
NEW LABOUR MAKES YOUTH A TARGET

The government has stepped up its attacks on youth with the announcement of new "fast track" punishment for teenagers, rushing their cases through the courts.

For New Labour young people are just a "problem", and every measure is aimed at coercing them into mutely accepting the status quo.

There will be curfews, "state bedtimes" and collective punishments for "problem families". Young people living in council flats will be on probation until they show they can "behave".

Those under the age of 25 at work will not even qualify for the paltry minimum wage New Labour plans to introduce. Those who are unemployed will face losing their minimal benefits if they refuse the offer of a training scheme, a subsidised six-month job, an approved college course or voluntary work.

Students will be trapped into years of

By the Editorial Board

servitude, as they work to pay back up to £10,000 worth of loans borrowed to get them through their degree.

Further education colleges are already run like private businesses. Teachers have ever-increasing numbers of students with little investment in new equipment.

Education is reduced to cramming for exams, as schools struggle to keep their place in the league tables. Young people who are no good at exams are unwanted. New Labour's "fast track sacking" will be used against teachers who rock the boat, making schools even more authoritarian and factory-like. Classes are so big that teachers are unable to provide the quality of education they would like.

This is the reality behind New Labour's talk of "opportunity for the many". Their

policies are to prepare young people for a lifetime's subservience to the multi-national corporations that dominate the world economy.

But there is another option, which is to unite students, working class young people and the unemployed to overthrow the status quo of globalised capitalism.

Technology today works to create profits for a small minority. Instead it should be put to work improving life for millions on the planet. What is needed is a change in the ownership and control of companies, property, money and land. Instead of benefiting a few, goods would be produced to fulfill the needs of all, and in such a way as to protect, not destroy, the environment. Instead of spending a lifetime slaving for some global corporation, young people could then develop their talents, be creative, and enjoy themselves free from commercial pressures.

The threat behind Blair's populism

BY THE EDITOR

Tony Blair performed the last rites over the body of Old Labour at the party's Brighton conference, setting New Labour on an uncharted course of sinister, right-wing populism.

Brighton marked a turning point in the waning fortunes of Old Labour. A disparate group who still believe in reforming capitalism through the redistribution of wealth, they are now almost without influence.

This is especially true of the trade unions, whose leaders were all sound and fury before they delivered their votes to Blair on every key issue. Behind this duplicity was the



Behind the wire - Labour MPs and conference delegates were surrounded by steel barricades and wire fencing throughout their Brighton conference.

threat that if they did not toe the line, there would be no legislation on the recognition of trade unions.

The union leaders could not have failed to note how Blair forecast that by the next

election all political parties would compete financially "on a level playing field". This can only mean state funding of political parties and, as a consequence unions like the GMB and the engineers are already on the point of ending their financial support to the party before it is ended for them.

Add to that the prospect of a two-tier minimum wage of well under £4 an hour, and it is easy to see why the trade union bureaucracy is already so disillusioned with New Labour.

New Labour has grown inside Old Labour like a lethal virus. Now it has taken over the body of the old party and controls it totally, despite the disquiet felt at some levels as shown in the votes for the left in elections for the National Executive Committee.

The conference meekly voted to abolish itself as a relatively democratic forum

where constituency resolutions are debated and voted on. Only finished policy statements will come before next year's event, while the NEC's new structure will render it pointless.

In any case, for New Labour, the party itself is an irrelevance. The Blairites see the party's role as a sounding board for the opinions of the "British people" rather than as an independent political organisation.

Cowed and sometimes bewildered, delegates voted overwhelmingly to abolish the conference as a meaningful event, endorsed tuition fees without a vote and applauded the Home Secretary Jack Straw for a speech that would have wowed the Tory Party conference.

They even applauded when Blair questioned the very origins of the Labour Party, as he asserted that the "division among radicals almost one hundred years ago resulted in a 20th century dominated by Conservatives".

He was referring, of course, to the foundation of the Labour Party itself in 1900 by the trade unions, who had broken from the Liberals because of their attacks on the working class. This "mistake" would be put right, Blair implied, through a closer and closer relationship with the Liberal Democrats, who seem certain to have ministers in the

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government before too long.

The speech, with its references to "the British people", "the blood and bones of the British", Britain as a "beacon to the world" and the description of the general election result as a "nation reborn" was right-wing populism of a kind not heard before in Britain.

Behind this populism is a government which speaks for global capitalism. "Flexibility will remain", Blair said, meaning job insecurity and low wages. He added: "For business, this will be a government on your side not in your way. And I say to both sides of industry, there is no place for militant trade unionism or uncaring management today. Partnership is the key. That is the only language this New Labour Government will respect."

In place of the welfare state that Old Labour built will come private sector provision, as Blair spelled out: "We need to invest more as a country in savings and pensions. But government's role is going to be to organise provision – like new stakeholder pensions – not fund it all through ever higher taxes."

And instead of basic rights to life and liberty, there are "duties" which are expressed in authoritarian language. Blair told the stunned conference: "We need to bring a change to the way we treat each other. I tell you: a decent society is not based on rights. It is based on duty. Our duty to each other. To all should be given opportunity, from all responsibility demanded."

Blair, just like Thatcher, rejects the concept of society. His is a country where there

are no social causes of social problems, simply individuals who are good or bad, those who carry out their "duties" and those who do not. This leads directly to threats of punishment for those who fail the "duty test" – the young unemployed, single mothers, rootless teenagers on estates, strikers, those dependent on benefits, "bad" teachers and anyone who disagrees with Blair's moral code.

The burying of Old Labour, the hastening of the marriage with the Liberal Democrats, along with the degeneration of the Tory Party, indicates that the old politics is dead. New Labour's emergence reflects the crisis of the state produced by the intense globalisation process.

The abandonment of traditional bourgeois party politics by the Blairites is a direct expression of the needs of multi-national capitalism, which demands unfettered control over people's lives. This is a road with a deadly logic – namely, towards a right-wing dictatorship.

Barclays Bank staff, tube drivers and many thousands of students opposed to tuition fees and the abolition of grants have their own interests to defend through strikes and demonstrations, which will bring them into conflict with Blair. All Labour MPs who say they oppose tuition fees must vote against the government or become part of Blair's project.

A socialist alternative to Blair and New Labour is urgent and *Socialist Future* is sponsoring a project for the launch of a new, revolutionary organisation next year. We urge our readers to support it.

IN OUR VIEW

The importance of 1917 today

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a watershed in world history for a number of reasons, and its outcome is still to be determined.

Today's Russia, with its Mafia control and social devastation, shows the extreme difficulties faced by capitalism in attempting to reestablish private ownership in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

In 1917, for the first time the working class became an agent of historical change, whereas until then it was always subject to the interests of capital.

Imperialism had led millions of workers throughout Europe and America into a war whose sole aim was the redivision of the world's markets and empires.

The revolution in Russia, which established the first workers' state in history, demonstrated that war, poverty and wage slavery was not the only course history could take.

By taking Russia out of the war, the Bolshevik Party which led the revolution, revealed the class nature of war in the 20th century.

Soviet Russia's withdrawal from the war intensified imperialism's problems and inspired workers everywhere to launch their own revolutions.

The rise of a monstrous bureaucracy in the USSR

under Stalin, which was consolidated in the 1930s, in no way undermines the essential significance of the revolution.

Stalinism was in conflict with everything the revolution stood for. Its policies helped Hitler to power and led to the defeat of the Spanish Revolution. The murder of the Old Bolsheviks and the pact with Hitler brought the Soviet Union to the brink of defeat.

Despite the terrible crimes of Stalinism, the USSR demonstrated that it was possible to develop an economy without capitalist, private ownership property relations.

The superiority of a planned, nationalised economy at a time of world-wide capitalist slump enabled the country to make rapid industrial progress. This ability to plan production was key to the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany.

The ending of the Stalinist bureaucracy in USSR was not a defeat for the working class. It vindicated Lenin and Trotsky's view that socialism could not be built in Russia alone without assistance from revolutionary governments in the advanced economies.

The crisis of globalised capitalism will provide modern Marxists with an opportunity to finish the job the Bolsheviks began.

80th
anniversary
of the Russian
Revolution

History in the balance



The Russian revolution would not have taken place but for a tense and sometimes bitter conflict inside the Bolshevik Party, with Lenin fighting off attempts to block the struggle for power. PAUL FELDMAN examines the historical record.

The Russian Revolution, which began 80 years ago on November 7, 1917, reverberated around the world. It changed the course of history and remains the most dramatic political and social event of the century.

Imperialist circles greeted the revolution with alarm, especially as the new Bolshevik government was committed to withdrawing from the World War. For workers everywhere, especially those fighting each other in the trenches, it offered new hope and inspiration.

Here was the theory of Marx about the class struggle put into practice with the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of the first workers' government in history. At a stroke, the revolution demonstrated that capitalism was not a permanent fixture on the planet but had an historical life and death.

As soon as the imperialist war ended in November 1918, armies from 14 countries were sent to try and crush the young Bolshevik government. The Civil War that followed the intervention of imperialist armies took a terrible toll, with the economy devastated and huge numbers killed.

In Britain, workers' councils were created to support the Russian revolution and dockers refused to load ships with munitions bound for troops sent by the Lloyd George government. With this international support, the Red Army, built from scratch under the leadership of Leon

Trotsky, defeated the White forces and secured Soviet power.

An analysis of why the Bolsheviks succeeded and revolutions in other countries failed is still relevant. There is no better source for this than *Lessons of October*, a series of articles written by Trotsky in 1924, shortly after the death of Lenin. His articles remain essential study for revolutionary Marxists today.

It was at a critical time. The future of the revolution in Russia and internationally had reached a turning point. Despite Lenin's call for his removal as general secretary, Stalin had begun to consolidate his power with the support of conservative sections of the party like Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Lessons of October was part of the struggle for historical objectivity which was already under threat from the ruling group in the party. In his introduction, Trotsky condemns the absence of a proper study of the revolution as "narrow and nationalistic" because workers in other countries still had their "Octobers" ahead and could profit from the Russian experience.

Trotsky sums up the experience of the 1917 revolution and insists, above all, on the crucial role of leadership and the development of Marxist theory free from dogma and outdated concepts. It is also a masterful insight into the role of the individual in history.

The articles outraged Stalin and his

supporters because *Lessons of October* reminded the party of the wavering role they had played in 1917 when Lenin fought to turn the party towards the objective of seizing power. They also showed that however bitter the differences had been in 1917, the Bolshevik tradition of inner-party democracy and struggle was crucial to the outcome.

The timing of the articles was significant. In 1923, the international communist movement had met with two crushing defeats, first in Bulgaria and then in Germany. "We witnessed in Germany a classic demonstration of how it is possible to miss a perfectly exceptional revolutionary situation of world historic importance. Once more, however, neither the Bulgarian nor even the German experiences of last year have received an adequate or sufficiently concrete appraisal," Trotsky remarks.

Events in Germany, in particular, reinforced the conservative outlook of Stalin and his supporters and was used to underpin the "theory" of building socialism in a single country – backward Russia. This was the opposite of the position of Lenin, shared by Trotsky, that the 1917 revolution was a "holding operation" whose ultimate success – or failure – depended on the development of workers' states in the advanced capitalist countries.

In *Lessons of October*, Trotsky particularly criticises Zinoviev and



Above opposite: Lenin on Red Square, May 25, 1919. Above: Trotsky inspects Red Army recruits.

Kamenev, who with Stalin formed the Troika that was leading the party in the direction of abandoning international socialist revolution in favour of "socialism in a single country".

The Troika's refusal to learn from defeats and mistakes characterised its indifferent attitude to Marxism and the development of theory. This obscuring of history and reliance on dogma became the ideological basis for Stalinism and all that followed in later decades.

Trotsky begins his analysis by suggesting that a party crisis is inevitable in the transition from preparatory revolutionary activity to the immediate struggle for power. "The explanation for this lies in the fact that every period in the development of the party has special features of its own and calls for specific habits and methods of work. A tactical

turn implies a greater or lesser break in these habits and methods," Trotsky explains. It was the strategic turn of the Bolsheviks towards conquering power, insisted upon by Lenin, that produced a major crisis in the Bolshevik Party in 1917. In Russia, what Trotsky calls a "scholastic parody of Marxism" had produced a widespread view that a socialist revolution could only take place in the advanced capitalist countries. The logic of this, of course, was that there had to be an indeterminate period of "advanced" capitalism in Russia before workers could and should struggle for power.

Key Bolsheviks supported a variation of this view which led them to believe that in backward Russia, where capitalism had a limited foothold, only a completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution which overthrew the Tsar was conceivable for the time being.

"The socialist revolution was to begin in the West; and we could take to the road of socialism only in the wake of England, France, and Germany. But such a formulation of the question slipped inevitably into Menshevism, and this was fully revealed in 1917 when the tasks of the revolution were posed before us, not for prognosis but for decisive action," Trotsky writes. "It meant going over to the position of the left wing of national revolution."

Before Lenin returned from exile in April 1917, this was the position that the party leaders like Stalin and Kamenev advocated in the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*, which they had seized control of early in 1917.

Thus, in March, an article on the war asked: "And where should a way out of war be sought?" and gave the following answer: "The way out is the path of bringing pressure to bear on the Provisional Government with the demand that the government proclaim its readiness to begin immediate negotiations for peace." This was the bourgeois

Provisional Government that had taken power following the February revolution which overthrew the Tsar.

Political warfare broke out in the Bolshevik Party after Lenin returned from exile in early April. He refuted the "Old Bolsheviks" who "more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly learned by rote instead of studying the specific features of the new and living reality... But one must measure up not to old formulas but to the new reality. Is this reality covered by Comrade Kamenev's Old Bolshevik formula, which says that 'the bourgeois democratic revolution is not completed'? "It is not," Lenin answers. "The formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. And it is no use trying to revive it."

The fundamental question around which everything else centred was whether the party should struggle for power or accept the role of a reformist opposition within a bourgeois framework. "These two tendencies, in greater or lesser degree, with more or less modification, will more than once manifest themselves during the revolutionary period in every country," Trotsky perceptively suggests.

Lenin, while he was still trapped in Zurich, had written letter after letter in March, most of which never reached *Pravda*. "It is absolutely impermissible," he wrote on March 9, "to conceal from ourselves and from the people that this government wants to continue the imperialist war, that it is an agent of British capital, that it wants to restore the monarchy and strengthen the rule of the landlords and capitalists." And later, on March 12, he wrote sarcastically: "To urge that the government concludes a democratic peace is like preaching virtue to brothel keepers."

When Lenin arrived at the Finland railway station on April 3, he called for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. It was a bombshell to many leaders of the party who had adapted to the compromise line of *Pravda*. The polemic between Lenin and the supporters of "completing the democratic revolution"

began immediately. The whole of the April party conference was devoted to deciding whether the party was planning to lead the socialist revolution or whether “we are helping (anybody and everybody) to complete the democratic revolution?”, Trotsky writes.

Lenin pushed on with his demands for change. On April 10, he came forward with a proposal to rename the Bolshevik Party the Communist Party. The opposition of the party leaders was so strong that it took a year – and a revolution – before they would sanction a change.

Trotsky remarks: “This incident of renaming the party serves as a symbolic expression of Lenin’s role throughout the whole of 1917: during the sharpest turning point in history, he was all the while waging an intense struggle within the party against the day that had passed in the name of the day to come. And the opposition, belonging to the day that had passed, marching under the banner of ‘tradition’, became at times aggravated to the extreme.”

The mobilisation of the right-wing elements in the party became increasingly intensive and their criticism became more outspoken after what is known as the “July Days”, when the Bolsheviks participated in mass demonstrations which ended in bloodshed.

But by October 16, the Revolutionary Military Committee was created by the Soviets, and the struggle of tendencies within the party, as well as the class struggle in the country, entered its decisive phase. Zinoviev and Kamenev, the open leaders of the right wing, wrote a letter on the eve of the revolution rejecting the resolution for an armed insurrection adopted by the Central Committee. They also made their views public.

Their letter stated: “We are deeply convinced that to call at present for an armed uprising means to stake on one card not only the fate of our party but also the fate of the Russian and international revolution.”



Stalin, Rykov, Kamenev and Zinoviev

Trotsky asks: “But if the insurrection and the seizure of power are out of the question, what then? The answer in the letter is also quite plain and precise: “Through the army, through the workers, we hold a revolver at the temple of the bourgeoisie,” and because of this revolver the bourgeoisie will be unable to quash the Constituent Assembly. “The chances of our party in the elections to the Constituent Assembly are excellent... The influence of the Bolsheviks is increasing... With correct tactics we can get a third and even more of the seats in the Constituent Assembly.”

Trotsky concludes: “Thus, this letter openly steers a course towards our playing the role of an ‘influential’ opposition in a bourgeois Constituent Assembly.”

Trotsky contrasts the “persistent, tireless, and incessant pressure” which Lenin exerted on the Central Committee throughout September and October as being “active, strategic, and practical through and through”, while the right-wing view was “utterly permeated with fatalism”.

The tendency towards “fatalism” is not

a peculiarly Russian or individual question, the *Lessons of October* makes clear. And here Trotsky returns to the failure of the 1923 revolution in Germany.

“This passive fatalism is really only a cover for irresolution and even incapacity for action, but it camouflages itself with the consoling prognosis that we are, you know, growing more and more influential; as time goes on, our forces will continually increase. What a gross delusion! The strength of a revolutionary party increases only up to a certain moment, after which the process can turn into the very opposite. The hopes of the masses change into disillusionment as the result of the party’s passivity, while the enemy recovers from his panic and takes advantage of this disillusionment.

“We witnessed such a decisive turning point in Germany in October 1923. We were not so very far removed from a similar turn of events in Russia in the autumn of 1917. For that, a delay of a few more weeks would perhaps have been enough. Lenin was right. It was *now* or *never!*”

The principal lesson for Trotsky is that without a revolutionary party, the working class cannot conquer power. His explanation of this from a Marxist



Lenin working in his office in the Kremlin

historical standpoint remains as clear and concise as when it was written:

“Consciousness, premeditation, and planning played a far smaller part in bourgeois revolutions than they are destined to play, and already do play, in proletarian revolutions. In the former instance the motive force of the revolution was also furnished by the masses, but the latter were much less organised and much less conscious than at the present time.

“The leadership remained in the hands of different sections of the bourgeoisie, and the latter had at its disposal wealth, education, and all the organisational advantages connected with them (the cities, the universities, the press, etc.). The bureaucratic monarchy defended itself in a hand-to-mouth manner, probing in the dark and then acting. The bourgeoisie would bide its time to seize a favourable moment when it could profit from the movement of the lower classes, throw its whole social weight into the scale, and so seize the state power.

“The proletarian revolution is precisely distinguished by the fact that the proletariat – in the person of its vanguard – acts in it not only as the main offensive force but also as the guiding force. The part played in bourgeois revolutions by

the economic power of the bourgeoisie, by its education, by its municipalities and universities, is a part which can be filled in a proletarian revolution only by the party of the proletariat.

“The role of the party has become all the more important in view of the fact that the enemy has also become far more

conscious. The bourgeoisie, in the course of centuries of rule, has perfected a political schooling far superior to the schooling of the old bureaucratic monarchy. If parliamentarism served the proletariat to a certain extent as a training school for revolution, then it also served the bourgeoisie to a far greater extent as the school of counter-revolutionary strategy.

“Suffice it to say that by means of parliamentarism the bourgeoisie was able so to train the social democracy that it is today the main prop of private property. The epoch of the social revolution in Europe, as has been shown by its very first steps, will be an epoch not only of strenuous and ruthless struggle but also of planned and calculated battles – far more planned than with us in 1917.”

Trotsky’s emphasis on the significance of the role of leadership – one which is not held back by old slogans and concepts, but which understands the contradictory process of history – remains the lesson of October 1917. Only a party which is built along these lines can lead a successful struggle for power.

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Behind the fall of a dictator

BY ANA ROSADO

The overthrow of Alfredo Stroessner's 34-year dictatorship in Paraguay in February 1989 was overshadowed by dramatic events in Rumania and East Germany but was equally historic.

A dramatic picture of change after decades of repression emerges from these essays by social scientists in both Paraguay and Britain. It is the first serious study of modern Paraguay published in English.

The analysis of the decade running up to 1997 is a stark condemnation of Stroessner's dictatorship. His brutal regime was propped up by the United States and later by South Africa's apartheid leaders. As late as 1986 Paraguay, a country of 4.8 million people, had more political prisoners detained without trial than any other Latin American country.

Between 1954 and 1989, the regime received \$31 million in US military aid and \$240 million in US technical and economic assistance, plus \$504 million in loans from the World Bank and \$619 million from the Inter-American Development Bank. Corruption was endemic. By 1988, contraband trade was estimated to be equal to and possibly larger than registered trade.

The authors show clearly how Stroessner kept his grip on absolute power. He did this through the Colorado Party, which controlled Paraguay society from top to bottom, manipulating myths and ideologies playing on national patriotism. This remains a highly sensitive issue in a country that lost 26 per cent of its territory during the Triple Alliance War of 1865-1870.

Ricardo Medina's essay discusses the background to the political weakness of the left forces in Paraguay during the Stroessner regime and since. The Paraguayan Communist Party (PCP) was founded in 1928, a time when Stalin was consolidating his power in the Soviet Union. In the decisive civil war period of

The Transition to Democracy in Paraguay
Edited by Peter Lambert
and Andrew Nickson,
Macmillan Press, £50



Paraguayan indigenous people are losing their land to deforestation

1947, the PCP promoted a Popular Front policy, which ignored the powerful left-wing faction of the Colorado Party.

The PCP failed to win over the *py-nandi* (barefoot) peasant militias who fought on the side of the Colorado Party in the Civil War. Neither the PCP, "nor the Febrerista Left," Medina writes, "had been able to follow a joint line of action, independent of traditional political forces. Rather than striving to create a liberation front from their own leadership, and following their own political strategy and tactics, they blindly followed the opposition to the Colorado Party, under the leadership of Colonel Rafael Franco."

The PCP also made the disastrous mistake of throwing itself into an armed struggle aimed at trying to provoke a military-led coup against Stroessner in the early 1960s. This political line led to the loss of nearly 100 of the party's best

activists. Marcial and Jorge Riquelme show how the regime's destruction eventually arose from within the very heart of the Colorado Party. General Andres Rodriguez had been Stroessner's right-hand man for years before ousting the dictator.

Ironically, not only the general, but his democratically-elected civilian successor, President Juan Carlos Wasmosy, continue to owe their power to the Colorado Party.

Behind the intrigues within the Colorado leadership leading to Stroessner's overthrow, was a sudden deterioration of the economy. In 1981 the completion of the huge Itaipú dam project coincided with a drop in world prices for cotton and soybean, Paraguay's most important export products.

Fundamental to the crisis which built up in the 1980s was the transformation of large numbers of Paraguay's poor from peasants to landless urban masses. Peasant organisations, which were brutally suppressed in 1976, began to spring up again between 1983 and 1986, organising large-scale land occupations. Following Stroessner's overthrow, occupations increased dramatically.

Although social inequality, corruption and economic stagnation have hardly improved, indeed, worsened in some respects, it would be a serious political mistake to conclude that the Rodriguez putsch and subsequent events do not signify a fundamental political shift. The authors are right to refer to a period of transition.

As Nickson writes: "The putsch did provide a political opening through which democratic forces have sought to dismantle the neo-sultanic regime constructed under Stroessner."

This important book helps enormously in understanding the background not just to the past but to the acute political crisis in Paraguay today, especially in the Colorado Party, which results from the drawing of the country into the process of globalisation.

Poet of the English revolution

The British ruling class always deny their own revolutionary history and Prime Minister Tony Blair joined the deception with a vengeance in his speech to the Labour Party conference last month.

He offered the following summary of British history: "From the Magna Carta to the first Parliament to the industrial revolution to an empire that covered the world..." But there is a crucial watershed missing from this myth of uninterrupted peaceful progress – the great English revolution of 1640 by which the bourgeoisie established its rule.

Blair went on to quote John Milton, describing him as "our great national poet of renewal and recovery". In reality, Milton was an extreme revolutionary who supported the overthrow of the feudal state. His ferocious anti-clericalism and anti-monarchism made him Cromwell's choice to write the ideological justification for the beheading of King Charles I. His essay *Eikonoclastes* was distributed by the revolutionary government, sending a shiver of fear through every royal court and bishop's palace in Europe.

Milton denounces monarchy as an irrational system of government, based on superstition and oppression. He justifies the execution of the King because true liberty can only be established by knocking down idols and establishing the rule of reason.

Blair's "great poet of renewal and recovery" was, in fact, the great poet of revolution and regicide!

To justify his own nationalism, Blair quoted Milton's description of the English people as: "A nation not slow or dull, but of quick, ingenious and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point that human capacity can soar to."

But Milton was first and foremost a Protestant internationalist. On a journey to Italy before the revolution he met and admired philosophers and scientists like Gallileo, and saw how their lives hung by a thread, because of the threat they posed



Review article by Penny Cole
Milton & the English Revolution
by Christopher Hill
Faber & Faber £14.99

to the feudal Catholic church, and its kings. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* he writes that it was the task of the English "first to overcome those European kings which receive their power not from God but from the Beast". The English "had the honour to precede other nations who are now labouring to be our followers".

Blair said "change is in the blood and bones of the British", but in Milton's view it was *revolutionary* change.

Further on in the passage quoted by Blair is a description of revolutionary London: "Behold now this vast City, a city of refuge, the mansion house of Liberty... The shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguered Truth, than there be pens and heads there... the people, or the greater part – more than at other times – wholly taken up with the study of the highest and most important matters to be reformed, disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discovering things not before discovered or written... All the Lord's people are become prophets."

Definitely nothing like New Labour's party conference!

"Hell is poverty on earth", said Milton, and in *Comus*, he writes:

*If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast
excess,*

*Nature's full blessings would be well-
dispensed*

In unsuperfluous even proportion.

Which sounds suspiciously like a call for the redistribution of wealth.

Milton narrowly avoided the executions that followed the restoration of the monarchy, and saw himself as the last repository of the revolutionary spirit.

In his last poem, *Samson Agonistes*, like Milton, the biblical Samson is blind and living under the rule of the Philistines, but refuses to worship in their temple:

*Shall I abuse this consecrated gift... by
prostituting holy things to idols..? The
chorus challenges this high moral tone: Yet
with this strength thou serv'st the
Philistines - idolatrous, uncircumcised,
unclean. But Samson replies: Not in their
idol-worship, but by labour, honest and
lawful to deserve my food, of those who
have me in their civil power.*

In his excellent life of Milton, first published in 1977 and recently reissued in paperback, the historian Christopher Hill refutes the charge that the English revolutionaries were killjoys, who banned art and pleasure.

In fact there was a great flowering of art, music and writing in the revolutionary period, and a passion for music, good food and good company echo throughout Milton's poetry.

It was actually the 17th century equivalent of the National Lottery and cable TV that the revolutionaries detested. Milton wrote that the state's intentions "in plucking men from their soberest and saddest thoughts, and instigating them by public edict to gaming, jiggling, wassailling and mixed dancing" was "to prepare and supple us either for a foreign invasion or domestic oppression...to make men governable".

Millenium Mandelson be warned!

Still, but very real

BY CORINNA LOTZ

The still life as a separate art form focuses on the here and now, the real existence of objects. In doing so, there is an implied rejection of the metaphysical and the ideal.

By reducing the infinite variety of the world to a relatively few number of things, or even just one thing, the artist constantly re-examines both the world and his or her relationship to it.

The result of this investigation over the last hundred years is beautifully presented at the Hayward Gallery.

Margit Rowell, the exhibition's curator from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, did not intend to follow the "canon" of art history which has placed Cézanne at the centre of the transition to the art of our century.

But in the end she found herself forced to return to him. His *Still Life with Ginger Jar and Aubergines* occupies a place of honour at the beginning of the journey through around a hundred paintings and sculptures.

Cézanne wanted to make an art with the classical gravity of the old masters. Like his impressionist contemporaries, he chose everyday life, people and nature around him, not religion or mythology, as his themes. As he matured, he focused on the most basic subjects: fruit on a table, the human face and the body.

Concentration on the seen, the modest things close to the artist's life, is also to be found in André Derain's fruit bowl and Paul Klee's four apples. With Alexei von Jawlensky's yellow coffee-pot and white teapot on an almost black background, these three paintings have an intriguing intimacy and intensity of vision.

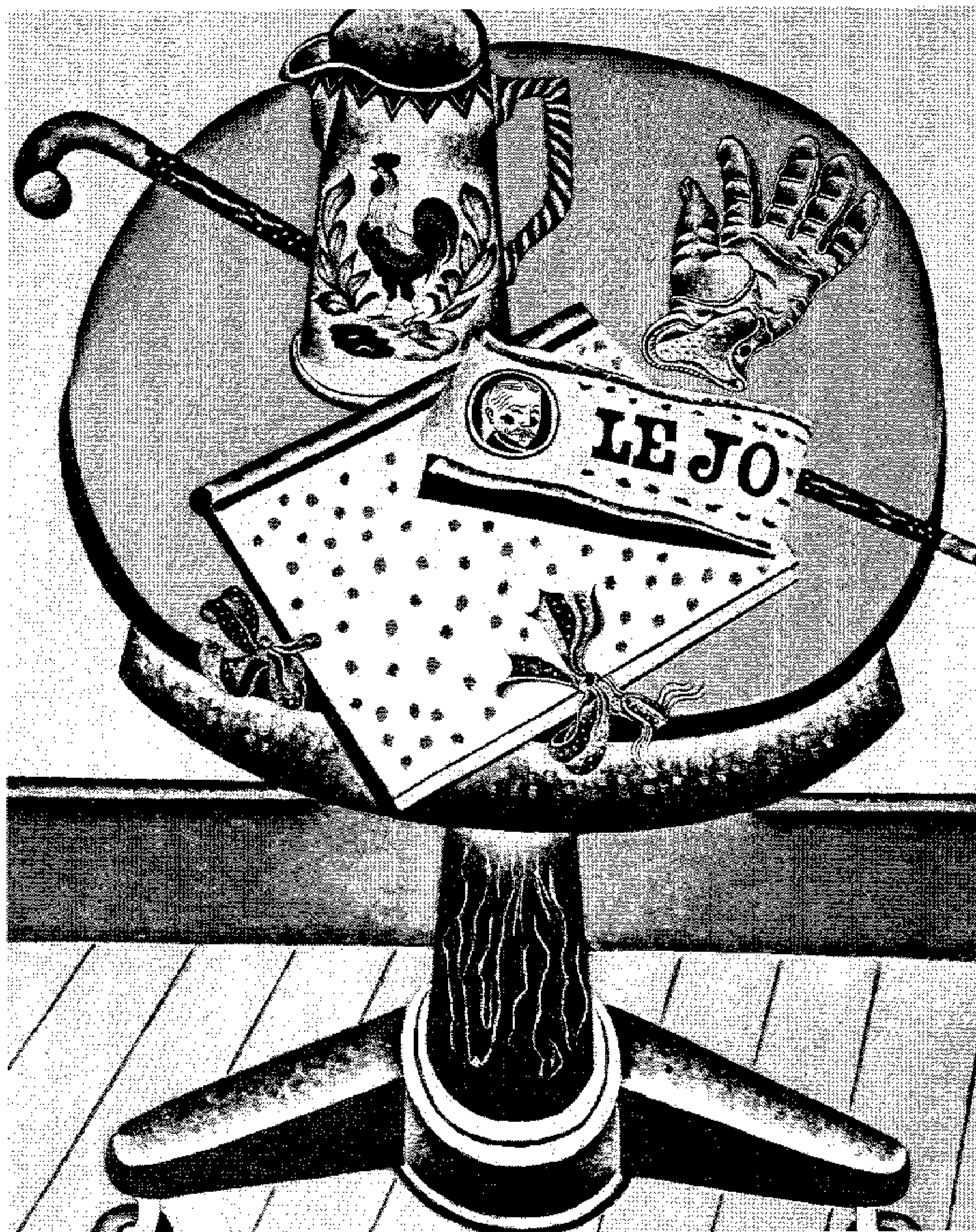
They challenge the notion, advanced by Rowell, that "it is not the subject that is important, but what the artist does with it". This idea is derived from the post-modern philosophies which Rowell has embraced. With Fredric Jameson, Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, she sees art

as a metaphysical system of signals and codes. The still life is "a system of objects," a "fictional system corresponding to a structure of desire".

Her theory is that still lives depict objects of desire which are never grasped or attained, presumably neither by the viewer nor by the artist. But this is contradicted by the lives of the artists themselves, as well as by the great pleasure derived from seeing works of art.

Contemporary accounts of the artists living in Paris at the turn of the century tell us they enjoyed eating the fruit which they depicted on their canvases. We can also assume they enjoyed the tea and coffee made in Jawlensky's utensils.

Objects of Desire
Hayward Gallery until January 4
Open daily 10-6;
until 8pm Tues. and Weds.
Admission £5/£3.50



Joan Miró *Table with Glove* 1921

The guitars, bottles, newspapers and pipes which figure so often in Picasso and Braque's Cubist period were the very stuff of their lives too, as they relaxed in their studios or Parisian cafes.

Of course it is true that objects are the ground for an investigation into the form of painting. But artistic creation, especially when it is innovative, is about the way in which humans grasp reality.

Marx said that for the pioneer English materialist philosopher, Francis Bacon, "matter smiled at human beings with poetical sensuous brightness".

Delight in the materiality of the world pervades Henry Laurens, Juan Gris and Matisse's great *Goldfish and Palette*, made before and after World War I, as much as the work of Soutine, Beckman and Miro in the 1920s and 1930s.

The still life, more than any other genre, offers the possibility of discovering and uncovering the real, the actual, that which exists around us, so that it can be grasped, owned and consumed.

Artists constantly seek strategies to allow us to see new aspects of the real, sides which we had not known were there, by re-presenting objects which we take for granted in unexpected ways.

Thus we find Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Ivan Puni and Francis Picabia select things like bicycle wheels and industrially produced objects to challenge fixed ideas. Duchamp's Dada movement, a reaction to the convulsions of war and revolution in 1917, relied on paradox. Its satirical approach was adopted again 50 years later by the American Pop Artists and the European New Realist movement.

Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol and the other artists associated with Pop Art reveal how much daily life changed in the post-war period.

Their subversive attitude to the products of the consumer society reveals a deep unease, and takes up the best traditions of the Surrealist movement.

In the last galleries the objects of the still life have left the canvas and jumped into life. Jugs, plates and tissue boxes suddenly mushroom gigantically. Mario Merz arranges masses of real fruit and vegetables on a spiral table. We see living food without a painting, and tables – real and painted – without any food.

Wolfgang Laib's closing offering, *Milkstone* takes us mysteriously back to the Russian artist Malevich, who made the first white on white painting.

Lessons in listening

Stephen C. Middleton reviews *In Full Cry* by the Joe Maneri Quartet (ECM 1617)



Joe Maneri: a mature revolutionary (photo courtesy EDCM records)

"Discovered" three years ago at the age of 67, with 72 notes per octave, playing saxophones, clarinet and piano, with a background in microtonal, Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Jewish, Hungarian and world music, Joe Maneri is an unlikely figure on the cutting edge of improvised music.

A former street preacher and student of Alban Berg pupil Josef Schmid, Maneri has tonally and, with his band, collectively pushed back more barriers in his belated three-year limelight than most do in a lifetime.

At last year's Unsung Music Festival, the extremes of empathy, pitch and full throttle road, often using notes few Western musicians have even dreamt of, convinced many that we had witnessed quartet jazz of a power and freshness not heard since Coltrane and Coleman in the 1960s and Braxton in the 1980s.

His ECM odyssey began with him and son Mat (who has adapted his father's methods to electric violin with startling effect) improvising with radical guitarist Joe Morris on one of last year's most acclaimed releases, *Three Men Walking*.

In Full Cry sees the microtonal maestro reunited with his regular quartet. Aside from the astonishing

virtuosity and phrasing of both Maneris, what is immediately apparent here, as it was live, is the incredible level of empathy. It is a lesson in collective listening for aspiring improvisers.

The sounds produced range from a lagging slur to the verges of ecstatic meltdown. John Lockwood on double bass and Randy Peterson, one of the most exciting percussionists around, are put through several wringers per piece and emerge triumphant.

In Full Cry's blend of collectively improvised pieces, standards (the most ravishing *Tenderly* you'll ever hear) and spirituals make it a compelling trip round the unique Maneri sound world.

Live, Joe Maneri beams constantly, rocking back on chair he perches on, grunting, exhorting, executing little cramped dances, playing up a storm and changing the shape of improvised music as he does so.

All praise to European labels Leo, hat ART, and ECM for documenting this major, hitherto neglected figure. The band is peerless. The man is a marvel. Charlie Parker said: "There are no boundaries in art" – and there is no age limit to innovation as, *In Full Cry* proves.

Labour MPs must vote against fees

Tuition fees are the biggest issue students have faced for many decades, says Siva Ganeshanandan, President of the University of London Union, the largest student union in Britain.

There are about 30 colleges, schools and institutes represented in ULU – and all have rejected the government's proposal to introduce £1,000 tuition fees for students from 1998 and to abolish what remains of the grant.

"The reaction has been very strong across the board, and colleges are doing everything they can to stop the plan," says Siva. "It is potentially the biggest thing for the last 30 years.

"Although it is £1,000 to start with, it is the principle of the thing. Once you breach the principle the level could easily rise. It is the thin edge of the wedge."

This has been the experience in Australia, he points out. Tuition fees began at around 20% of the total costs and are now around 40%, with differential charges for courses.

Siva sees fees as the kicking away of a

"Charging for knowledge is wrong..."

says Siva Ganeshanandan, President of the University of London Union

"ladder of opportunity" to improve a person's prospects which comes with accessing higher education. "Education is key and should be available equally to everybody. Charging for teaching and knowledge is wrong."

He believes that tuition fees will deter a lot of people from poor backgrounds from going on to higher education. "The better-off will see it as an investment which they can pay off later, while generations who have not been to university will see it as debt."

Like many students, Siva was "incredibly disappointed" that there was no vote on tuition fees at the Labour Party conference, despite a media build-up. "It

was a result of people being worried about their own positions and being leant on, essentially," he feels.

A recent survey suggested that 45% of Labour MPs are opposed to tuition fees. Siva, however, believes that the pressure from the party machine is intense and the job of ULU and other student bodies is to convince them that there "are enough voters out there to make it worthwhile for them to turn that principle into practice when they vote".

ULU wants to bring as many teachers, school pupils, parents, part-time students into the campaign. Siva has written to all London's head teachers inviting them to take part in a demonstration called by the union on November 1. Siva rejects the argument that students will earn more with a degree and therefore should pay towards the cost of education. "If they do earn more, they will pay more tax anyway, so there is an anomaly in that argument. In the end it is about opportunity. Tuition fees will perpetuate a situation where only the rich go to university and those from poor backgrounds are kept down."

JOIN THE ALL COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE

The ACA unites workers, professional people, students, artists, the employed and unemployed. We bring together individuals and local organisations on a social, cultural and political basis. Our aim is to develop ideas for a society based on democratic ownership and control by local communities and workplaces.

We reject low wages, job insecurity, increased police powers and the destruction of social and welfare services.

These are imposed by governments like New Labour to create the best conditions for high profits for multinational corporations operating in a global economy.

Globalisation has impoverished millions, but it also provides the potential for uniting communities across national boundaries.

The ACA believes that co-operative ownership and control of modern technology and the world's natural resources could very quickly provide for the basic needs of all humanity.

The ACA will help liberate the creative power of ordinary people to build a society which fulfils the wishes and needs of the majority. We provide a new forum where members can express and develop their political, artistic and social perspective and shape the vision of a new society. We aim to forge links with similar movements in other countries.

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- Democratic ownership and control