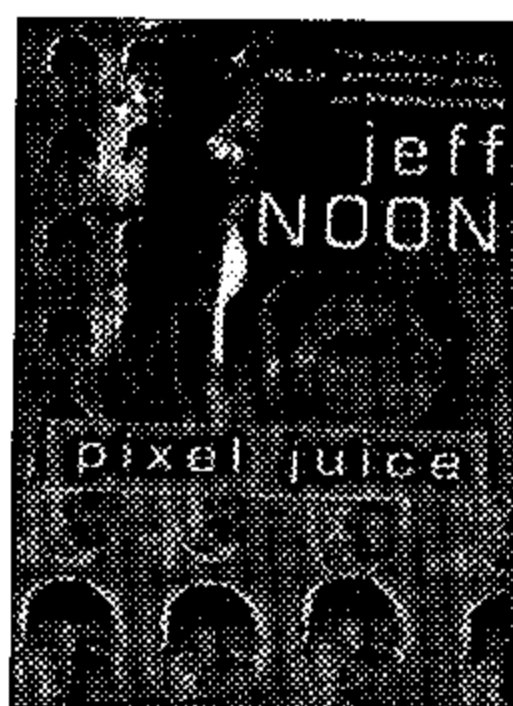
Prepare your head for a new experience

BY COLIN SANDIFORD

Pixel Juice is a collection of 50 short stories and poems by Jeff Noon. The cover of the book describes it as "Cyberpunk" which is really just a critic's way of saying "well I can't understand it but it sounds futuristic". The use of a *Star Trek* typeface and random "pixels" around the titles just screams "this is a science fiction book". However, I would call it more of a head on collision between William Gibson, Philip K. Dick, and a mid-life crisis.

The stories are sometimes self-contained but occasionally lead from one to another, making this a book that you can't really just pick up and start reading at any point.

The quality of the stories varies dramatically from one to the next and many will probably make more sense if you have read the author's previous books



(*Vurt, Pollen, Automated Alice* etc.). Quite often the author attempts to weave modern dance into the stories but the dialogue is more indicative of jazz and easy listening, as he puts it in the poem *Pixel Dub Juice (Sublimerix Remix)*: "More DJ's go 'groove', what's Noon trying to prove, he's not been in a club in ten years."

Many of the stories attempt to have

clever endings that make you think; however they fairly often fail leaving you with a feeling of "WHAT???". However like the works of Philip K. Dick, the book balances out and when you think back on it, the good parts generally stay in memory whilst the bad endings and even worse rhymes fade into obscurity.

Therefore if you are a fan of Mr Noon (or Messrs. Gibson or Dick) then I would recommend this book; however if you are not used to this style of writing, then I recommend purchasing some paracetamol before attempting to read it as, to quote the author's review of his own work, "*In style it's manic-frenetic, With language mistreated genetic, Brings K.Dick alive, To join famous five...Critics should pan it, They really should ban it...*" ■

Pixel Juice by Jeff Noon, Transworld Publishers, £15.99.

Youth at the forefront of campaign for justice

The campaign to free Steve Lewis, wrongfully convicted of two serious rape charges, was launched at a successful public meeting in Ilford last month.

His wife Mary, her family and her husband's family are all behind a determined campaign to expose the "case" against Lewis.

A moving letter from Lewis, written from Wandsworth prison, read to the meeting told how shocked he was at the

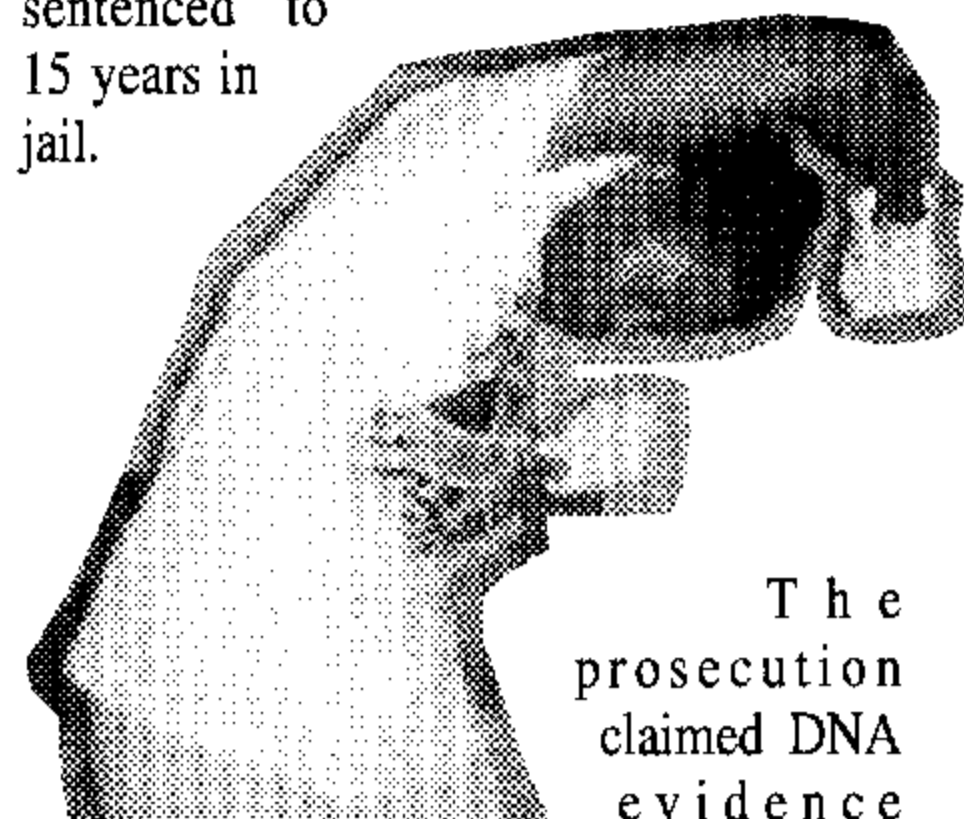


outcome of his trial. "I was found guilty of the most horrendous crime against women, with no evidence at all. Is this justice? No it's not."

The letter was read by Steve's niece Tanya. Mary's son Marcus and his friend Tyrone acted out a transcript from a BBC Radio 4 phone-in programme, in which a policeman confessed he and colleagues often lie in court. Samantha (right) opened the evening with a tribute in mime to Steve's struggle.

Lewis was originally arrested on an assault charge – which he admits to – in August 1996. He was held on remand until six months later

he was charged with rapes which had taken place in 1992 and 1995. In November 1997, despite overwhelming alibi evidence from family and employers, he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in jail.



The prosecution claimed DNA evidence matched him to the crime. But this "evidence" was never made available to the defence because it had been destroyed.

The DNA log records also show indications of alteration and of re-analysis. The blood sample given by Lewis took a month to arrive at a laboratory. When it did turn up, the tube was broken and the blood had spilled into a plastic bag.

In his letter to the meeting in Ilford, east London, Lewis spoke about how the pressure of working 16 hours a day, seven days a week had brought him to the point of a nervous breakdown.

He remembered little about the original offence of assault and life became a blur. "This may sound strange, but after a week in prison, I woke up one morning and felt free.

"I felt that I did not have to hide from clients, I did not have to make excuses, I had no one chasing me to do work for them. It was then that I realised what my life had been all about, work, work, work, and that it was worse than being in prison." His letter adds: "From the moment I was charged with these rapes to the day of my trial, I never for one minute thought that I would be found guilty.

"I believed in the British justice system. I thought that in order to convict someone you had to have evidence to do so...they never produced this evidence because they never had it." ■

To support the campaign, write to the Steve Lewis Appeal, PO Box 1265, Ilford, London IG3 9JD. Tel: 0181 590 3829.

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