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PREFACE

This issue of the *Socialist Register* was prepared in the shadow of Marcel Liebman's illness and death. We open this volume with an obituary of a deeply-mourned co-editor and friend.

In recent years, each volume of the *Register* has been devoted to the examination of a particular theme which in our view deserved detailed attention and critical analysis by the left. The 1984 issue was concerned with 'The Uses of Anti-Communism' as a crucial aspect of twentieth century politics, and sought thereby to provide historical and analytic perspective in the context of the 'new Cold War'. The double issue for 198516 mainly dealt with the theme of 'Social Democracy and After': by way of a critical survey of the theory and practice of social democracy and through an examination of contemporary challenges facing the working classes in the West, we hoped to begin an exploration of what is possible in terms of socialist change in the remainder of this century.

This year's volume—our twenty-third—follows its predecessors in also being devoted to one theme: the conservatism of the last decade. We decided on this theme because we felt it was very important for the Left to undertake a systematic examination of the 'new conservatism' now that it has been in power for almost a decade in Britain and the United States. The articles which appear in this volume explore the ideological rise of the new conservatism in light of the actual practices of conservative governments in the 1980s. These articles examine the rhetoric in light of the reality. Our authors demonstrate the severe reaction the new conservatism has entailed, and this bears out some of the dire warnings issued on the Left at the beginning of the decade; but at the same time, the essays in this volume also reveal acute contradictions in contemporary conservatism. It is on these contradictions that those committed to the socialist project will be able to build.

The first article, by Reg Whitaker, offers a lively and searching comparative analysis of the ways in which 'neo-conservatism' in the UK and USA has *used* the state; and it shows how hollow is the self-portrayal of the conservative project as that of 'getting the state off the people's backs'. Whitaker's demonstration of the extent to which the 'national security state' dovetails with the prosecution of 'class struggle from above' in domestic policy sets the tone for the following three articles which focus on the historical roots and contemporary face of American imperial-
ism. John Saville recounts the extraordinary and little-known story of how American nuclear bases came to be installed in Britain. It shows well how much secrecy, deceit and prevarication by both Labour and Conservative governments have been part of this story, down to the ridiculous and contemptible contradictions in which the British Foreign Secretary was enmeshed when he sought to defend British complicity in the American raid on Libya in April 1986.

The next article, by Larry Pratt, provides a detailed study of the premises on which the 'Reagan doctrine' is based, how it is particularly applied against movements for social change in the 'Third World', how it stumbles under the weight of its own belligerent irrationalities. Scott Forsyth explores a different aspect of Reaganism, namely Hollywood. He examines the politicisation of American cinema and its contradictory role in the brutalisation of popular culture which the Rambo phenomenon represents.

We then turn towards examining the political and ideological roots—and the social and economic significance—of the new conservatism in Britain and the United States. Bill Schwarz provides a well-documented account of the meaning and specificity of 'Thatcherism' in relation to British Conservatism. Kim Moody undertakes a sustained examination of the formation of a new 'business agenda' in the United States, its means of prosecution over the past decade vis-à-vis both the Republican and Democratic parties, and its central focus, namely the assault by business on labour.

The next essays go on to analyse particularly important facets of 'Thatcherism' and 'Reaganism' in power. Joel Krieger provides a comparison of the two in terms of the attack on the welfare state. Elizabeth Wilson and Zillah Eisenstein discuss what the new conservatism in the UK and USA has meant for women and the nature of the attack on women's rights. James Cronin and Terry Radtke analyse an issue which has been of critical importance in the rhetoric and practice of the new conservatism', namely 'lower taxes'; and, through a remarkable comparative survey of Britain and the United States, they place the new taxation policies in proper historical perspective. Ian Taylor shows how important the emphasis on 'law and order' was to the election of the Conservative government in 1979 and he provides a careful empirical analysis which demonstrates the extent to which Britain has become a far more violent society since 1979. But he argues that the ideology of 'law and order' is in the process of going through a significant transformation to retain its appeal into the 1990s.

The essays which follow also concentrate on the ideological domain. Harvey Kaye examines the way conservative historians and ideologues in America and Britain have mined and manipulated 'the past' in constructing the new conservative project and asks what this means in terms of the
left's own 'Gramscian' understandings of the uses of history. Ben Fine and Laurence Harris re-examine the transformation of economic theory in recent years and analyse the critical role of the economics profession in sponsoring and sustaining the new conservatism. Simon Clarke traces the rise of monetarism and its impact on the state against the background of the political failure of the ideology and politics of Keynesianism, above all as represented by Labour governments in Britain. In a different but related vein, Joel Kovel looks at the place of the Catholic Church in relation to the decade of conservatism. He offers a careful analysis of the theology of Pope John Paul II, a subject of considerable importance in an age when the conservatism of the Vatican confronts the challenge of 'liberation theology'.

We conclude the volume with two essays on strategic directions for the Left in the light of the decade of conservatism. Ralph Miliband, through an examination of the real purposes of American global interventionism, sets out the case for working for the dissolution of the American alliance; and he and Leo Panitch, noting the dramatic sag of conviction in the ranks of the socialist left in the face of the new conservatism, argue that the rise of the new conservatism confirms the most basic socialist tenets on the nature of capitalism. Far from succumbing to the notion that socialism has 'had its day', socialists need to try with renewed conviction and commitment to find ways of reinvigorating the socialist project while opposing the conservative one.

As usual we are extremely grateful to our contributors for their help, and also to Martin Eve and Sarah Tisdall, of Merlin Press, for their own indispensable contribution to the production of the volume. Once again, we stress that neither the Editors nor the other contributors to the Register necessarily agree with everything that appears in the volume.

Among our contributors, Reg Whitaker is a Professor of Political Science at York University, Toronto; and so is Larry Pratt at the University of Alberta. Scott Forsyth is on the Editorial Board of CineAction, a Toronto Critical film magazine. Bill Schwarz teaches in the Department of Cultural Studies at the North East London Polytechnic. Simon Clarke is in the Department of Sociology at Warwick University. Kim Moody is the Executive Director of the Labour Education and Research Project in Detroit, which publishes Labour Notes, an independent labour monthly; and Joel Krieger teaches Political Science at Wellesley College, Massachusetts. Elizabeth Wilson teaches Social Policy at the Polytechnic of North London; and Zillah Eisenstein is Professor of Political Science at Ithaca College, New York State. James Cronin is in the History Department at Boston College and Terry Radtke also teaches History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Harvey Kaye is Professor of Social Change and Development at the University of Wisconsin; and Ian Taylor is Professor of Sociology at Carleton University, Ottawa. Laurence Harris
is Professor of Economics at the Open University, Milton Keynes; and
Ben Fine is Reader in Economics at Birkbeck College, London. Joel Kovel,
Professor of Psychiatry at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New
York, is currently a visiting Professor of Political Science at the University
of California at San Diego.

October 1986

R.M.
L.P.
J.S.
MARCEL LIEBMAN

Marcel Liebman, who died in Brussels on March 2, 1986, was a contributor to the first issue of the Socialist Register in 1964 with an article on '1914—The Great Schism'; and he also contributed to the 1984 and 1985/6 volumes. Since 1984, he had been one of our co-editors. His death at the age of fifty-six is a grievous loss, in both personal and political terms.

Liebman's academic career was spent at Brussels University, where he was for many years an influential, controversial and much-loved teacher. He was the author of a number of notable works, for instance The Russian Revolution, translated into various languages including English, Leninism under Lenin, one of the best available studies of the subject for which he was awarded the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize in 1975, and a pioneer study of early Belgian socialism, Les Socialistes Belges 1885–1914, which was intended to be the first volume of a comprehensive history of socialism and the labour movement in Belgium. Another book of his, Né Juif, was a remarkable autobiographical account of a Jewish childhood in Belgium under German occupation, all the more remarkable for the class analysis which informs it.

Liebman was an independent socialist and Marxist, critical both of social democracy and Stalinism in its many forms. He showed great courage throughout his life in his espousal of unpopular causes, notably the cause of Palestinian rights. By the time of his death, he had long been one of the outstanding intellectual figures on the Belgian Left, with an influence which extended into many different areas of life. He will be greatly missed; and for everyone who had the privilege of his friendship, he will remain a cherished and exemplary presence.