

socialist

REVIEW

Number 2 May 1978 25p

TEN YEARS ON
Chris Harman Tariq Ali
David Widgery Alain Krivine



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NF in the
unions

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Nuclear Power

40 page issue

Editorial

A common query from readers of our first issue—What do we have to hide? Are we afraid of admitting that *Socialist Review* is a magazine set up by the Socialist Workers Party?

In fact, the omission of any reference to the SWP was not a result of any dark plot. Quite simply, in the rush of producing the first issue we forgot.

Socialist Review was indeed set up on the initiative of the Socialist Workers Party. But, as should by now be obvious, it is not any narrow 'party-line' magazine. We hope to involve socialists of many different viewpoints in contributing to the analyses and discussions that take place within its pages and, hopefully, in editing it.

The present issue is a case in point. It contains a special supplement devoted to assessing the significance of the events of 1968 for revolutionary socialists. In bringing it together, we have tried to ensure that the viewpoints of those outside the SWP are represented.

We will be continuing our review of the last ten years in our next issue, which will include an interview with Sheila Rowbotham on the womens' movement and an article by Richard Hyman on the British labour movement since 1968.

Finally, our apologies to Monstrous Regiment. In fact, it was they, not Women's Theatre Group, who put on *Vinegar Tom*, scenes from which illustrated David Edgar's article in our last issue.

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cartoon: Liz Mackie

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NEWS

analysis

Immigration

Making racism respectable

Margaret Thatcher's now notorious *World in Action* interview thrust the issue of immigration (a polite word for 'racism') into the centre of British politics. With a few carefully chosen phrases, Thatcher set the stamp of respectability on the Nazis' propaganda about the danger of British 'culture' being 'swamped' by hordes of black immigrants.

Detailed proposals for curbing immigration were presented by the Tory deputy leader, William Whitelaw, to the Conservative Central Council on 7 April.

The report of this meeting by the political editor of the *Sunday Times* gives an impression of the extent to which open racialism is eating away at the Tory rank and file:

'A succession of parliamentary candidates came to the microphone. The man from Leicester South spoke in defence of "we the historical peoples of Great Britain" . . .

From Luton West we heard the case for "human and sensible repatriation"

'Walthamstow delivered the same message. Repatriation had a "legitimate role", positive discrimination was racist, the Commission for Racial Equality was illegal . . .

Hackney Central also backed repatriation, after declaring that the New Commonwealth's 34 per cent share of the local birth rate was the "stark reality" of a national problem.

'Then there was the man from York, a doctor. He was against repatriation, but was much bothered by disease, especially tuberculosis and hookworm. He wanted tighter medical checks on all people coming in, "whether", he said tolerantly, "they are brown, yellow - or black".'

The actual measures proposed by Whitelaw will cut immigration by a fraction and will hardly affect the size of the black population in Britain. But there is a vicious, racist twist to the proposals.

The Tories intend to set up a register of dependents entitled to join Asian families settled in Britain—if they are not registered within a year the dependents' right of entry will lapse. A quota will be fixed for the number of Asian immigrants allowed to come into

the country each year.

Worse still for black people living in Britain, Whitelaw plans to introduce a system of 'internal' control aimed at catching illegal immigrants. Whatever the form this system would take—identity cards? passbooks a la South Africa?—it can only mean for black people even more harassment and discrimination on the part of the state and employers.

Labour has been quick off the mark in denouncing the Tory proposals and has in general, since the Thatcher interview, tried to present itself as a genuinely anti-racist party. However, many of the Tory proposals—on quotas and internal control, for example, are more or less identical to those

contained in the report of the parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration published in March.

The report infuriated even the liberal press. The *Financial Times* headed its editorial on the subject 'Outbidding Mrs Thatcher' and declared of the report:

'It would have been more straightforward simply to have endorsed the views of Enoch Powell'.

The report was, however, 'bipartisan'. It was signed by Tory MPs and five Labour MPs, including Syd Bidwell of the Tribune group, as member for Southall a prominent figure in various anti-racist campaigns. In the March/April issue of *Labour Monthly* Bidwell had written:

'In the coming general election many Tory candidates will be crawling in the gutter with National Front candidates. Our hope is that there will be few Labour candidates doing likewise'. By his own conduct, Bidwell has shown how feeble that hope is.

Of course, the Select Committee report does not represent official Labour government policy. But there are signs that, in the recesses of Whitehall, more attacks on black people are being prepared.

There is, for instance, the Green Paper on British Nationality Law. Issued with little publicity in April 1977, the Green Paper was generally welcomed. But its proposals if implemented, could mean



Colin Chalmers

another twist in the racist screw.*

Current British nationality law is an inheritance of empire. There are about 950 million 'British subjects'. Most live in former British colonies, now independent states, in Asia, Africa and the West Indies. All of them, if they were to live in Britain, would have full civil and political rights just as if they had been born here.

Before 1962 all British subjects also had the right to enter Britain freely. Since then a series of racist immigration Acts have restricted the right of entry to the dependents of people already settled here and 'patrials'—people whose parents or grandparents were born in Britain.

'Close ties'

The aim of the Green Paper is to marry the law on citizenship to this racist immigration legislation. Under its provisions, those British subjects with 'close ties' to Britain will become British Citizens with the unqualified right to enter Britain. There will also be a second-class British Overseas Citizenship for the citizens of remaining British colonies, who will not have the right to enter Britain.

The Green Paper ignores the situation of citizens of independent Commonwealth countries like India, Jamaica and Nigeria living in this country. As Anne Dummett puts it in the briefing referred to above:

'It has not said what rights they would have, or whether they would retain their freedom to come and go. Supposing they did not retain this freedom, it is not said whether or on what conditions they might become British citizens. Possibly their status will remain as at present; it is most unfortunate that this is not made clear, especially with regard to voting and working in the public service'.

Deprived

In other words, under this Green Paper it is possible that black people living in this country may be deprived of their right to enter Britain freely and may lose the right to vote here because their 'links' with Britain are not close enough.

* The following comments on the Green Paper draw heavily on A. Dummett *British Nationality Law*, 20p from Action Group on Immigration and Nationality, c/o JCWI 44 Theobalds Road, London WC1 8SP.

Underlying this Green Paper is the objective of bringing Britain into line with other Common Market countries. On the Continent, immigrant workers have no rights in the countries where they work. They are aliens, denied the right to participate in the politics of the 'host' countries, liable to deportation at any moment. Obviously, this position drastically weakens the ability

of immigrant workers to organise and fight for better wages and conditions.

The 1971 Immigration Act was introduced by the Tory government as a step in this direction. Labour in opposition denounced the Act and is now tightening it up. The proposals on citizenship (promised in that famous left-wing election Manifesto in 1974) seek to bring immigrant workers closer to the

condition of contract workers, brought into the country under work-permits, rightless and subservient to the employers.

Paradoxically, at a time when the growth of the Anti Nazi League has isolated the Nazis, their racist ideas are more influential than ever before. The Nazis will not be defeated unless the racialism of the Labour and Tory parties is challenged. *Alex Callinicos*



Deserted Palestine refugee camp

Middle East

Israel's elastic borders

'I would like to stress that we want peace more than any other nation on earth', insisted Israeli Prime Minister Beigin last month. As he spoke Israeli jets were flattening towns and villages in Southern Lebanon, and thirty thousand troops were launching a huge and brutal military operation. As if to commemorate thirty years of the Zionist state, Lebanon was invaded in the best Israeli tradition.

In 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1978 Israel has gone to war, emerging larger each time, and yet each time apparently not satisfied. Like some nineteenth century imperial power in Africa, the very logic for Israel's existence seems to be to gobble up whole areas of the neighbouring Arab states.

The Israeli explanations for this years' invasion are transparent. The claim that it represents a reprisal for the Palestinian raid near Tel-Aviv is simply rubbish. Israel has long desired to extend its northern border up through Southern Lebanon to the Litani River—based on Biblical references to the extent of 'Eretz Israel' ('The land of Israel')

In addition Israeli military leaders had become increasingly worried by the effectiveness of the Palestinian forces in the area between Israel's border and the Litani. The Palestinians were no longer being held at bay

by the right-wing Christian forces that Israel had been arming and supplying. A full scale invasion of the area had been planned for months—and in terms of Israel's real ambitions, it had been planned for years. The raid near Tel-Aviv was one of many 'justifications' which might have been used for the inevitable expansion to the north.

Expand

On the basis of Biblical references Israel will want to expand eastwards too, as far as the Euphrates River in Iraq. In fact Israel's borders are as elastic as its leaders want to make them. Any number of Biblical myths can be used for further land grabs or full scale wars and invasions. But just why does Israel find these necessary?

Like any other settler state, the history of Israel has from the beginning been one of encroachment. In much the same way, with a similar Biblical motivation, the white settlers carried their control all over Southern Africa in the nineteenth century. For the Zionist hardliners today the invasion of Lebanon has its economic advantages—Lebanon, like the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, is a rich and fertile area—but it is not simply a military exercise against the enemies of Israel, more an extension of Israeli

control over areas rightfully theirs. For these Zionist hardliners to accept limitations to these rights, would be to put into question the whole basis for their expansion into the West Bank, Gaza, Golan, and Sinai, as well as the logic for the original occupation of Palestine and the expulsion of its Arab inhabitants.

But there is more than one variety of Zionism. What has frightened Beigin and the hardliners since the invasion has been the response of many Israelis particularly the young, who have reacted against the government's strategy in Lebanon and their approach to 'peace' as a whole. The 300 army officers who began the 'Peace Now' movement reflect the view of many Israelis that this time Beigin has gone too far. For many of the 40,000 who demonstrated for 'peace' in Tel-Aviv (the equivalent of a rally of 750,000 in Britain!) retention of only some of the Occupied Territories, and a compromise agreement with the Arab states and the Palestinians is the best way of ensuring Israel's security, and keeping sweet with Washington—Israel's banker and source of her mass of weaponry. The right has started its own 'Secure Peace' movement, but the damage to the Zionist establishment has already been done.

The cracks which have appeared by no means indicate

the development of an anti-Zionist current in Israel, but do suggest that the ideas which for thirty years have been used to justify any violence or arrogance against the Palestinians or the neighbouring Arab states are at last wearing a little thin.

Missing

What has excited many Israelis into their opposition to Beigin has been the fear that Israel is missing the important opportunities to secure 'peace' which have been offered by the largest and most important Arab state, Egypt. Almost forgotten behind the events of the invasion is Sadat's initiative, begun last October, to complete a deal with Israel behind the backs of all the other Arab states, which would exclude the main party to the whole conflict, the Palestinians.

Sadat made enormous concessions. He recognised Israel, in itself the most disgusting betrayal of the Palestinians. He made a great show, both in Israel and in Egypt, of embracing Beigin, the main architect of the terror campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s which brought off the murders of hundreds of Palestinians. He welcomed Beigin to Egypt on the very spot on which Israeli bombs and missiles had rained down in two successive wars. And Sadat obtained *nothing*.

Nothing

In fact of course Beigin had nothing to give. His own intransigent brand of Zionism made it impossible for him to accept any limitations to Israeli rights in 'Eretz Israel'. What the young Israelis fear is that this attitude will not only alienate the United States (which has its relations with the oil-rich Arab States to consider), but that Sadat, so rebuffed, will be driven into the camp of the Arab 'rejectionists', and closer to the Palestinians.

But even Sadat must have known the likely outcome to his advances. They were doomed like all his schemes. For Sadat's own record of failure is quite exceptional. Under his guidance Egypt has accumulated a grotesquely huge foreign debt of 16 billion. The majority of Egypt's forty million population are poorer than ever. Sadat's grandiose investment schemes have failed dismally, with the only obvious result the movement of Egypt fully into the Western economic

camp. Egypt's dependence upon the United States is now so great as to give its rulers no further room for manoeuvre. Thus Sadat's 'initiative' towards Israel was an attempt to pressure the US into disciplining Israel into a new settlement.

Sadat, for his own desperate reasons, did offer Beigin an unprecedented opportunity to fix up a 'peace' deal. Sadat's failure to find any response to his concessions will be another nail in his coffin. It will have been put there by Beigin and the hardline Zionists, who would not compromise. But that after all is what the core of Zionism is about. Arrogance, violence and expansion have always characterised colonial settler states.

Along with the Lebanese, it has of course been the Palestinians who have suffered most deeply. But the irony of the recent events is that in the long run they may lead to a real strengthening of the Palestinian movement. The great weakness of the movement is its political dependence of the leaders of the Arab states. The treachery of the Arab governments, in particular the 'progressive' Libya, Iraq and Syria, who stood by and watched as the Israelis

pounded Lebanon, has been a timely reminder to the Palestinians that they are quite alone in the Middle East. It has exposed the complete emptiness of the 'Rejection Front' of Arab states (those claiming to reject diplomatic manoeuvrings with Israel), whose conferences in Tripoli and Algiers pledged solidarity with Palestine.

Even the established 'left' of the movement was deeply involved with one or other of the Arab leaders.

Different

Now the genuine revolutionaries within the Palestinian movement, who have for long been opposed to the purely nationalist 'moderate' leadership with their manoeuvrings and diplomatic games, have the opportunity to argue for a different approach to the liberation of their country.

Until now the left within the movement has distinguished itself by insisting on a continuation of the armed struggle in opposition to Arafat and the other 'moderate' leaders who relied on the diplomatic road. The revolutionaries must develop their strategy further.

This must mean on the one

hand a much greater concentration of Palestinian efforts in the Occupied Territories and in Israel, where the Palestinian population is more deeply involved and committed to the movement than ever before. (The riots, demonstrations, strikes and limited military actions in the West Bank, Gaza and Galilee all bear this out.)

Secondly a real attempt to build a relationship with the workers' movements of the Arab countries must go ahead if the complete betrayal of the Arab leaders is ever to be effectively opposed. The worst enemies of for example, the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian peoples—Assad, Hussein and Sadat—are also the worst enemies of the Palestinians. To unite with the workers' movements for a real change in the area is the basis for there to be any serious possibility of bringing down the Zionist state.

If these changes in strategy can be forced through by a realignment of revolutionaries within the movement, it may well be that the invasion of Lebanon, though another bitter experience for the Palestinian people, will mark a turning point in the struggle for the Arab East. *Phil Marfleet*

Jobs

Fighting back on Merseyside

With luck the Liverpool unemployed will enjoy successive days in May. On 9 May a city-wide strike has been called and the following day Liverpool meet Bruges in the European Cup Final at Wembley.

Certainly the conference on unemployment held on Merseyside nearly a month ago, which called for the May 9th stoppage was a real step forward. The delegates agreed to make 1 May a demonstration against the dole and to back a Right to Work march to London in late May/early June.

But on the negative side it looks again as if, tragically, the recognised leadership—official and unofficial—want to do anything rather than fight. Whether the stoppage itself is a real one or descends into a call for a delegate lobby of Parliament will depend heavily on shop stewards from plants such as Dunlop, Birds Eye and Triumph.

Several of them are united in

a very effective Right to Work committee but whether they can push the city's labour movement into a real day of action remains an open question.

What is clear is that 'the problem of the depressed areas' is here to stay. The last quarterly report to the Government's Manpower Services Commission (MSC) stresses that up till the middle of last year unemployment in the North West, North East, Scotland and Northern Ireland had not been rising faster than in the more prosperous areas. Since then the old trend of the late 1960s has returned, and this time of course in a much more extreme form.

No surprise

So extreme, in fact, that the MSC is now talking glibly of 'permanent parallel employment'; job creation, subsidies to companies, 'work experience' on an indefinite basis. It is hard to see quite what the MSC or

the Government thinks this would do in, say, Knowsley, Kirkby or Skelmersdale, where one in four is on the dole, or in parts of the North East, where local unemployment is even higher.

The movement of employment away from the 'development areas' into the industrial heartland is something we noted in our last issue ('Merseyside: Testing Ground'). It is a movement almost entirely made up of the large, multinational firms attracted by Government gifts and cheap lonas in the 1960s: Leyland, GEC, Lucas, Spillers, Montague Burton, Courtaulds, Unilever—the list goes on and on.

For the most part this process is a quite deliberate and thought-out 'rationalisation'. Unilever, for example, have been facing the need to reorganise their frozen food subsidiary, because of a squeeze from other manufacturers, and

as the best-organised Birds Eye plant, Kirkby was the obvious target.

Government support, or import restrictions are also being used by such firms to give themselves breathing space and time to withdraw to the 'centre' of the economy. For example, Coats Patons, with a £2 million Temporary Employment Subsidy has quietly been getting rid of people at the same time. Courtaulds has received TES and protection from certain low-cost imports while closing plants and reducing manning levels.

Coles Cranes, receiving £8,000 a week TES for its Sunderland plant, is at the same time offering an extra £6.52 a week for working an extra hour and giving overtime if the deal is accepted.

It would be mistake to ignore the level of redundancies even at the heart of British industry in the West Midlands: the Black country town of Oldbury, for example, is being especially hard hit by loss of jobs, again in large firms such as Tube Investments.

1930s levels

But the crunch is in the areas of high unemployment, and it is going to be accentuated by large numbers of school-leavers coming onto the dole. On Merseyside there will soon be about 40,000 more people in search of jobs, lifting local unemployment to real 1930s levels.

Meanwhile, the confidence for any sort of fightback still has to be won. Leyland workers have reacted with anger to the paltry sums offered in return for their jobs, but so far the only full-blooded responses to the sack this year have been in small plans—Scotfisco and Kirkby Fashion Designs—by women.

On the other hand disputes over manning are running second only to pay stoppages (though a long way behind). There have been three major manning strikes on Merseyside, none of them defeated but none outright victories. The problem is one of co-ordinated action: the kind of city-wide general strike not seen in Britain for years.

Action on May 9 and the march on London may provide the initial confidence Merseyside and similar areas need to break the paralysis of mass unemployment. *Dave Field*

Italy

Four days in Milan

18 March 1978. Saturday night in Milan. Two young friends, Fausto Tinelli and 'Iaio' Ianucci, one an apprentice the other a student, one 18 the other 19, go out to get some cigarettes before the jazz concert starts at their local social club. Both of them are known to have sympathies with the revolutionary left but neither is an activist.

They are just like thousands of other young people in the city—to the left of the Communists, without rosy prospects of getting a job, active in their quarter and in the social club which they help to run in an occupied building.

It is two days since Moro was kidnapped by the Red Brigades. The city is still tense from the general strike on Thursday, the press is full of the need to rally to the defence of the State in its hour of peril.

Tinelli and Ianucci walk round the corner from their club, into Via Mancinelli, a dark and deserted street with concrete walls on either side. Suddenly they are accosted by three men. Hardly a word is exchanged before there is a muffled sound of shots being fired from revolvers fitted with silencers.

Ianucci falls immediately, shot in the neck. Tinelli tries to escape but as he runs he is hit five times from behind. Both of them die within minutes.

At the jazz concert their friends cannot believe what has happened. There are scenes of hysteria and utter despair. The free radios of the city begin to intone their message for all those who are listening: 'Two comrades have been shot by the fascists. Assemble immediately in Piazza Loreto'.

By 11 p.m. more than 2,000 people are in the square. Arms linked, chanting and shouting, they begin to march towards the city centre, blocking the traffic

all the way down Corso Buenos Aires. The *Autonomi*, who believe in the imminence of an armed struggle with the State, break off from the main body of the demonstration, and take to overturning cars and smashing windows.

The plate glass windows of the Israel-American bank end in smithereens. The police arrive in force; skirmishes between the *Autonomi* and the *carabinieri* go on till the early hours of the morning.

19-20 March. In the days that follow the killing of Fausto and Iaio the press does everything it can to minimise the event or to explain it away. For them it is inconvenient and awkward that the first victims of the climate of tension created by the kidnapping of Moro should be two innocent teenagers whose sympathies were with the revolutionary left.

Various stories are therefore invented. The assassination was a 'settling of accounts in the drug world of Milan' according to the hypothesis of one newspaper. Another suggests that it was part of gang warfare between the *Autonomi* and the *MLS*, a Stalinist group with a strong following at the university.

Incensed

The friends and comrades of Tinelli and Ianucci are aghast and incensed at these 'interpretations'. They explain to anyone who cares to listen that their dead friends were not involved in the drug world. The only thing they had done was to cooperate with an inquest which the social centre had launched to try and identify the sellers of heroin in their quarter. Neither of them was a member of the *MLS* or the *Autonomi*.

UPI pictures of Fausto Tinelli (L) and Lorenzo Ianucci, two 19-year-old leftists killed by gunmen. 3-18 in what investigators said may be a political crime.



At the Leoncavallo social club they have no doubts who is responsible for the killing: 'Fausto and Iaio have been killed by the fascists. The fascists want to use the situation to provoke us into violence, to push the country into a state of unbearable tension, to open up the way for a right wing takeover. That has been their strategy ever since they planted the bombs at Piazza Fontana in December 1969. It has not changed.'

Furious

21 March. The funeral has been fixed for the 22nd. At the trade union headquarters in Milan a furious fight breaks out over whether there should be a general strike the next morning, to enable workers to attend the funeral.

The CISL and the UIL, the Catholic and Social-Democrat trade unions are in favour. The CGIL (Communists and Socialists) are against, though the Socialists do everything in their power to convince the Communists, who are in the majority of the need to strike.

But the Communists of the CGIL stand firm.

They argue that it is wrong to mobilise again so soon after the general strike of the previous Thursday, that the tension in the city will only be increased by bringing the factories to a halt, that the circumstances surrounding the assassination are obscure, as are the political beliefs of the two dead teenagers. They want a partial stoppage in the north-east of the city only (the area where the killing took place) and assemblies in the rest of the factories to discuss terrorism.

Theirs is an incredible position, far more reactionary and defensive than that of the CISL or the UIL, who are supposed to be to their right.

Late at night, after a day of incessant wrangling, a shabby compromise is reached: the initiative is to be left to the individual factory councils, but the official stoppage is to be only for two hours, which hardly leaves any time for workers from most parts of the city to go to funeral and get back again 22 March. In spite of the PCI's

attempt at sabotage, there are more than 100,000 people at the funeral of Fausto and Iain. The crowd is immense—larger than that on the day of Moro's kidnapping. They have come from all over Milan—workers, students, the people of the quarter. There is even a delegation from the factory council of Fiat Mirafiore at Turin.

The funeral procession is led by two middle aged women holding a simple banner made from an old sheet. On it is written: 'The mothers of every comrade mourn for their sons Iain and Fausto.'

There has been an extraordinary mobilisation of the women of the quarter in the days after the killing. They have been on the radio to protest that their sons are neither delinquents nor drug addicts.

One of them recounts: 'In the 50s' and 60s' we were often in the streets, picketing during the strikes, protesting against the Christian Democrats. At that time it was the Communists who led the struggles. But then came the historic compromise and today the real communists are our sons and daughters.'

Silence

The procession proceeds slowly, in absolute silence, towards the church where the funeral ceremony will take place. It is only a few yards from the spot where the two were gunned down on Saturday evening.

The small square outside it is absolutely packed, as are all the streets which lead to it. When the coffins come out of the church, they are greeted with the last salute of a thousand clenched fists.

Some one near the front starts clapping and the fierce, bitter applause spreads right through the immense crowd, to die away as suddenly as it started. Then there is nothing left to do but file slowly past the place where Tinelli and Iannucci fell. It has been barred off and is covered with hundreds of flowers and messages from those who knew them well and those who knew them not at all.

Postscript, 26 March. The communique issued by the Red Brigades yesterday ends with the words: 'Honour to the memory of comrades Tinelli and Iannucci'.

But their friends tell the newspapers: 'We do not want the praise of the Red Brigades and it can go straight back to where it came from. They are trying to use us but we will not be used. For us their methods are abhorrent and counter-productive.'

If Italy does not now lurch to the right it will be no thanks to the Red Brigades but rather to mass mobilisations like that which took place, in the teeth of all opposition, in Milan on 22 March 1978, to pay the last respects of the city to two dead comrades, Fausto Tinelli and 'Iain' Iannucci. *Paul Richards.*

decision to back a member arrested on the Lewisham anti-NF demonstration was leaked in an attempt to stir up opposition among train drivers in the Waterloo branch.

Much less well-known is a presence in the motor industry. There are, for example, about half-a-dozen National Front shop stewards in Leyland's Longbridge works. Longbridge was also the scene of an excellent anti-NF demonstration, when 200 assembly workers refused to work with a Front supporter, who was then moved elsewhere.

Well-organised

Similar strikes against racist workers, or more often foremen, have taken place in hospitals, at London Airport and on London Transport: all places, of course, where black workers are relatively well-organised.

Workplaces where there are no blacks employed at all, however, have also seen National Front activity: the docks are a well-known case. Less known is the recent NF appearance in the NUM, on Arthur Scargill's home ground of Barnsley.

The other face of the Front's as employers' stooges. As yet this is a rare occurrence. Yet TGWU London area officials in the construction industry were the subject of threats and attempted break-ins last year by thugs, almost certainly in the NF, acting on behalf of lump labour sub-contractors.

And the NF also showed it has a nice class of member during the recent lorry drivers' strike in South Wales. On this occasion two T&G officials were warned to withdraw pickets from one haulage firm 'or there would be trouble'. The employers concerned was the chairman of the local Front branch.

Shopfloor responses to the Front, and the policies now being put forward by branches in a number of unions, have been rapidly changing. Apart from strike action mentioned earlier, the process of challenging Front members face-to-face has also been successful. A notable example was in the UPW where a fascist from the Rathbone Place, London, sorting office contrived to be off sick for a week after being exposed in *Socialist Worker*.

What is new,

however, is the willingness of rank-and-file militants to argue for the expulsion of NF members from the union. The recent NUR executive decision came after a resolution from the Watford branch protesting at NF activities. Although the executive decision has been somewhat diluted it still provides a basic approach.

What is really striking is that the same approach should come in four separate branch resolutions—from Romford, Croydon, Central London and Hull Gas Staffs—to the General and Municipal Workers' conference.

The motions are unlikely to be reached but show how attractive the idea is of making fascism incompatible with union membership. Another interesting point is that neither of those two key 'moderate' unions—the GMWU and USDAW—has an anti-immigrant motion on the agenda, for the first time in several years.

The problem with anti-NF resolution, as with any others, is of course pursuing them and making them a reality. If all the fine motions in opposition to the NF at this year's conferences were enacted, the Front would have few members with union cards. It is here that union involvement in the Anti Nazi League is crucial.

Sponsors

By mid-April ANL union sponsors included 30 AUEW branches and districts, 25 trades councils, 11 NUM areas and lodges, 50 local Labour parties and six to ten branches from each of a number of unions: TGWU, CPSA, TASS, NUJ, NUT, NUPE. On the other hand only 13 shop stewards' committees had sponsored the League at that stage, and though these were in important factories—BAC, Leland and Rolls-Royce for example—it is at this level that the Front can be most effectively dealt with and where the League is still weak.

The Front is still badly organised in industry and relatively isolated, but if allowed to remain it could well grow to a point where local union organisation was seriously threatened. Trade unionists should take their cue from the Halifax firemen who were offered £75 by the NF during their strike and refused to accept it. *Dave Field*

NF and the Unions

Flushing out the Front

The National Union of Railwaymen's decision to threaten National Front members with expulsion has, apart from sending Fleet Street into a frenzy, turned a necessary spotlight on the fascist presence within the unions.

The presence is not new. One of the most poorly-organised Bolton engineering works had a Front convenor for years, and the North West also saw an example of NF strike-breaking at Intex Yarns, when Asian workers were attacked by thugs 'defending' the offices of the National Union of Dyers and Bleachers (recent sponsors of

the Anti Nazi League).

These examples are probably less significant than the organised Front activity among post office workers and train drivers. London's Upper St branch of the UPW is controlled by the NF, while fascists have also tried to organise in the Mount Pleasant and Rathbone Place sorting offices.

Betrayed

In ASLEF the Front presence is betrayed by two national conference resolutions, but was also shown when news of an executive

Pakistan

Pakistan at the brink

The intention of the Pakistani junta, led by the Chief Martial Law Administrator General Zia-ul-Haq, to execute former Prime Minister Bhutto is a new vicious round in the faction-fight inside the ruling class.

The loss of Bangladesh in 1971 almost destroyed Pakistan. The bourgeoisie is too weak, cowardly and corrupt to hold the state together. Bhutto saved Pakistan, but only by promoting the state machine above the wavering bourgeoisie.

Between 1972 and 1973 he nationalized industrial and financial units valued at 1.4 billion US dollars. This is the basis of his 'socialism' which still confuses even some revolutionaries. In fact they facilitated the channeling of resources to his political supporters, the landlords of Sind and the rich peasants of the Punjab.

More seriously for him, Bhutto also created opposition inside the army. He created a para-military body, the Federal Security Force, which in 1977 got 14 per cent of the defence budget and was much more than a police force. He also retired most of the senior officers in favour of political supporters, although these have not been very reliable.

Massive aid

Bhutto's big weakness was that his regime depended on massive financial aid from Saudi Arabia and other reactionary Arab regimes. When these governments decided to support the opposition Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) Bhutto was in deep trouble.

The PNA combined ultra-reactionary Islamic groups, the Tehrik-e-Istiqal, a capitalists' party led by retired Air Vice-Marshal Asgar Khan, and the regional opposition from Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Faced with this combination and a hostile army Bhutto had no chance.

The new regime is even more

repressive than Bhutto, which is saying a lot. The introduction of 'Islamic' punishments like public execution and flogging is directly due to the junta's dependence on money from the reactionary Arab regimes.

The military has no answer to the economic crisis other than shooting workers or to the separatist ambitions of Baluchistan and NWFP other than armies of occupation. Bhutto was at least a successful con-man with a good line in demagoguery.

But Zia dare not get out by

handing over to a civilian regime. That would mean elections, and he has achieved the incredible feat of almost ensuring that Bhutto and his Pakistan People's Party, overthrown by a series of general strikes last year, would win by a mile.

Apart from anything else Bhutto is a very vicious man and the junta can be in no doubt about what he would do to them if he regained power. To hold elections would negate the whole purpose of getting rid of Bhutto in the first place.

Submission

So the regime hangs on, resorting to more and more violence in an attempt to terrorise everyone into submission. The proposal to hang Bhutto is the latest expedient. The danger for Zia is that a judicial murder might unleash

forces that even the army could not control.

The existence of the Pakistani state is at risk. The only possible basis of Pakistan is religious communalism—the idea of an Islamic state. The loss of Bangladesh almost destroyed this illusion and the Pakistani ruling class is too weak to support the state. The whole show could collapse under the strain, especially as the army proved to be incapable of holding the regime together in 1968-71. The chaos that this would cause in the whole region cannot be imagined.

The tragedy is that there is no socialist alternative to relate to the mass activity of workers and peasants. By default all this support flows to Bhutto. With Pakistan facing what might be a terminal crisis the need for such a party becomes more and more urgent. *Barry Pavier*

Budget '78

New phases?

Denis Healy's 'sunshine' 'giveaway' budget gives away very little to Labour's working-class supporters. According to the *Economist*, a married man on average earnings with two children 'gets from all the budget and national insurance and other changes this April a net increase in weekly take-home pay of precisely 7½p'.

Other people did rather better. To quote the *Economist* again: 'A few years ago, it would have been hard to imagine a Labour chancellor doling out tax concessions to the richer people in Britain; expressing delight that in future it will be much easier to keep businesses within the family—to hand them on, with the minimum of interference from the taxman, from father to son; promoting tax laws which are bound to be riddled with possibilities of abuse. But, in the cause of small business, Mr Healey has been willing to do all this and more'.

Measures of this sort (obviously aimed to rob the Tories of their claim to be the champions of 'free enterprise') added up to an election budget.

October this year looks more and more like election-time. There are plenty of indications that inflation will begin to rise again in the autumn. While the rate at which prices are increasing may fall to seven per

cent early this summer, the underlying rate is going up.

The statistics which show this are the Price Commission's index of rises notified by big firms, and the government's figures for wholesale and material prices. Most alarming is the two per cent rise in March of raw material prices, which had been falling since April last year.

So Callaghan and Healey may well want to get the election over with before the rate of inflation starts climbing again. Most of the tax benefits come into effect in July, which is also the month that the Lib-Lab pact expires. Since the Liberals do not look like renewing the pact, Labour must either face a House of Commons of which they do not command a majority or risk an autumn election.

Tucked away

Crucial to all these calculations is the future of the Social Contract. Tucked away in the redbook of statistics published by the government with the budget is the assumption that 'average pay increases in the year beginning August, 1978, will be about half the average for the current pay round'.

This works out as a 5 per cent ceiling on wage increases

and a seven per cent limit to the rise in average earnings in 1978-9. After their success in enforcing the ten per cent limit, Callaghan and Healey are pressing for a much tougher policy to follow it. Already the new pay ceiling is being written into the cash-limits on spending in the public sector.

The government's ability to make this new Phase Four limit stick will depend on the attitude of the trade union leaders. The latter will, almost certainly, refused to buy a formal agreement along the lines of Phase One and Two. Moss Evans, Jack Jones's successor as general secretary of the TGWU, has been making a lot of noises about 'free collective bargaining' recently.

The signs are, therefore, that the government will go it alone. According to the *Financial Times*, the new limit will be announced soon but:

'Unlike last year, there will be no attempt to seek a formal deal with the unions, since this would risk a politically damaging rebuff.'

'Ministers still hope that the TUC will support a continuation of the rule maintaining a 12-month interval between pay settlements and not openly oppose government policy'.

These hopes of TUC co-operation may well be realised. After all, in an election year, the trade union leaders' loyalty to the Labour government is likely to take priority. *Alex Callinicos and Dave Field*

France

Back to the struggle

The electoral victory of the right in last month's legislative elections, unthinkable almost nine months ago, has nonetheless resolved none of the pressing problems of French capitalism. Initial enthusiasm on the Bourse has faded as President Giscard d'Estaing's new government shows little change from the old one.

The right-wing majority remains politically divided. The diehard Gaullists under Chirac remain as stubbornly opposed as before to any talk of 'opening to the left' after their furiously reactionary electoral campaign had kept them (just) ahead of the Socialists as the major party. For his part, Giscard is not much nearer to his 'liberal' aim of drawing the Socialists into a Centre coalition.

His 'personal following', the UDF, a loose coalition of various centre groupings achieved 21 per cent of the vote but is nowhere near constituting a political party with a sound base and a permanent political weight.

Nothing

The Socialists and the Communists meanwhile have been thrown into disarray by their unexpected defeat, and have characteristically resorted to blaming each other for their present impasse.

The Socialists are in no position to respond to any approach from Giscard despite the alacrity with which their leader Mitterrand (not to mention the Communist leader, Marchais, and the heads of the two big Trade Union federations) seized the offer of a chat at the Elysee Palace with the President, when none of them had set foot inside the door for over ten years.

The debate inside the Socialist Party has turned on how to remodel the Union of the left so that next time they can't be caught out by the Communists. One wing, around Michel Rocard, one time 'leftist', argues that they should avoid from the beginning anything as detailed (or binding!) as a Programme, even one as vague as the Common Programme. On the other wing stands the CERES group, now excluded from the leadership,

which wants the party to return to a more leftist language, so that it can't be outflanked by the CP again.

It is among the Communists that dissatisfaction is most significant, however. Already Marchais has been forced to admit the existence of a debate inside the party, which of course he blames on a 'bourgeois offensive' and the opposition of diehard Stalinists opposed to the Party's new image!

There are, of course, a few of the latter but there is a lot else besides. There are those who want the party to proceed much further along the Eurocommunist line, echoing criticism of the PCF by the Spanish and Italian Communists; and those who having been told to 'wait until the Elections' now want to know what went wrong—if the elections were so important, why did the CP break up the Union of the Left and so lose the elections?

One thing is certain—the leadership carries very little conviction. At a recent aggregate in Paris the audience burst into laughter which the local secretary joined in as he read out the official party explanation of the defeat.

It will be difficult to keep the lid down on the growing debate. As one militant put it in a letter to a nonparty paper, 'You want to push us back into our shell? Too late, the shell is broken'.

The revolutionary left for its

part faces a situation it too was quite unprepared for. Its respectable vote in the first round, around 3.3 per cent, shows that it has established a certain political presence. In many ways the situation is quite favourable.

The leading bourgeois paper, *Le Monde*, pointed out in some alarm that the reformist solution of the CP and SP now had no chance of being im-



plemented in France for the next five years and French workers might well lose patience with their 'traditional' organisations before then. If the revolutionary left can take the initiative in the coming period when the reformists are in such disarray, there are great possibilities.

They will only be able to do this if they can shake themselves free of their more rigid historical scenarios and their own traditional inward-looking sectarianism. *Philip Spencer*

Horn of Africa

Eritrea could be the key

The war in the Horn of Africa is far from over. Military preparations by the Ethiopian regime and its Russian and Cuban allies are building up for a decisive confrontation with the Eritrean liberation forces.

Carter has reiterated his warnings about Russian activity in Africa, and British foreign secretary David Owen has joined in with a speech condemning the Russians for initiating a new 'scramble for Africa'. It is clear that the West regards events in the Horn as only one aspect of a threatening situation in Africa as a whole, particularly southern Africa.

Last month the Somali government was forced to withdraw its regular forces from the Ogaden, the Somali-populated south-east region of Ethiopia. Ethiopian forces, equipped with \$1 billion worth of Russian armaments and assisted by an estimated 16,000 Cuban troops, inflicted a decisive defeat in the conventional war against Somalia.

The guerilla war fought by the Western Somali Liberation Front is continuing, however. The WSLF has made several claims to have killed Ethiopian and Cuban troops in recent clashes, and Ethiopian planes

bombed a Somali village in 'retaliation for provocation' by Somali guerillas.

The defeat has caused a political crisis in Somalia. Young army officers attempted a coup against Siad Barre's regime in the second week of April. The attempt does not seem to have been very well planned, and it failed in a matter of hours. Barre was undoubtedly aware of the danger of a coup, and had taken care to isolate returned troops away from the capital. Eighty executions of officers were reported before the coup (this was denied by Barre) and the participants were reported to be either killed or under arrest.

No evidence

Although the Russians might have gained from such a coup, there is no evidence that they were actually behind it.

The significance of the Ogaden victory to the Ethiopian military regime, the Derg, is enormous: without it their days were numbered. It also means that they are in a much stronger strategic position to fight the Eritreans—the route from Addis Ababa to the port of Djibouti is open again.

Eritrea was always the more important region to hold on to. It is the most industrialised and urbanised province of Ethiopia, with a population of three million—the same as in the whole of Somalia. Without Eritrea, Ethiopia is landlocked. It will not be an easy war—the Eritreans control 90 per cent of the country.

Suffered

The Eritrean struggle for independence is now in its seventeenth year, and in that time the liberation movements have seen allies come and go, and suffered internal divisions which still persist. Eritrea was an Italian colony until the end of the second world war. In 1952 it was 'federated' with Ethiopia by the British, who had also re-imposed Haile Selassie's corrupted and brutal regime on the Ethiopian after the war.

The Eritreans consequently have no illusions about the British, nor about the Americans, who armed and backed Selassie and did nothing to stop him smashing any remaining Eritrean autonomy in 1962.

Facts like these show up the hollowness of the present American and British protests

from ROUGE

NEWS analysis

about foreign intervention in Africa. They are largely responsible for shaping the conflicts which are now occurring.

That said, the role of Russia and Cuba in the Horn of Africa should be paid to the myth that, whatever their domestic faults, they are somehow 'progressive' in their foreign policy.

As long as Selassie remained in power, the Russians had a foothold in Somalia and consequently backed the Eritreans. Cuba trained Eritrean freedom fighters in 1969-70.

When the revolution in Ethiopia in 1974 overthrew Selassie, and a group of officers armed with socialist rhetoric took over, the Russians saw an opportunity to expand their influence. They tried to federate Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and South Yemen. The aspirations of the Somalis for 'Greater Somalia' encompassing the Ogaden and the Somali-populated area of north eastern Kenya, got in the way. There was a switching of alliances: the Americans were kicked out of Ethiopia in April last year and the Russians from Somalia in November.

The Somali regime suddenly ceased to be 'Marxist' while the Derg in Ethiopia became a model socialist government. The Derg's need to recapture Eritrea has transformed the Eritreans from national liberation movements into the 'pawns of Western imperialism', according to *Pravda*.

Airlifted

The Cubans have officially denied any intention of fighting the Eritreans, but the Eritreans say that at least 2,000 Cubans have been airlifted into the Eritrean capital, Asmara. The Eritrean Popular Liberation Front commented 'They are not there to play football.'

The international alliances have been one of the most puzzling aspects of the situation to many British socialists. Briefly, the Arab states have mostly lined up against traditionally Christian and pro-Israel Ethiopia: Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states. On the Ethiopian side are the Russians, Cubans, East Germans, the Libyans and the Israelis.

Israel's presence in this line up is explained by its need to keep the Red Sea from becoming an 'Arab lake'. Israel was an important supporter of Haile Selassie and continues to support the Derg for the same

reasons.

Some of the Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, also materially support the Eritreans against the threat of Russian predominance in the Red Sea area. The importance of the Red Sea as a naval and especially an oil tanker route explains the involvement of so many different countries in the situation.

Reactionary

Some people on the left in Britain oppose the Eritreans on the grounds that the Derg is socialist and therefore any nationalist movement is reactionary in relation to it, although it may have been progressive in Selassie's time. But a workers' state wouldn't napalm people who wanted to be independent, as the Derg is now doing to the Eritreans. It would give them the unconditional right to secession, with an invitation to unite.

The rest of the Derg's policies in Ethiopia itself also show very clearly what kind of regime it is. It isn't fascist—it was brought to power on the tide of a revolution led mainly by the Ethiopian working class. It introduced a number of radical reforms—nationalisation of the land, the banks and major companies, but that was as far as it would go.

Faced with continuing struggle by workers and peasants, the Derg responded with repression. Thousands of militant workers and students have been massacred. The trade unions have been smashed. The so-called 'Red Terror' aims at wiping out all opposition to the Derg's rule.

The only hope for a real transformation of Ethiopian society lies in the overthrow of this barbarous gang. A victory for the Eritrean liberation forces would help to bring that nearer.

Sue Cockerell

Letter from Madrid

Christian 'charity'

'In certain circumstances, violence isn't only legitimate but is also a sign of Christian charity'.

These are the words of Blas Pinar, former confidant of General Franco, now leader of Spain's biggest and nastiest fascist organisation, Fuerza Nueva (FN). Recently the rich young blue-shirted thugs of the FN have been dealing out 'Christian charity' in large amounts.

Physical attacks on bookstalls, meetings, paper sellers, cinemas, bookshops, etc have increased. They have usually been organised by the FN or a terrorist group closely linked to it, the 'Guerillas of Christ the King'. They are generally liberally armed with iron bars, chains, coshes and sometimes guns.

A typical attack was a recent foray (one of many in the last six months) in the Madrid flea market, the Rastro. A group of thirty Christians, equipped with helmets and shields, accompanied by prearranged whistle-blasts, charged back and forth among the many left-wing bookstalls.

It took the police three hours to arrive, although there is a police station on the same street. When they finally turned up, they fired tear gas at the stall-holders and shoppers.

But the actions of the police surprise no-one. They are always in evidence on guard outside the FN headquarters. The left, however, never benefit from their protection.

Recently the Communist Party leader, Santiago Carrillo, was picketed by armed FN members at a university in northern Spain. When the police finally arrived they es-

corted him to a restaurant, where they left him—still surrounded by fascists. Carrillo then had to phone for help to the local governor, a known fascist recently linked with a bomb attack against a radical magazine in Barcelona.

While many republican groups remain illegal in the new 'democratic' Spain, the FN, with tacit police support, continue to preach and practice violence against the left. More sinister still are the known links between the FN and the upper echelons of the armed forces.

Mary and Doug Andrews

ECONOMIC BRIEFING

In the last economic briefing we saw how the hoped for expansion of the British economy was running into difficulties because of the sharp rise in imports. Actually this is not a new problem at all, in fact every bid for growth by a British government in the past two decades has come unstuck at least in part for this reason.

During the 'Barber boom' of 1971-3, for example, the import bill doubled in two years, (this is before the oil price explosion) and in the early 1960s Selwyn Lloyd's reflation of the economy was cut short by the same problem.

Whenever this happens the call arises, both from the nationalist Right representing small business and from large sections of the reformist Left (the CP, Tribunites etc.) for import controls to prevent the inflow of foreign goods.

In addition to these periodic balance of payments difficulties for the whole economy there are ongoing problems for specific industries in the import of particular kinds of manufactured goods.

Certain industries, for example textiles, shoes, electronics (and of course cars) have been losing out heavily to a growing volume of cheaper and higher quality imports. The employers in these industries, backed in most cases by the relevant trade unions, call for special curbs on



the import of these goods in order to 'protect British jobs'.

The *revolutionary* left, of course, has always opposed the call for import controls because of its political implications, implications we shall examine in a moment. Before looking at these, however, we ought to consider the economics of the matter. Is it the case for example, that import controls would reduce the level of unemployment in Britain? What in fact would be the economic effects of import controls?

The first point to be made, and it is one that is very often missed, is that the large scale introduction of import controls would in and of itself constitute a reduction in living standards. In so far as the import controls made people buy British goods instead of foreign ones, the British goods would be more expensive or inferior in quality to the foreign goods they replaced (otherwise people would have bought them anyway without the import controls). This would amount to a cut in real wages.

That is not in itself decisive, however, because a cut in the real wages of employed workers might be felt to be worthwhile if

it was associated with a reduction in unemployment. But this would not happen—on the contrary it is likely that the effect of import controls would be to *raise* the overall level of unemployment.

The key point here is the crucial importance of foreign trade to the British economy and the complete interdependence of exports and imports. To give just one example, for every £1 worth of foreign car imports, Britain exports £2 worth of car components.

Retaliation

Any general introduction of import controls by Britain (other than as a very short term measure) would inevitably meet with retaliation from other manufacturing nations, in the form of the exclusion of British goods from their home markets.

Since in *manufactured goods* as opposed to food and raw materials, Britain exports far more than it imports (£5 billion more in 1977) this process would cause British firms to lose more markets abroad than they stood to gain at home. The net result would be an increase in unemployment in Britain.

The possible implications of such policies for the world economy as a whole are very serious. The danger is that of triggering off a spiral of measures and counter measures by all the advanced countries against each others exports that would deepen the present world recession into a 'protectionist slump', perhaps of 1930's style proportions.

The danger of retaliation rules out large scale import restrictions as a viable policy for British capitalism, but it leaves open the possibility of selective bans and quotas on the import of specific items, such as textile goods, where British firms are particularly vulnerable.

The government can impose specific bans and quotas of this kind in a piecemeal way, simply by issuing orders to that effect. In the last two years the number of such orders has increased considerably, mostly without coming to public notice (an exception is the recent restriction on Japanese car imports which was widely publicised). This kind of behaviour, which is by no means confined to Britain, constitutes a sort of 'creeping protectionism' which can only tend to deepen the world recession.

Thus a ban on the import of say, Japanese television tubes, while it may protect a small number of jobs in Britain in the short run, in the long run it is part of a process which is bound to reduce both living standards and the number of jobs available all over the world, including in Britain.

In practice these specific restrictions are frequently directed against goods coming from Third World countries, which are not in a position to retaliate. An example of this would be President Carter's recent ban on the import of shoes into the US. The immediate effect was that 30,000 people were thrown out of work in a single district of Brazil.

It should be obvious that no trade unionist can support this sort of policy. If the case for import controls is misguided economically, politically it is very dubious indeed. The call for import controls rests on the belief (even when factually wrong) that they can save 'British' jobs through a mechanism that inevitably involves the loss of 'foreign' jobs. If it were true, for example that stopping Japanese car imports could permanently increase the

number of jobs available in the British car industry, this could only be by throwing a similar number of workers out of work in Japan.

This is a very curious policy for a socialist to advocate, for it goes against the most elementary trade union principles. It involves saying that British workers and British bosses have a common interest in getting together to do down foreign workers. The logic of this position is not socialist but *nationalist*. This is underlined by the fact that, outside the labour movement, the most consistent demands for import controls come from the *far Right*. David Turner.

LABOUR NEWS

One of the quietest revolutions ever in the British trade union movement may just have begun. The new code on time-off for union duties became law on 1 April, institutionalising many of the practices which shop stewards have won from management over the years. Reasonable facilities for stewards are now required, as is paid time-off to organise at the workplace.

The significance is perhaps not so much in what is new, but—to quote a senior conciliation service official—that 'it defines the limits to which the unions should go'. The document in fact underwent major changes from its 'consultative' stage—every one of them in favour of the employers.

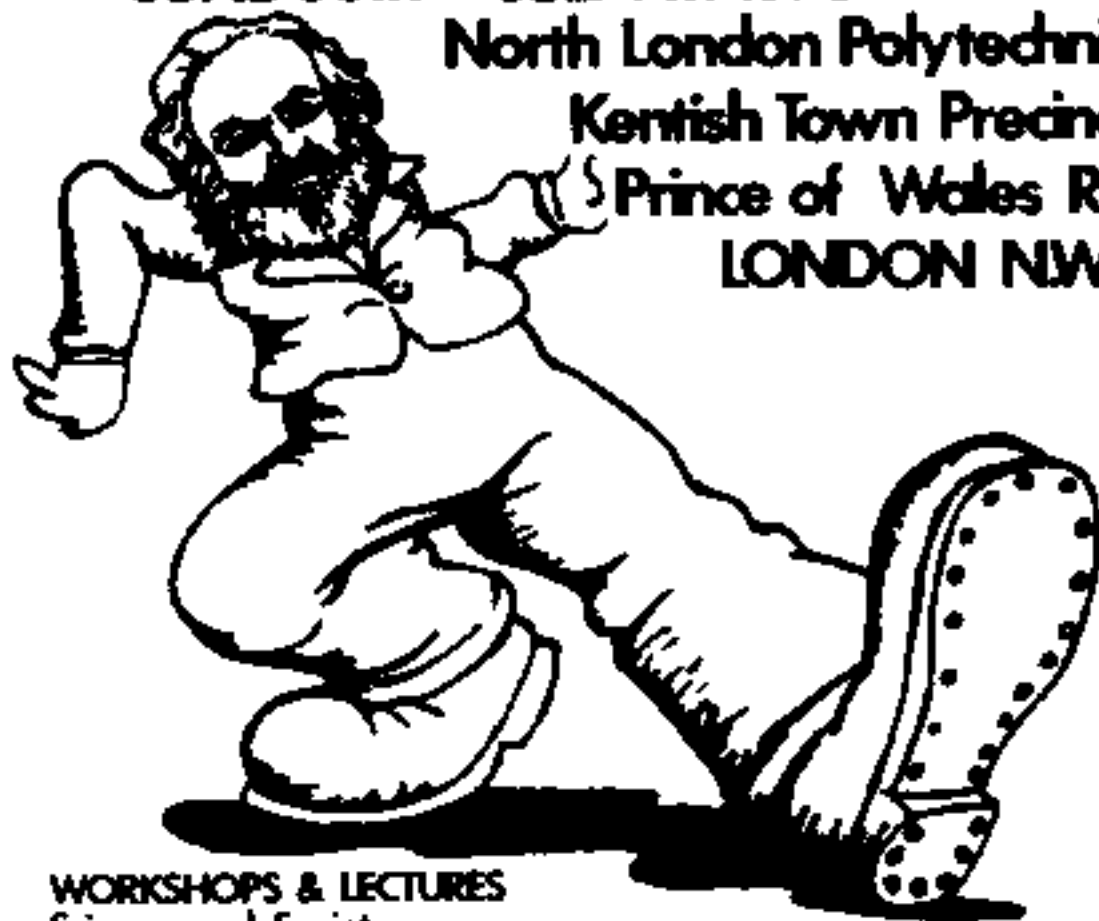
The TUC now intends to give a massive boost to shop steward training, hoping eventually to train 100,000 stewards a year at recognised college courses. A £600,000 government subsidy is already available and this is likely to rise to £1m shortly (the TUC wants three times as much).

Stewards are thus going to become more 'expert' and, the TUC hopes, a more predictable group. Whether this means longer-serving stewards, becoming more and more like full-timers, as the TUC must want or whether it means a new generation of trained militants is of course the big question. Dave Field

MARXISM '78

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Chris Harman

'Everything seemed possible...'

Mention 1968 at any gathering of the left and you get two quite different reactions. There are those who can be expected to subside quickly into a rather sickly nostalgia, with tales of how they petrol bombed the police in the Boulevard Saint Michel or (more likely) of how they ransacked the vice-chancellor's office. And there will be others, younger, more working-class, who will ask what was so special about their last year in primary school.

Yet 1968 was an important year in a way in which neither the aging ex-student rebel nor the younger cynic realises. For it marked a qualitative change in the whole character of the international class struggle.

There had been great struggles in the industrialised countries in the decade prior to 1968. But they had been isolated and their impact soon passed. People rapidly forgot the mass movement that overthrew the Kishi government in Japan in 1960 or the general strike in Belgium in December of the same year.

These were little more than hiccups which the system could take in its stride. As Tony Cliff remarked of the Belgian general strike, capitalism was 'still expanding, even if in an uneven way. Society as a whole was not at an impasse. Hence neither of the contending classes felt it necessary to change the balance of forces fundamentally.' (*International Socialism 4 Spring 1961*).

The picture in the decade after 1968 has been quite different. Eruption has followed eruption — a general strike in one country, an insurrection in another, a military coup somewhere else. Whole countries have been stuck in seemingly permanent political crisis. The old Comintern phrase about 'an epoch of wars and revolutions' has once more rung true.

Only in a narrow belt of Northern Europe have the ruling classes been able to keep their heads completely above water; only in the United States has the old order been able to neutralise and reabsorb the forces that rocked it in the 1960s.

1968 was not just one wave of student insurgency or one general strike (even if the biggest in history). It marked the *watershed* between two eras. It was preceded by the longest boom in capitalist history, with 20 years of permanent economic expansion and social peace; it was followed by a new period of never-ending economic and political crisis.

The pattern to the series of political upheavals that began in 1968 only makes sense when you see how various forces that had grown up in the first period reacted when faced with the second.

The most important effect of the long boom was a massive growth in the working class throughout the world. Tens of millions of workers were sucked into new centres of industry: French, Algerian, Tunisian, Spanish and

Yugoslav peasants into the car plants of Paris; Turks, East German refugees, Yugoslavs and Italians into Dusseldorf and Cologne; the toilers of Southern Italy into Turin and Milan; the radical agricultural labourers of South Portugal into the factories of Lisbon and Setubal; the children of the Navarre peasants who had fought enthusiastically for Franco into the new factories of Pamplona.

Although in Northern Europe and the US the boom was accompanied by a steady rise in living standards, in many other countries it was financed by a deliberate pushing down of working-class living standards. France under de Gaulle, Portugal under Salazar and Caetano, Spain under Franco, Argentina under a military regime, Chile under Allende and Frei, Pakistan under Ayub Khan, Poland under Gomulka — all could have high rates of capital accumulation because of varying degrees of repression directed against the most elementary workers' struggles.

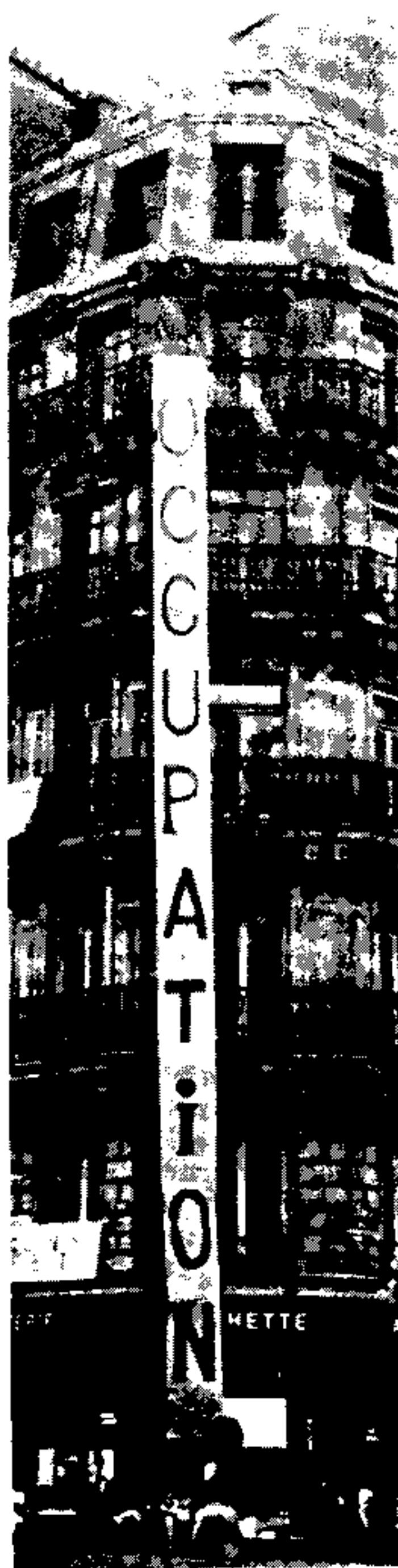
Many of the old peasant prejudices exploited by the ruling classes to maintain their political control began to wilt in the industrial concentrations. This process affected both the Catholic Church in the Latin countries and the Stalinist apparatuses in Eastern Europe.

The traditional left within the workers movement was incapable, at first, of taking advantage of this break-up of the traditional right. Social Democracy was too closely bound to the CIA and its image of the 'free world' to take the initiative: in Spain and Portugal its underground organisations were more or less dead; in Italy participation in Christian Democrat governments lost it voters to the left; in France its backing of the war in Algeria and its support for the advent of de Gaulle so devastated it that at its low point (in the 1969 presidential election) it received only about four per cent of the popular vote.

Paralysed by their desire

The Communist Parties were often much stronger. But they were paralysed by their desire to prove their respectability to the ruling classes long before anyone thought of the term 'Eurocommunism'. In France they restricted the workers' movement to occasional one day token strikes; in Spain they preached 'national





reconciliation' and a peaceful general strike as the alternative to fascism; in Portugal they refused any attempt to turn huge street demonstrations against the dictator Salazar in the early 1960s into a general insurrection.

The result globally was what we in the International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party) in Britain called a '*vacuum on the left*'. There was immense and growing resentment among workers that the traditional institutions of capitalist society could not hold down for ever. But working-class organisations capable of unifying and directing those resentments did not exist.

Transformed by the boom

It was this that gave the student movement immense, if transient, importance in many countries. The universities themselves had been transformed as a result of the boom. Big business had felt that the old cloistered playgrounds for the youth of the privileged classes were no longer adequate for supplying its technological needs. In every country it opened university education up to hundreds of thousands of youngsters from the lower middle class and even the working class, in the expectation that these would learn to man its technological apparatuses and its bureaucracies.

Growing numbers of youth flocked into the system of higher education, expecting the old life style and the old privileges, only to be bitterly disappointed. They were faced with the exam system where they had expected enlightenment, with authoritarianism where they had expected liberalism, with repression where they had expected tolerance. Their disillusion rapidly took political forms. Their youth made them willing to turn to new, radical ideas; the fact that they were not bound to the daily grind of productive work gave them a freedom to argue and demonstrate that workers rarely have. The general ideological crisis of society found its easiest expression in their ranks. And so, whether in Paris or Milan, in Berlin or Berkeley, Warsaw or Prague, they poured by their tens of thousands on to the streets, providing a focus for everyone else who was fed up with the old order.

One other product of the 1960s was of particular importance for many of the movements of 1967-9. This was the American attempt to

assert their dominating position as the world power at the expense of the people of Vietnam. 1968 was the year when the attempt came apart, as the Tet offensive of the National Liberation Front inflicted the first major defeat on the Americans. The 'war came home' as GIs began using fragmentation bombs against their officers and joined in peace rallies, as the American campuses erupted, as President Johnson was forced to abandon his plans to run for reelection, as armed police beat demonstrators to pulp outside the Democratic Party convention in Chicago. To all sorts of people, throughout the world, the message of Vietnam was: *Everything is possible*.

All these different factors came together to cause the explosion that shook France in May and June 1968. A student movement, stimulated by the Vietnamese struggle, clashed with the university authorities, provoking massive police repression and, in its wake, massive, spontaneous solidarity action by a working class rebelling against ten years of right-wing rule and depressed living standards. (The May events in France are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this Review).

The French May was followed a little over a year later by the Italian 'hot autumn', the 'May in slow motion'. Spontaneous walk-outs from Italy's big factories were followed by street demonstrations and clashes with the police, in which the workers of Turin and Milan took up the slogans of the left-wing students.

In 1969 Argentina experienced the Cordobaza - a virtual uprising as the workers of the car plants of Cordoba fought against the military forces. In Prague too, the spring of that year saw a brief alliance between the student organisations and the renovated trade unions.

New, confident and unfettered

Many of the same elements were still at work six years later, when student-worker demonstrations overthrew the empire of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia and when a group of middle ranking army officers finally brought down the fascist dictatorship in Portugal. The by-products of the world boom — especially a new, confident, powerful and ideologically unfettered working class — were once again tearing asunder the shell of the old society. But by this time there was a



VIETNAM Tet offensive. NLF hold Hue for 3 weeks and seize US embassy in Saigon. **WEST GERMANY** Rudi Dutschke shot. Students riot against right wing Springer press. **FRANCE** Student barricades 'detonate' strike of 10 million workers.



CZECHOSLOVAKIA 'Liberal' Dubcek replaces 'Stalinist' Novotny. Workers and students begin to organise independently. Russians invade. **IRELAND** Civil Rights demonstration, RUC invade Bogside, Catholics fight back. **USA** Police club anti-war demonstrators outside



Chicago Democratic convention. **MEXICO** 400 student demonstrators massacred by Government. **BRITAIN** 100,000 on the streets in solidarity with the NLF.

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full-blown international economic crisis, leaving much less room to manoeuvre for the defenders of the old order than in France or Italy in 1968-9.

Everything seemed possible in 1968. Yet ten years later, after a decade of 'wars and revolutions' there is still not one example of a successful bid for power by the working class.

In the May events there was one great weakness — and it has stymied every movement since. There did not exist an organised and centralised network of militants inside the factories — a party — prepared to lead the movement forward. Workers were not prepared to follow the students when it came to the question of political power — they looked to their traditional organisations, especially the Communist Party, and on their advice returned to work.

When it came to the Italian hot autumn, once again a militant, revolutionary minority succeeded in 'igniting' massive conflicts; but likewise, the reformist trade union organisations eventually succeeded in absorbing much of the new energy.

In Chile the revolutionary left (especially the MIR) showed that on occasions it could speed up the radicalisation of the masses; but it could not prevent the reformists of the Socialist and Communist Parties channelling the radical impulses in a disastrous direction.

In Portugal the revolutionary groups and the extreme left within the armed forces were able to push things to the point where the capitalist power structure had virtually disintegrated; but they did not have the influence within the workplaces to get the workers to build an alternative. Nor did they attempt to do so: as a result, on 25 November, 1975, a few hundred right-wing soldiers were able to reassemble the fragments of the bourgeois state structure while the reformists held the working class back from action.

The revolutionary left in 1967-9 could grow in the vacuum. But it could not fill the vacuum. It was just too small in the first place.

The fingers of two hands

People today often have no conception of how weak the revolutionary left internationally was before 1968. In France at the beginning of the May events the three main revolutionary groups had at most 600 members each. In Britain the left was even smaller. We in the International Socialists were already the biggest revolutionary group, but we had at most 400 members and about half of those were concentrated in London. In major industrial centres like Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, our membership could be counted on the fingers of two hands.

There was no way in which such small organisations could provide practical leadership even in quite small industrial disputes affecting one industry, let alone in the huge spontaneous upsurges of 1967-9.

But the organisations themselves could grow, with the perspective of developing the roots necessary to provide leadership in the next great round of struggles.

But, in fulfilling this task, the revolutionary left was held back not merely by its size, but also by its social composition and its politics. And, in many cases, the three different sorts of weakness reinforced one another.

The smallness of the revolutionary organisations meant that only those who were very highly motivated politically and who had



plenty of spare time were likely to join. That usually meant those from a student-intellectual background. But this then created an atmosphere inside the organisations which made manual workers feel out of place. Discussions were dominated by highly articulate ex-students with little knowledge of what was happening in the real world. The very language they employed reeked of academic 'Marxism'.

The small size of the organisations and the social composition of the membership led in turn to an attitude which discouraged any attempt to take seriously the everyday struggles of workers.

In Britain, for instance, the International Socialists (now the SWP) were attacked on all sides for 'economism' and 'workerism'. Even within the IS there were minority tendencies which denounced any recruitment campaign directed at workers as a 'dilution' of the organisation. Meanwhile in the broader revolutionary milieu, sociologists and would-be Marxists enjoined us to create 'Red Bases' within the universities, which would be 'sociologically inaccessible' and from which we could bounce socialist ideas 'like billiard balls' into the working class. Their efforts went into producing papers and journals for the radicalised student and ex-student milieu (*Black Dwarf*, *Ink*, *Red Mole*, and, in its own way, *New Left Review*) instead of attempting to build in the class of which these papers sometimes spoke.

The initial success of the French students in 'igniting' a general strike led to futile attempts at imitation, with groups of revolutionaries taking to the streets and fighting it out with the police in complete isolation from the class: the failure of these efforts led in the worst cases merely to more refined forms of militarism (bombs and revolvers). In South America a whole generation of revolutionaries committed political (and all too often physical) suicide by turning to guerrilla actions as a substitute to working within the class to develop its self-confidence and organisation.

Even where the lesson was learnt about the need to build inside the working class there was not always an escape from the easy illusions of 1968-9. In Italy for example the most successful and rapidly growing of the groups in the early 1970s, Avanguardia Operaia, began life by denying the need to work inside the unions. In Spain the whole left exaggerated the revolutionary consciousness of the workers, talking year after year about an 'incipient pre-revolutionary situation'.

Politics abhors a vacuum. Once millions of



men and women have been thrust by their own spontaneous actions into political life, they will attempt to define politically what they are doing. If they do not find a revolutionary definition, they will adopt a reformist one.

This is particularly the case in periods of economic crisis. Every spontaneous economic struggle is then portrayed by the ruling class and the media as pushing society to the edge of 'chaos'. People either develop a total view of the system, or they end up trying to fit their own actions into it.

The vacuum of the late 1960s was not filled by the revolutionary left; therefore a new reformism had to fill it — especially after the onset of the world economic crisis in the mid-1970s.

Outlets for their anger

There was a new growth of the existing reformism, which usually meant the Communist Parties and the unions they controlled. Young workers who had been on the barricades in 1968-9 now looked for an outlet for their anger in terms of the day-to-day fight in the factories. The older workers most able to advise them on this were the established Communist Party militants, intent on capturing the militancy for their parties' project of reforming capitalism from within. They could offer the young workers 'practicality', short-term goals, advice, apparent results. The revolutionary left, waving its red flags outside the factory, screaming of 'red bases', denouncing activity inside the unions, could not.

A second form of reformism developed in many countries through a rejuvenation of the old Social Democracy. With a little help from their friends in the CIA and the North European governments they developed a new image and put a lot of money into building up new apparatuses. They did not usually succeed in building a new workers' cadre: but in France, Spain and Portugal they did manage to capture a lot of working-class votes.

This revival of Social Democracy in turn stimulated the Communist Parties to make new efforts to appear respectable: the Stalinist ugly duckling was miraculously transformed into the liberal, Eurocommunist swan.

Regardless of the form taken by the growth of the new reformism, it posed deep problems for the revolutionary left — especially for the impatient street fighters of a couple of years earlier.

They suddenly found they were isolated. The young workers who had marched alongside them

CHINA Border fighting with Russia on Ussuri river. **ITALY** 'Hot Autumn': waves of strikes for renewal of contracts. Formation of base committees in factories. **CZECHOSLOVAKIA** Riots follow Czech victory over Russian ice-hockey team. **ARGENTINA** Workers uprising in Cordoba. **BRITAIN** Dustmen's strikes start 'revolt of the lower paid': strike against Labour's proposed 'In Place of Strife'. **PAKISTAN** General strike. Overthrow of Ayub Khan. Imposition of martial law. **IRELAND** Street-fighting in Belfast and Derry. British troops sent in



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and helped them raise the barricades had suddenly opted for surer, more concrete, if illusory, aims. In France they chose to wait for apparently guaranteed success, first from the 1974 presidential elections and then from the 1978 assembly elections; in Italy they argued that the new Communist-tolerated government should at least be given a chance to halt the drift towards 'chaos'; in Spain they flocked to vote for the Communist and Social Democrats in parliamentary and union elections.

All too often the former 'ultra-lefts' reacted by replacing a new form of impatience for the old. In the past they had believed that an activist revolutionary minority could by its own radical action transform society for the working class; now they believed manoeuvres with reformist parties could transform society for the working class. In neither case did the class itself have to develop a revolutionary consciousness and a revolutionary party.

A fairly typical example is that of the former 'ultra-lefts' of Democrazia Proletaria (previously Avanguardia Operaia) who now call for import controls and give the impression that a 'left government' of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and themselves could 'open up the revolutionary road' in Italy. The result has been a drastic decline in the cohesion and influence of what was once the strongest far left in Europe.

In France the growth of illusions in electoral possibilities among workers found its reflection among the revolutionary left in an obsession with electoral activity and with demands for various governmental combinations of reformist parties. Of course revolutionaries should use elections to make propaganda, and should welcome the advent of the reformists to office as a way of showing that reformism cannot work. But with much of the European left you cannot help feeling that once ultra-impatient revolutionaries are now themselves in danger of behaving like the left wing of reformism.

The practical tendency to move to the right to meet the new reformism has its theoretical expression in certain allegedly 'new' Marxist thinking.

The Eurocommunists, of course, write off the dreams of 1968 as 'unrealistic utopianism'. Using bowdlerised versions of Gramsci they suggest that any assault on state power is impossible in the 'West'. The tendency today is for much of the far left to succumb to a slightly more radical version of this thesis. An assault on state power, they suggest, can only come via a 'left' or 'workers' government, by replacing the stress on building the revolutionary party by a stress on 'blocs' with other social forces, and by adopting an uncritical attitude to the bourgeois democratic illusions of most workers.

For these people, the failure of the last ten years is a failure of revolutionaries to dilute their ideas in the direction of the various reformist currents, not a failure to fight reformism in the factories through the building of a revolutionary party. Typically, those who treated the 'student vanguard' or the 'Red bases' as a substitute for the party in 1968-9 now once again displace the task of building the party into the distant future by arguing that it cannot occur until electoral manoeuvres have split the reformist organisations.

It seems that they will never learn that reformism will recover from any crisis unless there already exists at least the beginnings of a party, with members capable of carrying the

revolutionary argument and giving practical leadership in every factory.

The media have already started their celebration of 1968. It consists chiefly in portraying it almost exclusively as a student movement and then claiming that students have calmed down a lot since. In that way what actually occurred can be made to seem distant and irrelevant.

But the claim is not even true when applied to students. In this country the wave of student struggles in 1970-71 was much bigger than that in 1967-9, and the wave in 1976-7 was even bigger than that in 1970-71. When it comes to workers, the claim becomes a joke. There may not have been a general strike in France in the last two years, but there have been massive explosions of anger in Tunisia, Poland, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Egypt, Spain, South Africa — to name but a few.

The wave of insurgency that began in 1967-9 is still continuing, flaring up first in one part of the world, then in another, and only in one place has the working class yet suffered a decisive defeat — in Chile.

What is true, however, is that much more is at stake in the battles today than ten years ago. The continuing economic crisis allows capitalism very little room for making concessions. It therefore tries to contain the militancy by using the reformist parties and unions to get workers to identify with the competing national capitalist units of the world system. Massive, spontaneous struggles erupt. But they are followed by new governmental combinations (or sometimes just by talk of new governmental combinations), by longer or shorter lulls which prepare the ground for fresh spontaneous outbreaks.

The employing class everywhere uses these lulls to its own advantage, moving quickly from concessions designed to make easier the tasks of the reformists, to new offensives against the working class. Real wages are cut, 'rationalisation' destroys hundreds of thousands of jobs permanently, social services become increasingly inadequate, various forms of racialism and nationalism grow, efforts are made to create a 'new right' to gain from disillusion with the new reformism, the state's repressive forces are strengthened.

Yet hardly anywhere does the employing class feel confident enough yet to put all its eggs in the far right basket: in France, in Britain, in Italy, in Spain the 'new right' has to fight it out within the institutions of the ruling class with those who know the social democrats and 'Eurocommunists' are still vital. For, the ruling class itself cannot fully forget how repression and depressed living standards proved a dangerously explosive mixture in France and Italy and Argentina and Portugal and Spain and even, in 1972, in Britain.

Just as there have been many 'Mays' in the last ten years, there will be many more, much more bitter than before, in the next ten years. The revolutionary left has to remember this. But it also has to remember that the worse the general crisis of society the greater the need for an active, intransigent but cool-headed revolutionary party.

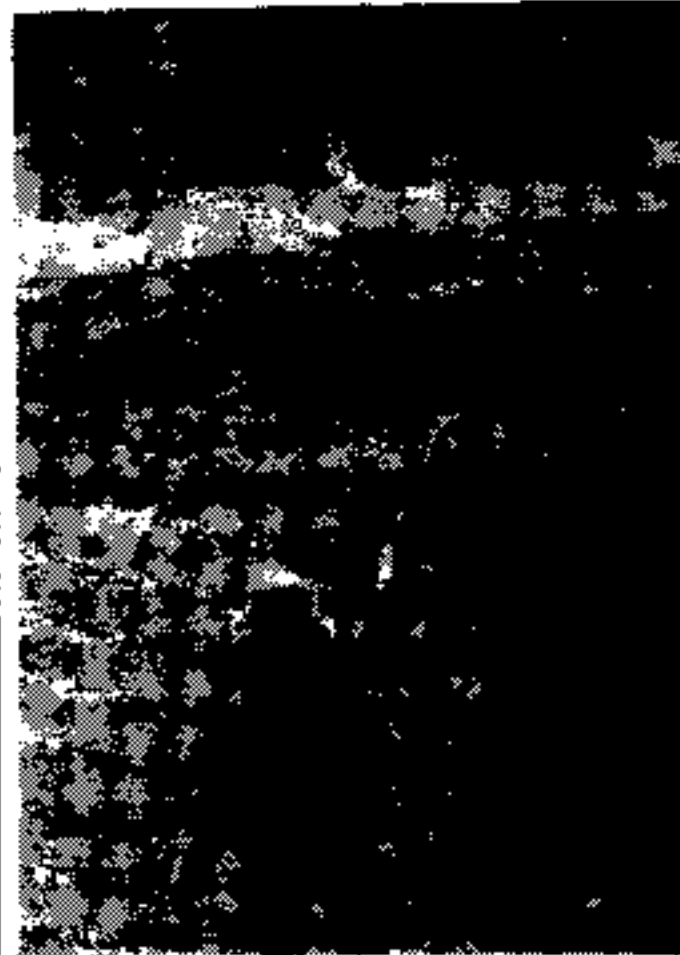
Growing bitterness is going to be accompanied by growing despair — especially of those forced to live on the margins of society as jobs are destroyed. The bitterness of unemployed youth can feed into the working-class movement via a party, giving added power to the revolutionary forces. But there is another alternative: the despair can be utilised by capitalism, whether to

BRITAIN
Tory

Government:

500,000 strike against Industrial Relations Act.

JORDAN Mounting strength of Palestinian guerrillas smashed by King Hussein in 'Black September'. INDO-CHINA US invades Cambodia. USA 4 antiwar demonstrators



shot dead by National Guard at Kent State University. CHILE Allende's 'Popular Unity' government elected.



POLAND Shipyard workers in Gdansk and Szczecin strike against new piece-work system. Police and CP headquarters attacked.

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encourage insane acts designed to discredit the revolutionaries, as with the Red Brigades in Italy today, or to build up extra-parliamentary forces of the far right, as in Italy and Germany before the second world war.

Bourgeois journalists rarely see things in a context wider than a couple of months: they are paid to titillate readers with the clever phrases which carry a sensation of immediacy, however misleading this might be. Revolutionary socialists have to be much more perceptive. The death throes of an old social order can drag on for decades, rather than days. That is why we have to insist that the game begun in 1968 is still continuing, but that the stakes are getting much higher.

Tariq Ali

The lessons of 1968

The political explosions which marked the year 1968 are only ten years old. And yet they have already become history. Isaac Deutscher used to remark that the memory of the newly-radicalised militant only covered half a decade — to explain what had happened prior to that one had to start anew.

It is not possible to recount the impact and importance of 1968 in a brief article. We have attempted to do so at length elsewhere*. But it is worth summarising the interrelated character of the upheavals. In February 1968 (the Vietnamese New Year), the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam launched a powerful military offensive against the armies of American imperialism. The scale and character of the thrust traumatised Washington. There were simultaneous assaults on 26 provincial capitals. The ancient imperial metropolis of Hue fell after a fierce battle and the NLF flag flew over the old palace. The working-class suburbs of Saigon were solidly for the NLF and the American Embassy itself was temporarily captured by a group of NLF commandos! The NLF offensive laid the basis for the largest anti-war movement in the history of an imperialist country. It gave hope and joy to revolutionaries throughout the world and it marked the beginning of the end for the Americans in Vietnam.

The effect of the Vietnamese developments in Western Europe was electric. In France a developing student revolt, stimulated by the Tet offensive, clashed with the State. After weeks of struggles the movement reached its climax on the night of 10 May. The students erected barricades, won increasing support and held out for the whole night in the face of repeated assaults. The following day the French government accepted most of their central demands. This victory set off a chain reaction. Under real pressure from below the giant communist union The CGT and the CFDT called a one-day strike in solidarity with the students. It was a massive success. Spontaneous factory occupations developed and within a few weeks France was in the grip of a

*1968 and After by Tariq Ali, Blond and Briggs, £5.25 (due to be published in June 1978)

spontaneous general strike from below. Ten million workers had withdrawn their labour and occupied their factories. It was the largest general strike in the history of capitalism. The struggle was defeated and derailed by an unsigned 'historic compromise' between the French Communist Party and the Gaullist Fifth Republic. The strike lacked a clear political focus. The revolutionary left was weak. The PCF was hegemonic.

Only three months after the May-June events in France, the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. The experiment known as the 'Prague Spring' had ended censorship in that country. Debates and discussions were taking place in the realm of politics, economics, culture and history. Trotsky had been virtually rehabilitated by the paper of the Czech Young Communists. Deutscher's writings were being serialised. The appeal of the Fourth International to Czech workers and students had appeared in Czech in a new magazine, *Informacny Materialy* (Information Materials), which also published accounts of the French May extremely hostile to the PCF. Growing demands for institutionalised pluralism were being discussed. A proposal to permit tendencies in the Czech Communist Party had already been agreed upon and was awaiting ratification from an Extraordinary Congress of the Party scheduled for September 1968.

Before it could take place Russian tanks moved in to end the experiment and assert Stalinist hegemony. But Czechoslovakia in 1968 was to prove different from Hungary in 1956. It took the Russians over a year to substitute a new leadership. Their political control was established by a massive purge of the CPCz. Tens of thousands of communists were expelled.

The Vietnamese offensive had revealed the weaknesses of American imperialism; the May Events had shown both the vulnerability and the resilience of the bourgeois-democratic states of the West; Prague revealed the deep and profound crisis which was shaking the Stalinist system. It was these three events which shaped world politics and nothing has been the same since. For though the struggle of the workers suffered defeats in both Paris and Prague, these were of a specific character. The crisis of the capitalist and the bureaucratic system is more pronounced today than it was in 1968. Developments since that time have revealed the inability of capitalist politics and economics to recreate the lost stability of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Lessons of developments

Revolutionary socialism was reborn in Europe in 1968. The growth of the far left has been a direct product of 1968. The fact is, however, that unless we fully absorb the lessons of political developments over the last ten years, we will be unable to move forward. The emergence of 'Eurocommunism' is also a product of the last decade. But a repetition of old formulas in the battle of ideas with the Eurocommunists is clearly not sufficient. It should be stated that, in many cases, the theoreticians of Eurocommunism have posed important questions of strategy and tactics. True, they have provided the wrong answers, but we can only challenge them if we accept that the traditional syndicalist recipes, which characterised much of the European far left are utterly inadequate in formulating a response.

The single most important experience for the working class in Western Europe since 1968 has been the Portuguese Revolution. Its failings allow

us to develop further some of the lessons of May 1968 in France and of the wave of workers' struggles which shook Britain in 1969-74.

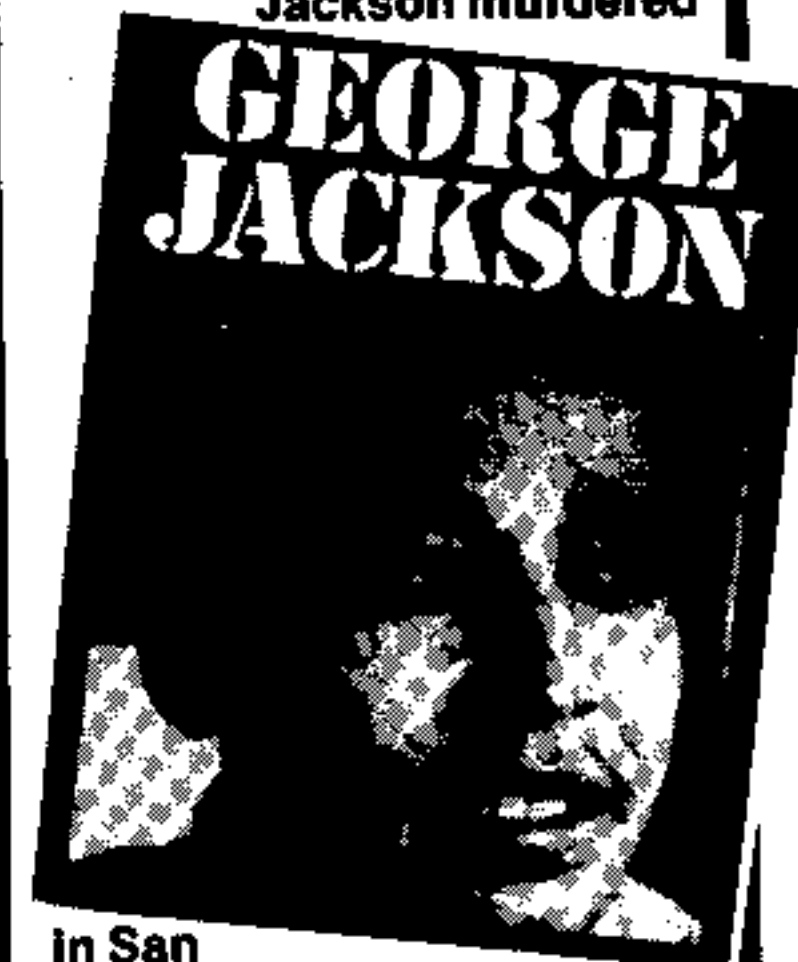
The central point to grasp is that the French general strike, the Portuguese upheaval, the 1974 miners strike in Britain, were not ended by repression and bloody counter-revolution. They were derailed by bourgeois-democracy. The difference is absolutely fundamental for the development of a Leninist political strategy in the West. The Russian Revolution never confronted a modern bourgeois-democratic state. Nor did the Bolsheviks have to face a well-entrenched reformist apparatus in the heart of the working class. Tsarist Russia was the most backward state in continental Europe. It also possessed the most advanced revolutionary organisation in the world. Furthermore this organisation was implanted in a minority of the population. An inter-imperialist war was of vital importance in creating the conditions for an ultimate assault on the Tsarist state and its apparatus.

Historic memory of occupation

The scale of mass mobilisations in de Gaulle's Fifth Republic were qualitatively superior to Tsarist Russia. The ten million workers involved in the strike represented the most vital section of the population. But whereas in Petrograd the workers in 1917 instinctively moved to setting up soviets as the most democratic way of asserting their rule, the same did not happen in France. The 1905 of the French workers was 1936. Their historic memory was not of setting up soviets, but of occupying their factories. In 1936 they had done so on the heels of the election of a Popular Front government. Those occupations had a dual character: they both celebrated the victory of the Popular Front and sought to institute reforms from below. In 1968 the factory occupations had a more revolutionary dynamic. That is why the PCF 'marshals' were on constant alert to prevent any student agitators from entering the major factories.

The strike lacked a clear political focus. It was defused not by repression but by the announcement of a general election. Gaullism was prepared for a frontal clash, but took great care not to initiate one. The millions of workers and students wanted a change, but saw no reason for a frontal assault. The Communist Party was the only party which could have changed this state of affairs. It did not. It proved itself in the words

IRELAND Internment introduced. USA George Jackson murdered



In San Quentin prison. BRITAIN Postmen's strike. Occupation of UCS. INDIA 1169 political murders as Government 'cleans up left' in West Bengal. CEYLON JVP uprising crushed with support of Russia and China. BANGLA DESH General strike for independence from Pakistan. Pakistani army moves in and crushes independence. Indo-Pakistan war leads to 'independence'. CHINA Mao's 'close comrade in arms', Lin Piao, disappears. Subsequently denounced for allegedly plotting Mao's murder.

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TEN YEARS ON



Renault workers in occupation

of its leaders to be 'a party of order'. A small minority of workers did break with the PCF and moved over to the far left, but the majority remained intact. Why? Because the only way in which ten million workers would have understood the need to go further and ultimately to have a test of strength was through a common experience of new organs of power and a government based on them. For the masses need to be convinced that what they are fighting for will be better than what exists.

If France had not already proved that, we had the experience of the Portuguese laboratory in 1974-75. Here we saw a decomposing state apparatus, symbolised by an army split from top to bottom accompanied by a striking radicalisation of important sections of the working class. But here the dominant groups of the far left showed that they had learnt little from the weaknesses of 1968. Their euphoria and insurrectionist rhetoric failed to confront one key element of revolutionary strategy: how could the masses be won over to socialism. The vanguard in Portugal was ready in the factories and in the army. Its task was to win the masses. It thought it could make the revolution.

Social composition and politics

It was derailed once again by elections and the election of a Constituent Assembly. The failure of the far left to understand the significance of these elections and the bureaucratic urge of the Portuguese Communist Party to ignore them led to a short-lived alliance. This enabled Mario Soares to present himself as the only defender of democracy in the working class. The PCP defended Moscow. The far left thought democracy was not the central question. They were both outmanoeuvred and outflanked by a demagogic social-democrat, backed by reaction.

1968 allowed the revolutionaries to increase their influence in one big leap. But this leap was not sufficient to create revolutionary parties. In Portugal and Italy the major far left groups succumbed to opportunist and ultra-left pressures. Despite their relatively large size, they collapsed politically. The large groups that have survived in the West have been the French, Spanish and Japanese sections of the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party (formerly IS) in Britain. In their different ways all these organisations are groping towards developing a revolutionary strategy which

BRITAIN Miners strike smashes Tory wage policy. Pentonville 5 strikes break Industrial Relations Act.



Five Trade Unionists are inside. WHY AREN'T YOU OUT?

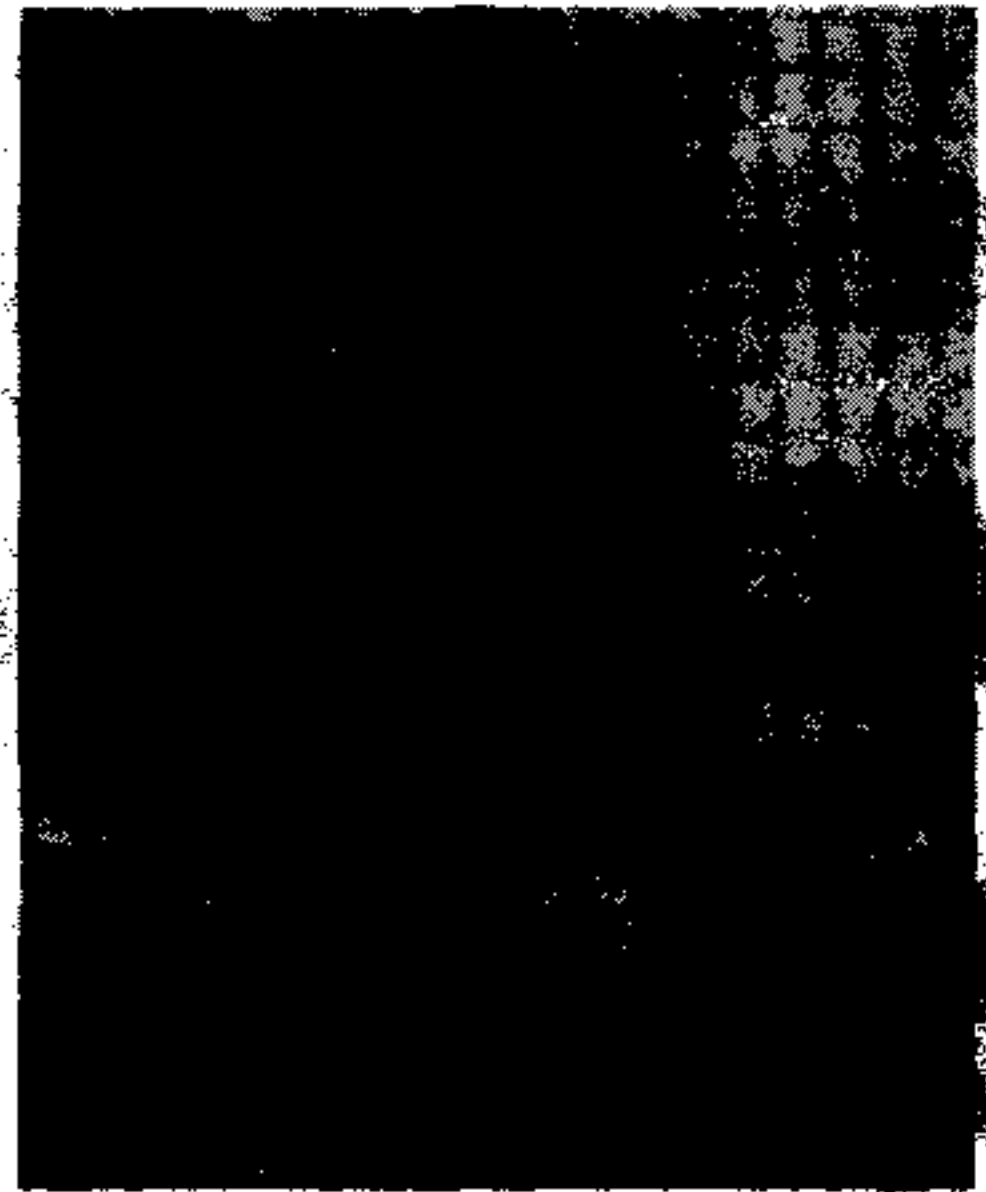
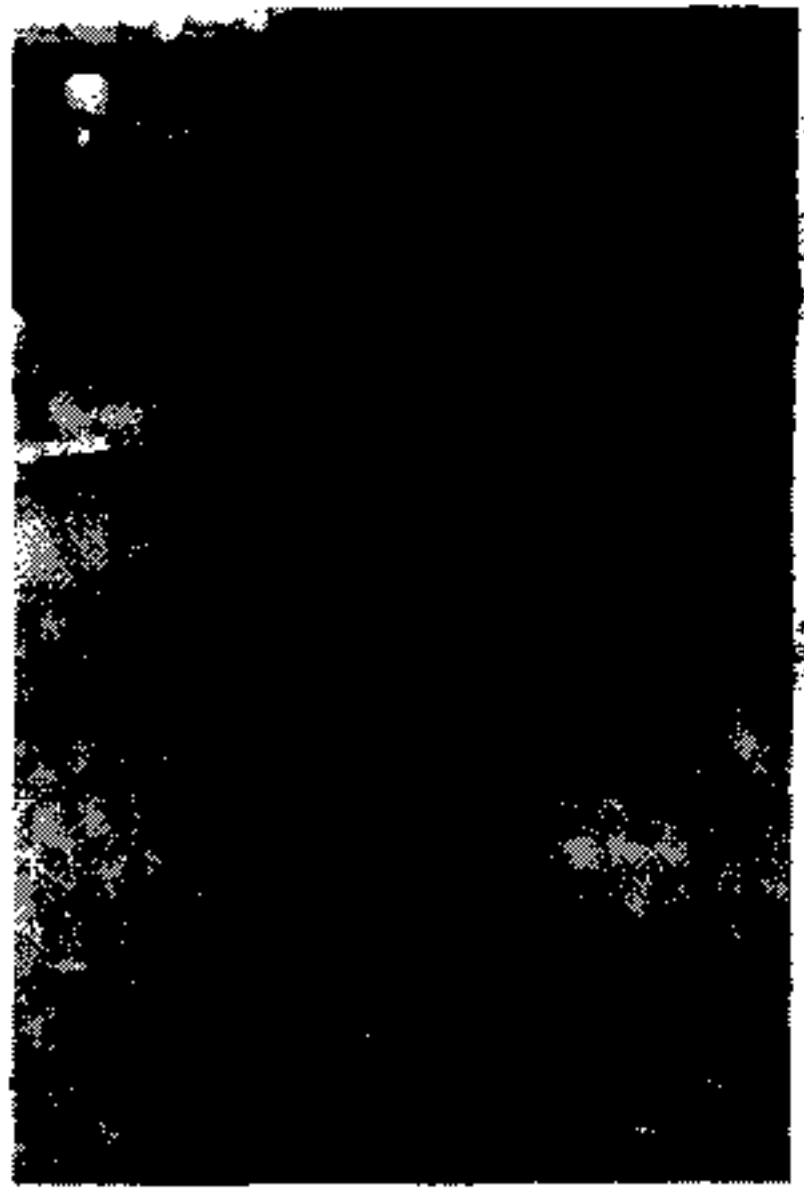
CHINA Nixon pays state visit. IRELAND Bloody Sunday massacre by British troops in Derry. British Embassy in Dublin burnt by 30,000 strong crowd. Stormont suspended. URUGUAY Government declares 'state of internal war' to destroy Tupamaro urban guerrilla movement. CHILE 'Bosses strike' against Allende government. Workers respond by forming 'cordones' to control the factories.



corresponds to the tasks that lie ahead. These can now be summarised in the following fashion:

- 1 A creative application of the tactics of the United Front, initially formulated by the Communist International and later developed by Trotsky. These remain the only viable strategy to win over the masses.* They also necessitate a struggle to create a unified revolutionary organisation in every country in the world — a small starting point, but an important one to lay the basis for constructing broad-based tendencies in the trade unions which unite revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries on the basis of struggles for common objectives.
 - 2 The socialist revolution in the West will either be made with the support of the majority of toilers or it will not be made at all. Thus the necessity to counterpose socialist democracy to bourgeois democracy. This means not just the raising of radical democratic demands today (proportional representation, annual parliaments, right of self-determination of nationalities, etc.), but the projecting of our socialist model. This will be infinitely more democratic than what exists today. It is in this context that a democratic revolutionary organisation (with full rights for tendencies and factions) is not an empty, intellectual or petty-bourgeois abstraction, but it corresponds to the objective reality of the societies in which we live. The working class in the West is passionately interested in democracy at every level.*
 - 3 Those of us who are members of the *Fourth International* are extremely conscious of our weakness on an international level. The FI is not the nucleus of a mass International. It is one element in the situation. But the struggle to build a mass international organisation cannot be left to chance or spontaneity. It has to be organised. That is the main strength of the FI, but most of its members understand that it will be built only with the entry into its ranks of other revolutionary organisations and currents. Nonetheless internationalism without an International has a somewhat hollow ring.
 - 4 Revolutionary parties have never emerged out of an arithmetical growth. They are the results of wars, revolutions and political upheavals. There has to be a breach in the mass working-class organisations before a mass revolutionary party can see the light of day. That is the central corollary of the united front. No revolutionary party exists in Europe today. What does exist is various nuclei. The opportunity now exists to weld some of these together to strengthen the foundations of what could become a party. The crisis of Stalinism and the CPs in Europe poses the question of winning over tens of thousands of workers to revolutionary politics in the present period. But this will only be achieved by combatting sectarian ultra-leftism and syndicalism on the one hand and opportunism and rightist adaptations to the bureaucracies of the mass organisations on the other.
- These then, expressed somewhat schematically, are the challenges of 1968. How and with what degree of success they are taken up depends on all of us.

*See *New Left Review* 100 for two important texts by Perry Anderson and Ernest Mandel *On Socialist Democracy and the Leadership of the Proletariat* produced by the FI constitute an elaborate synthesis and systematisation of the strands within classical Marxism on this subject. They are also the most useful strategic response to the 'Eurocommunists'.



ARGENTINA Peron returns. Hundreds killed when right wing attack crowds greeting him. **THAILAND** Military regime overthrown. Massive strike wave. **GREECE** Students occupy Athens Polytechnic against Junta; crushed by tanks.



CHILE Allende government overthrown by military. Tens of thousands murdered. **BRITAIN** Glasgow firemen's strike. **SOUTH AFRICA** Wave of black strikes in Natal force big wage increases.



هذا طريقي في الكفاح
فيا اخي اتمم كفاحي

MIDDLE EAST Yom Kippur war. Beginning of Oil Crisis.

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David Widgery

Ten years for Pandora

There are times, remarkable times, which clear up in weeks the disorders of centuries. 1968 was such a time — of the audible end of eras, of a collision of turning points, of new possibility. 1968 was the critical year in the Vietnamese three-decade-long war for independence, the year of the most important popular movement in Eastern Europe since 1956, the biggest ever general strike in European history and street battles in Derry which took the Irish question out of the impasse set by the settlement of 1921. All the social authorities which had seemed eternal were unsettled as '68's semaphore signalled from the ditches of Da Nang to the corridors of Nanterre, passed on to the car factories of Billancourt and Le Mans to the squares of Bratislava and Prague, then onto the bloody pavements of Mexico City and Chicago, Belfast and Grosvenor Square.

1968 acts as a marker of the end of the long boom and the re-emergence of socialism to the left of the Communist Parties, and, slightly later, revolutionary feminism as active, organised political forces. Suddenly the post-war double-act of a Communist world which denied communism and a Free World which wasn't free looked the farce it was. The Emperors — De Gaulle, Lyndon Johnson, Brezhnev — had no clothes. The powers-that-be were scared of us, their once obedient servants.

The year began politically in central Vietnam with the Tet offensive, which can now be seen as a tour de force of strategic warfare. The Pentagon generals had in the mid-60s embarked on the most hideous phase of their war, an attempt literally to annihilate the rural societies in which the Viet Cong had their political roots. Search and destroy operations were carried out with routine brutality, peasants suspected of disloyalty were herded into concentration camps called strategic hamlets, rebellious regions became free fire zones for artillery, computerised B-52 runs and helicopter gun-boats. The clouds were seeded, the crops dried up or flooded, children scorched. Babies are to this day born twisted and deformed from that aerial poisoning. The Vietnamese resistance was to be obliterated by the technology of Coca Cola and Cape Kennedy.

The solidarity movement in the West which sought to awake the blunted moral responses to this macabrely efficient war of annihilation was itself marked by an appalling sense of ineffectuality. Inevitably we cast the Vietnamese as victims — how could they not be overwhelmed by the most powerful empire in human history?

But, after the initial feint at Khe Sanh and the swift and peaceful capture of Hué on 31 January 1968, it became clear that the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam had launched a sustained and general urban assault, opening prisons, overrunning arsenals and bases, knocking out US equipment on the ground, revealing simultaneously the inertia of the South Vietnamese puppet forces and the extent of their own underground civilian support. The NLF struck at 34 out of 44 provincial capitals, 64 district capitals, destroyed



over 1,800 aircraft and bombarded the US Embassy and airstrip in the heart of Saigon.

Clustered round the radio news from Hué, deciphering the only nearly reliable reports, in *Le Monde*, we suddenly grew brave.

In Paris on 21 February 1968 a mass student demonstration took down the street signs and renamed the Latin Quarter 'The Heroic Vietnam Quarter'. The spirit of Hué had arrived in Europe. Here its partisans were not the patient, proud peasants, but the avenging angels of various 'isms. The student *enragés* were fuelled, not with national pride, but with social disrespect, political derision, a desiring for revolution and a proclivity for madness as political method. The children of affluence, the workers in the brain factories, were restive, too. Time bombs, buried and ticking away since the global settlement of 1945, were going off, crashing against the conformity and stupidity of higher education, the remorseless banality of the media, the repression of real love and free sensuality.

The French student movement was originally founded by Resistance veterans and shaped in the bitter struggle against France's colonial war in Algeria. But its political reflexes were now sharpened by *groupuscules* — the nuclei, groups, gangs and small parties of the far left. For it was they who pressed the agitation born in Nanterre forward to Paris, then built the movement to re-open the Sorbonne and remove the police from the university. Carefully, imaginatively, they pushed their demands to the point the authorities would make their mistake and unleash the repression that caused the explosion.

On the night of 11 May 50,000 college and school students and young workers met a massive force of riot police with their gas masks, grim overcoats and black rubber clubs. Barricades were thrown together out of parked cars, grills, railings and comradesly trees. With the advice of passing building workers, the students learned how to lever up the cobble stones. 'Under the cobbles, the beach' they scrawled on the walls.

In the Rue Gay Lussac the fighting went on for five hours, hours of gasping lungs, scorched throats, cracked rib cages, bloodstained trousers. It was so bad taxi drivers and concierges, no friends of the *enragés*, hauled the injured away from the vengeful black mosquito swarms of CRS (the CRS? Well, they make the SPG look like Dixon of Dock Green). Radio reporters coughed and wept into their tape recorders till their worried producers switched over to soft music. The world's TV showed the cliché streets of Parisian tourism, now illuminated with fire bombs, misty with tear gas, serenaded with shrieks.



Two days after the night of the barricades, ten million French workers went on strike. At last the oldest of political reflexes — solidarity — had operated. The Sorbonne was re-opened and occupied as a centre of revolutionary debate, confession and confusion. In the audience were the most adventurous young workers: '(We) rediscovered there in the Sorbonne the historic idea of the revolutionary traditions of the working class and started to talk the language of revolution.' And in *that* process Marxism recovered its own meaning from under the shrouds of Stalinism, social democracy and small-group sectarianism. At the entrance to the Odéon amphitheatre is written: 'Run forward comrades, the old world is behind you'.

Bread and roses

In the factories the young workers were getting the message, both of Hué and Rue Gay Lussac. At Nantes, Sud Aviation workers occupied, shutting the manager up in his plush office. Then Renault-Cleon was occupied. *La grève sauvage* spread through cars, aircraft and engineering to mines, shipping and transport. Strippers, footballers and TV announcers made their demands.

Calmly a nation went on strike, not just for bread but for roses. The workers at the occupied Berliet factory re-arranged the lettering outside the front gate to read *'Liberté'*. The boom had exploded in its makers' face. The bureaucracies of the reformists left were stuck in the clichés and sloth of the past. Finally it was the Communist Party that De Gaulle had to depend on to get people back to work... Indeed, one of the most retchworthy aspects of the anniversary will be the professors of King Street's amnesiac attempts to hail May as some little known by-way on the British road to socialism.

For it was the East bloc as much as Western capitalism which felt May's challenge to the stilted, finished, stale mutilations of Marxism we had been offered for thirty years. 'What was proved in Prague and Bratislava', writes Rudolf Bahro, the East German communist, now arrested, listen King Street, as an 'imperialist spy', 'was nothing less than the capacity of our social order to exist without the dictatorship of a politbureau'. The reform policy of Dubcek and the thousands of political flowers which had begun to blossom from it were destroyed by the Kremlin as casually and as completely as a boot might crush a daffodil head.

Imagination takes power

And in Chicago the whole world watched while Mayor Daley's police thugs brutally restored

order outside the Democratic Convention in another episode in that profound crisis in American bourgeois democracy which was to reach its climax over Watergate.

It was as if an international political pageant was being acted out — the ideas we had treasured in pamphlets and argued about in tiny pub back rooms were now roaming, alive, three dimensional. Marxism had come out of the cold.

The simple lessons of 1968 were simple to read off and important to re-emphasise. The working class, written off by dumb sociology and depressive 'marxism', remained, when the chips were down, decisive. Conversely, the Communist Parties and the bloc to which they owed their loyalty were revealed as a central element in the status quo. And, most practically, those still stranded on the astral planes of May in the misery of June had to realise that out of the flash of euphoria must emerge the politics and the organisation of the long haul, the preparations for the fire next time. The business of engaging socialist politics with the working-class reality from which it derives its meaning, without compromising the clarity of our political and personal goals in those useful cages of routine and meetings and like machinery, this has been the stuff of our lives for the last decade.

But to me it's more fascinating to trace the ideas which winged from May's Pandora's Box without us orthodox politicians knowing quite where they might alight. For one of the most valuable, but easily forgettable, legacies of May and any genuine revolutionary upsurge is that sense of personal possibility, a sudden enlargement of the apertures of the political imagination.

One of the particular emphases of May, but present in every revolutionary movement and in the theories of Marx, Trotsky, Reich and Brecht, is the realisation that challenges within culture and against political, educational and sexual hierarchies are necessary, essential, inherent parts of taking political power. It's, of course, tempting to overstate the progress that can be made in the cultural and sexual spheres. This is habitual among intellectuals, who mistake their mental and sexual battles with bourgeois ideology for the real engagements. But understanding is doubly important now the right is on the offensive again, attempting to regain the social and cultural ground we surged across almost by accident in the aftermath of May, by the Tyndale inquiry, the Criminal Trespass Act, in the *Gay News* trial and the Gould report, in the entire intellectual Operation Julie which seeks to track down the places of manufacture and distribution of the contamination of '68.

It is important for our morale that we stand

PORTUGAL Armed Forces Movement overthrows fascism: attempted right-wing coup by Spinoza defeated by workers' mobilisation. **ETHIOPIA** General strike: overthrow of Haile Selassie regime. **CYPRUS** Attempted right-wing coup leads to Turkish invasion and downfall of Greek Junta. **INDIA** National railway strike broken with 50,000 arrests. **BRITAIN** Second miners strike brings down Heath government. **IRELAND** Ulster Workers Council strike. End of power sharing.

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CAMBODIA Phnom Pen falls. **VIETNAM** Saigon falls. **PORTUGAL** 'November 25'. Left wing military units broken. Soares starts to roll back the Portuguese Revolution. **SOUTHERN AFRICA** Independence for Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. **LEBANON** Government attempt to crush fishermen's strike in Sidon starts civil war.



rightly appraised of our real strengths and appreciate the much enlarged social presence the revolutionary left has unofficially won over the last ten years, especially as the liberal British bourgeoisie, unlike the French, still seeks, hopelessly, to ignore us out of existence.

Only two decades ago, every wretched book published by Lawrence and Wishart was an intellectual event. Even ten years ago, the range of readable socialist literature (outside the Aladdin's cave at the back of Collett's) didn't overtax a kitchen table-top. To say that the pre-'68 revolutionary left consisted of clumps of bespectacled gents with pamphlets in their coat pockets arguing about what went wrong with Russia, collectively as ingrown as a toenail, is, unfortunately, not too much of a caricature. The range of socialist ideas and idioms displayed, say, at the Socialist Book Fair or Pluto's current list, in comparison with the intellectual barrenness of social-democratic and liberal thought, is an enormous advance in a country which has such an offhand approach in matters of Marxist theory.

Likewise, culturally it has taken a full decade to see even part of the fruit from the Maytree's seeds. But again and again, one can trace back the most artistically daring initiatives, in theatre, film and design especially, and now music above all, to the catalyst of '68, which opened up the struggle, by art and media workers, for political control of the means of communication.

Pandora was a woman

It's quite silly to see this expansion of the socialist cultural menu as estranged from political power. The bourgeoisie certainly doesn't and yet is impaled on its own inability to produce any artistically worthwhile alternative. No wonder the National Front hates Rock against Racism — you just can't pogo to Elgar. The Hornsey Art School students' visions in 1968 may have been smothered by the office boys of the bourgeoisie but they got their revenge. Let Alderman Bains tell Johnny Rotten to do what he's told. Let us fill Victoria Park and rock it against racism, exactly ten years after the first, tiny, postwar Mayday '68 festival experimentally set up its puppet show and waved its agitprop top hats.

And in another still more broken line of descent, it is not unreasonable to trail back the first stirrings of modern feminism to the joyous if utterly male-defined subjectivity of May. 'One must remember', writes Guy Hocquenghen, 'before May, France was the most Victorian of countries, the most puritan, the most reactionary on sexual questions'. Yet by April 1971, 343 women publicly declared themselves to be among the million French women forced each year to

have illegal abortions. And by its emergence, women's liberation, which, like the student movement, is a quite distinctive response, in form as well as demands, to modern forms of oppression, alters the very definitions on which political struggle takes place.

'The Communist Revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas', says the *Communist Manifesto*. Now the women's movement has become as large and as international a radical movement as the anti-Vietnam movement of the 1960s, some of the dejected male chauvinists of the revolutionary left might reflect how merciless the revolutionary process can be, especially to its own adherents. But by placing an analysis of power firmly on the realities of everyday life, rather than always about somewhere and someone else, the women's movement has brought the relevance, the necessity of socialist emancipation, into an unnervingly sharp focus. Pandora was, of course, a woman, of an enquiring nature.

But what of our organisational standing in the workplace, where the great majority of men and women still spend a great deal of their time and where they are still most potently organised? For it was the building of a permanent organised presence there for the full range of revolutionary ideas that most of us saw as the future after '68.

Had this report been five years after '68 rather than a decade, it might be easy to sound very optimistic. For, paradoxically, it was in Britain, traditionally but inaccurately known as a revolutionary backwater, that the far left made a real impact on trade unionism. For here we are not sealed off from the factories by an organised and industrially effective Communist Party apparatus but are rather sucked into a unified social-democratic union structure which already possesses a strong tradition of independent rank-and-file organisation to which the ideas of revolutionary trade unionism articulate well. With all due modesty, IS's political perspectives proved highly influential on the British far left. The gusto of May fed directly into an upward trajectory of class militancy.

Perfunctory and insufficiently daring

Our ideas of a new vigour in wage militancy, of industrial action over 'political' rather than 'economic' issues (an unreal distinction but one beloved of social-democratic thought), the tactics of work-in and factory occupation, the spreading of organised solidarity movements, the framing of demands which develop working-class political power, the extension of union organisation into

traditionally middle-class jobs whose actual jobs were increasingly proletarianised, all these pressed forward. Indeed, in the industrial sense, the May events were one incident on the sharply rising curve of struggle which was to climax in our '68, that remarkable year of 1972, of the miners' strike, Pentonville and the builders' national dispute, when it almost seemed we were pressing against the limits of capitalist power.

And with us pressing round the world was a synchronised wave of working-class revolt from the Norwegian docks to the Zambian copper mines, from the Indian train drivers to the Nigerian bank clerks, a revolt which in 1974 had smashed asunder the established power structures in Thailand, Ethiopia and Portugal. Perhaps more than even we had anticipated it was the urban working class who moved, in the Third, Second and First Worlds, in Bangkok, the Baltic ports and Birmingham. And if the 1960s had been the decade in which black America spoke out, the 1970s, stamped by the blinding courage of Soweto, hearing the roar of Africa and the Caribbean's townships and cities.

Yet, only four years on from the high-point of 1974, such an optimism needs to be qualified. The system we face constantly changes itself in response to us. Already it is more centralised, more vicious, better armed... look again at Lisbon, Bangkok, the Ogaden. A photo of the massacre at Thammasat University now hangs over my desk in the place of warning once occupied by a *Comment* front page 'Allende: Left Unity Brings Results'.

Across Europe in these last four dog years, it has been clear that capitalism has begun in earnest to raise its level of productivity in a new way, by a state organised re-structuring of industry, executed by social-democratic trade unionism. The social cost is the permanent but unannounced end to the main features of post-war capitalism — full employment, rising real wealth, the welfare state. Instead there is quite stark poverty, even if it is disguised by the giro and the rented TV.

In this world, I can feel no sentimental jollity about what we glimpsed in May, at the very pinnacle of the biggest boom in world history. When the immediate task is as basic as grouping and linking those who will take a stand against racism of the most open character, the slogans of the Odeon, 'This is my desire as reality because I believe in the reality of my desires' sound, well, distant. As the socialist slabs of the Broad Left disintegrate, taste than we can possibly replace them, it's difficult to reflect that our own conceptions of rank and file militancy have often been perfunctory and insufficiently daring.

It's been a season in which to be grateful for little advances: for a small committee against a hospital closure, for a march of the unemployed which was still proud, for the firemen, just for fighting back, to the punks, just for existing. For Lewisham, at first sight so like Grosvenor Square but ten times more real. For the American miners strike, perhaps the most appropriate anniversary for May.

To those who stayed with revolutionary politics while the going was good and have found it now convenient to get out, good riddance. To those comrades who are taking a rest, in pain, or disagreement, or from exhaustion, we'll see you again. To those who have stayed, a salute... we ain't seen nothing yet. Like the reggae singer says, 'we're going to mash down Babylon, one of these days', and we'll have May in our hearts when we

Alain Krivine played a leading role in the student rebellion which sparked off the French general strike of May-June 1968. He helped to found the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (JCR — Revolutionary Communist Youth), formed in 1966 by Trotskyists expelled from the French Communist Party's student wing. The JCR was banned by the French government for its part in the May events.

Today Krivine is a member of the political bureau of its successor, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR — Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International, and editor of the LCR's daily paper, *Rouge*. He spoke to Alex Callinicos about the May events and their lessons.

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POLEND General strike forces abandonment of food price rises. CHINA



Mao dies. Beginning of campaign against 'Gang of Four'. LEBANON Syria moves in, increasingly against the Palestinians. ANGOLA MPLA defeats South African and mercenary backed forces. SOUTH AFRICA Black youth revolt in Soweto. ARGENTINA Military overthrow government of Isabel Peron. SPAIN Biggest strike wave since Civil War. THAILAND Military siezes power. BRITAIN Wave of racialism follows 'Malawi Asians' story. Asian youth mobilise.

Alain Krivine

The great dress rehearsal

What were the most significant features of the events of May and June 1968 in France?

They represented the first upsurge of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries since the era of the Popular Front in the 1930s. Their main features — and these features will continue to appear — are the following.

First, the events of 1968 showed that the working class, when it wants a change, even though its will is expressed in a very confused form, is able to initiate a mass movement which, for a certain time, totally bypasses the bureaucracies of the traditional reformist organisations. That's the first lesson.

Secondly, the kind of demands that were put forward in 1968, even in a confused way, continue to dominate the working-class movement up to the present time. The explosion in 1968 was not only around economic demands for higher wages and so on, even though these served as a pretext, but very quickly began to question, not only the exploitation of workers inside the factories, but also all the means of exploitation and **oppression** of capitalist society. Since 1968 there have emerged a series of movements which are totally new, but which are the result of the sort of challenge to the system which took place in 1968 — movements of immigrant workers, of women, of soldiers, the ecological movement, and so on. In 1968 society was not partially put in question — what took place was a confused but global contesting of all the aspects of capitalist society.

The third feature of 1968 which I want to talk about is the will the working class showed during this movement to take into their own hands their hopes, their fights, their lives — even their daily lives. This confused thrust towards self-management continues to make itself felt in the trade unions and even the reformist parties today. The reformist leaders have been forced to recuperate this desire on the workers' part to run their own lives by explaining that they are in favour of self-management, even if they bitterly opposed it in 1968. But in addition you now find that a large minority of the working class is opposed to the bureaucratic structure of all the reformist organisations.

This global aspiration to self-management, to workers' democracy, is very important for us because it means that in relating to the struggles of the working class we can put forward a series of questions like workers' control, elected strike committees, which are becoming much more credible than in the past.

These are the main features of 1968. In a certain sense we can say that 1968 was a political defeat for the working class, because nothing changed as far as the government was concerned and so on. But I think that 1968 was a kind of general dress-rehearsal of what could happen in the near future in the sense that it was the result of

a new relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class which still continues to exist in France and indeed throughout Western Europe.

What role did the revolutionary left and in particular the LCR (then the JCR) play in the events of 1968?

In 1968 the far left was mainly organised among the students, and since the movement began as a student upsurge the revolutionary left played a major role, even the leading role, in the demonstrations and in the first stages of the movement in 1968.

Many people have talked about the role of spontaneity as against the role of organisation. I think that the two are totally linked. In a movement like that in 1968 the members of revolutionary organisations are in a minority. But what was very striking in 1968 was the fact that most of the demands which were apparently put forward by the movement spontaneously were in fact demands around which the revolutionary organisations had fought for years and years as a tiny minority in the universities. Examples of these slogans were — internationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-bureaucratism, anti-Stalinism, and so on. OK — anti, anti, anti — but nonetheless a kind of demand which gave a political tone to the movement.

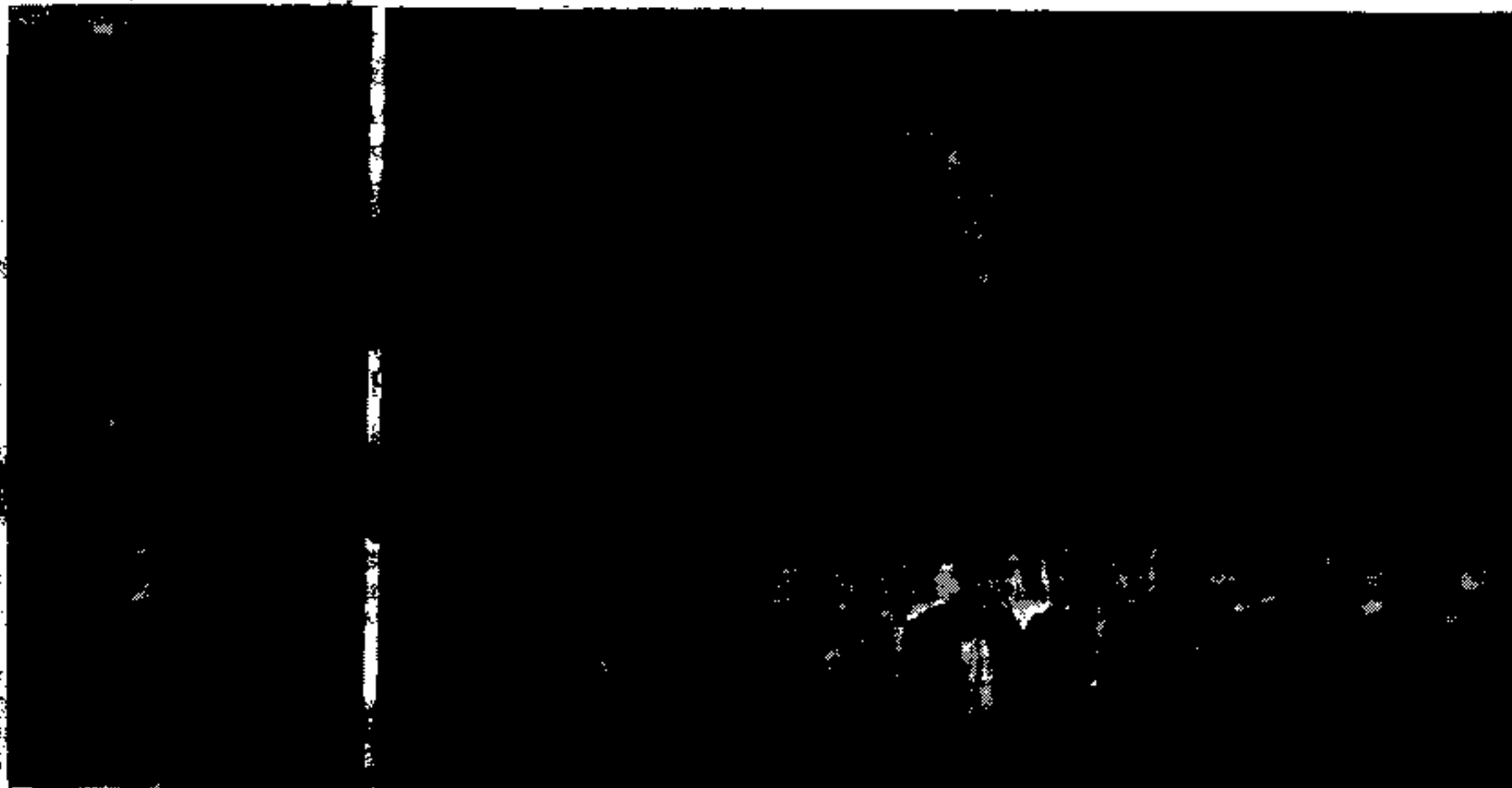
Of course, when the upsurge took place, many new things appeared as a result of the richness of the movement, but as far as the leadership of the movement was concerned, the revolutionary organisations played a major role because politically they had a more coherent view of the movement and because they possessed a national structure.

the working class recognised itself, not in the students' demands, but in the fact that they were fighting successfully, and on this basis workers were prepared to follow the students.

The second stage was the development of the movement against repression into a massive general strike. Now the question was not only to fight against repression and against the government — it had become a question of power, of overthrowing the government and presenting a political alternative. Then of course the gap began to appear between the students and the workers. When it came to as serious a question as that of taking power, the working class naturally had no confidence in the student leaders. Workers had confidence in our ability to organise demonstrations and to fight in the streets, but not in our ability to form a government or prepare a political alternative.

When the question of power was posed workers looked to their traditional leadership, in which they normally had confidence — not only the national leadership of the reformist organisations, especially the CP, but the rank-and-file activists with a long record of struggle in the factories. When they saw that the CP and the SP were not prepared to go further and raise the question of power, workers spontaneously ended the strike, understanding that it was finished and stupid to continue a general strike, with all its effects, without any perspective.

We can here see both the role of the students in starting off the movement and also the limits of the student movement in the absence of any real implantation of the revolutionary party inside the working class. Only a national organisation with an established base in the working class would



But despite the insurrectionary proportions of the general strike and despite the leading role played by the revolutionary left, the movement of 1968 failed — it was, as you said yourself, in a certain sense a political defeat for the French working class. Could you explain why?

There were three stages in the movement in 1968. The first stage was the explosion by the students and the movement of solidarity against the repression they suffered, which initiated the movement among the workers. The second stage was the general strike. The third stage was the end of the strike. The workers had their own demands, economic demands which had not been met by the government and on which the reformist organisations had refused to fight. When the student movement exploded

have been able to make real rather than formal links between the revolutionary will of the students and the confused revolutionary will of the working class. Our weakness in 1968 was that we had a base only among students and so we were at the head of the movement in its first stage and under the table at the last stage.

That leads directly into my next question. You've stated very clearly that one of the main reasons for the defeat of the movement in 1968 was the revolutionary left's lack of implantation in the working class. What success in the following years has the LCR and the revolutionary left in general had overcoming this obstacle and rooting themselves in the French labour movement?

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EGYPT Huge strikes and riots force cancellation of price increases. **TURKEY** Start of eight month workers strike. **INDIA** One million state employees in Maharashtra start 54 day strike. **ARGENTINA** Strike wave wins important wage increases. **RUMANIA** 90,000 mineworkers on strike. Hold two central committee members as hostage for negotiations. **BRITAIN** Firemen's strike.



To start with we used a tactic that was very dangerous — very dangerous. Frankly speaking I must say that if we had no political deviations it's because we were linked to the Fourth International.

During the first stage of the radicalisation that occurred in Europe in the 1960s we understood that this radicalisation affected, not the working class, but the university and high school students. So, after our expulsion from the CP we decided to build only a youth organisation, because we believed it was mainly among students that it was possible to accumulate forces rapidly.

Then there was 1968. That was good for us in a certain sense, but our organisation was mainly students with all the dangers which that involved when it came to elaborating a political programme and so on. In that situation the Fourth International, with its tradition, programme, etc. stood us in good stead.

Then after 1968, with the new radicalisation among workers, we decided to change our intervention totally and to concentrate, not all, but a large part of our forces, on the working class. We had a certain credibility thanks to our implantation among youth which meant that we were seen as a national political force. We used this credibility to go in a very voluntarist way to the workers.

We took two thirds of our students — some of them went to work in the factories, most went around the factories to try and recruit the militant worker around whom we could build. Students could not themselves build, but students could get the militant, or two or three militants, who could afterwards build a real base in the factory. That's

what we decided — the turn to the workers. In particular, we decided that the intervention in each factory should be made through a permanent bulletin — a factory newspaper of two or three pages appearing each week.

We made mistakes — you can imagine the kind of mistakes we made for years and years! But now the result is clear. In 1968 the JCR had 800 or 900 members, with a very small minority of young workers. Then we built the Ligue. Now there are 3,300 members, with a minority of students (less than 13 per cent of the membership are students and one per cent high school students). We must add 2,500 manual and white-collar workers in the Red Mole groups, which exist in nearly 300 factories, offices, ministries, hospitals, and so on — these are the organised sympathisers of the LCR. Next month we are setting up a youth organisation, the JCR, which will be autonomous from the Ligue.

There has been a qualitative change as far as our implantation in the factories is concerned. But globally, as far as the tasks are concerned, there has not, I think, been a qualitative change. If, for example, there was a new upsurge tomorrow, then, although our intervention would be totally different from what we did in the past, the growth in our base has not been sufficient for us to appear as an alternative to the reformists.

Quite recently I read an article in Le Monde by Nicholas Baby, a leader of the high-school movement in 1968, which talked about the 'crisis of leftism' (14 March 1978), arguing that the far left in France had failed to develop into a serious alternative since 1968. Is that claim valid?

It's true, if that was what the comrade was saying, that in 1968 we had the biggest revolutionary movement in Europe and now look how many people there are in revolutionary organisations compared to the CP. But I think it's a short cut to say that. There is a crisis in the extreme left organisations in Europe today — in France, more so in Italy. This crisis is linked to two factors.

First, there is a crisis which is a result of 1968 in the sense that, as I said, 1968 was a movement not only against exploitation but also against oppression. There developed movements which revolutionary Marxists were unable to understand. Now they understand, but too late.

For example, the question of the oppression of women inside revolutionary organisations has caused a serious crisis throughout the far left in Europe. The violence of the women in our organisations is linked to the violence of the oppression they have suffered within our organisations — leading to splits etc.

But it's not only the question of women, of homosexuals, etc., it's even in a certain sense the crisis of militantism*, which raises the question of the kind of revolutionary organisation we need. Of course, I'm not putting Leninism into

* The name given to a crisis of identity that has affected many of the generation of 1968 in the French far left — Ed.

USA Miners strike
TUNISIA General strike
NICARAGUA General strike.

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NO CUTS
health
housing
education
social services
public transport
unemployment
consumers
nurseries
libraries

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN
A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE



ROCK AGAINST RACISM



question, but I think we have to discuss the application of democratic centralism. There is no model of democratic centralism — it's two words which contradict each other. So today we discuss the question of democracy within the revolutionary organisation, the role of the leadership, the beginning of bureaucratisation linked to the development of the organisation, and it's not an answer just to say 'Lenin said, Lenin said'. How do we understand the new forms of political activity that have emerged? I accept that we have to use the framework of Leninism, but we have to be careful not to give dogmatic answers to these questions. Many organisations have been thrown into total crisis, have been split, as a result of these problems.

The second problem is the underestimation by many groups of the capacity of the left reformists — the Stalinists and social-democrats — to accommodate the new radicalisation since 1968. For example, look at the way in which they are taking up the demands of the women's movement in Italy, France and Spain.

The reformists understood, after they had been initially by-passed, that, because of the crisis of capitalism, they could not limit their answer to economic demands but were forced to give a political answer — a programme of government. Today the reformists offer the working class a credible answer — the historic compromise in Italy, the nation union in Spain, the union of the left in France. Now there is no longer the vacuum which existed in 1968.

Many of the organisations of the European far left thought after 1968 that reformism was finished and that it would be very easy to build revolutionary organisations because workers were no longer reformist. But it was not true. They had not understood what for us is fundamental, especially after the Portuguese experience — the strength of the reformists and of illusions in bourgeois democracy among the masses and the fact that the revolutionary movements of the last ten years have all been betrayed by elections and the structure of bourgeois democracy. There is a connection between the reformist policy of the workers' parties, the illusions in bourgeois democracy which they spread in the working class and the offensive of the bourgeoisie itself in defence of its 'democratic' system.

The question of a united front policy towards reformist workers is very important. Many ultra-lefts rejected this — the result is either they become totally isolated, as in Portugal, and are smashed, or their perspective is like that of the Red Brigades, where their activity is a substitute for a working class which they don't understand.

There is no alternative to a united front policy. Through this policy we try to show in action that workers' democracy is superior to bourgeois democracy. That's the importance of propaganda for self-management, attempts at workers' control, and so on. We have to be at the head of the fight for democracy against Stalinism. The social democrats have been able to grow by claiming to defend democracy against Stalinism. Of course, we don't share their illusions in bourgeois democracy, but it's clear that many combative workers joined the Socialist Party because of their disgust with Stalinism.

To obtain a rupture of the masses from their traditional parties they need to be involved in united action, because it's through the experience of united mass action that their ideas are changed. To have united mass action you need the

participation of the CP, the SP and the revolutionaries in class actions. That's the point of departure of our united front policy.

One final question — ten years on from 1968, and in the aftermath of the left's defeat in the French general elections, what prospects do you see for the revolutionary left in France?

Well, in France we are in a contradictory situation due to the political defeat in the elections. The working-class movement is demoralised and at the same time there is discussion such as we have never seen before inside the workers' parties. For example, in the CP now the disarray is total, and many people — but still a minority — inside the CP are looking toward us, because we have always condemned the Common Programme and the union of the left and now that the reformists' strategy has failed, many rank-and-file CP members are beginning to question this strategy.

So the echo of our position is stronger, I think, than ever before — but in a global climate of defeat. I think it's a conjunctural defeat. I don't think the relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class has changed. It's not as if the working class has been defeated after mass struggles — it's a subjective defeat. So we are in a climate which does not permit many actions, but a climate that permits discussion.

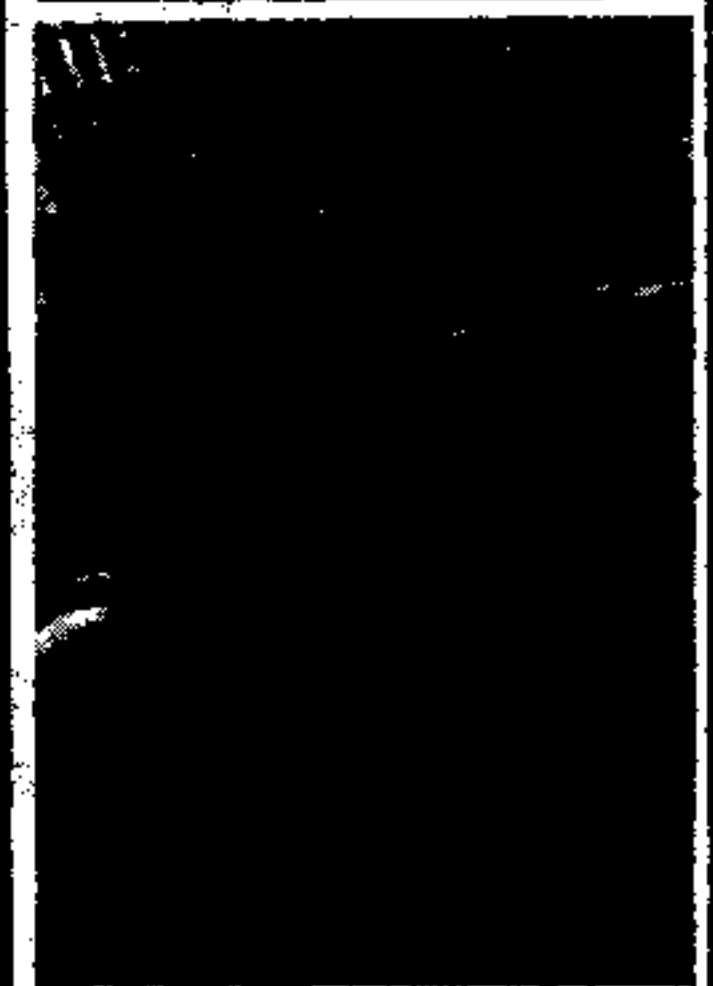
The problem is to estimate the scale of the demoralisation of the working class — that is, what will be the ability of the working class to conduct new actions and so on. In some months, we think, there will be big struggles. We believe that the bourgeoisie cannot stabilise the regime because of the economic crisis, because of its own internal conflicts, because the workers' parties got nearly 50 per cent of the vote — something which hasn't been seen in other countries, because the working class will want to take its revenge and there will no longer be any electoral perspective to permit the bourgeoisie to canalise workers' militancy away from struggle, because many fractions of the working class will be forced to fight — the danger is that some fights will be totally isolated and very violent, without any political perspective.

Here it's more difficult for us. When it is a matter of offering an electoral perspective to defeat the right what we have to say is very credible. But in the struggles that will develop, we will have to argue for centralising them, in the long term for bringing down the government and so on. You will understand that all this is fine for the more combative fractions of the working class, but it appears a little utopian to the majority of workers, especially because the trade unions will probably lead some militant strikes to play down the defeat for which they are responsible, but will never centralise the struggle. The fact that Mitterand, Marchais and the trade union leaders have agreed to visit Giscard d'Estaing, which they always refused to do in the past, is an indication that they may lead struggles, but within the framework of the regime.

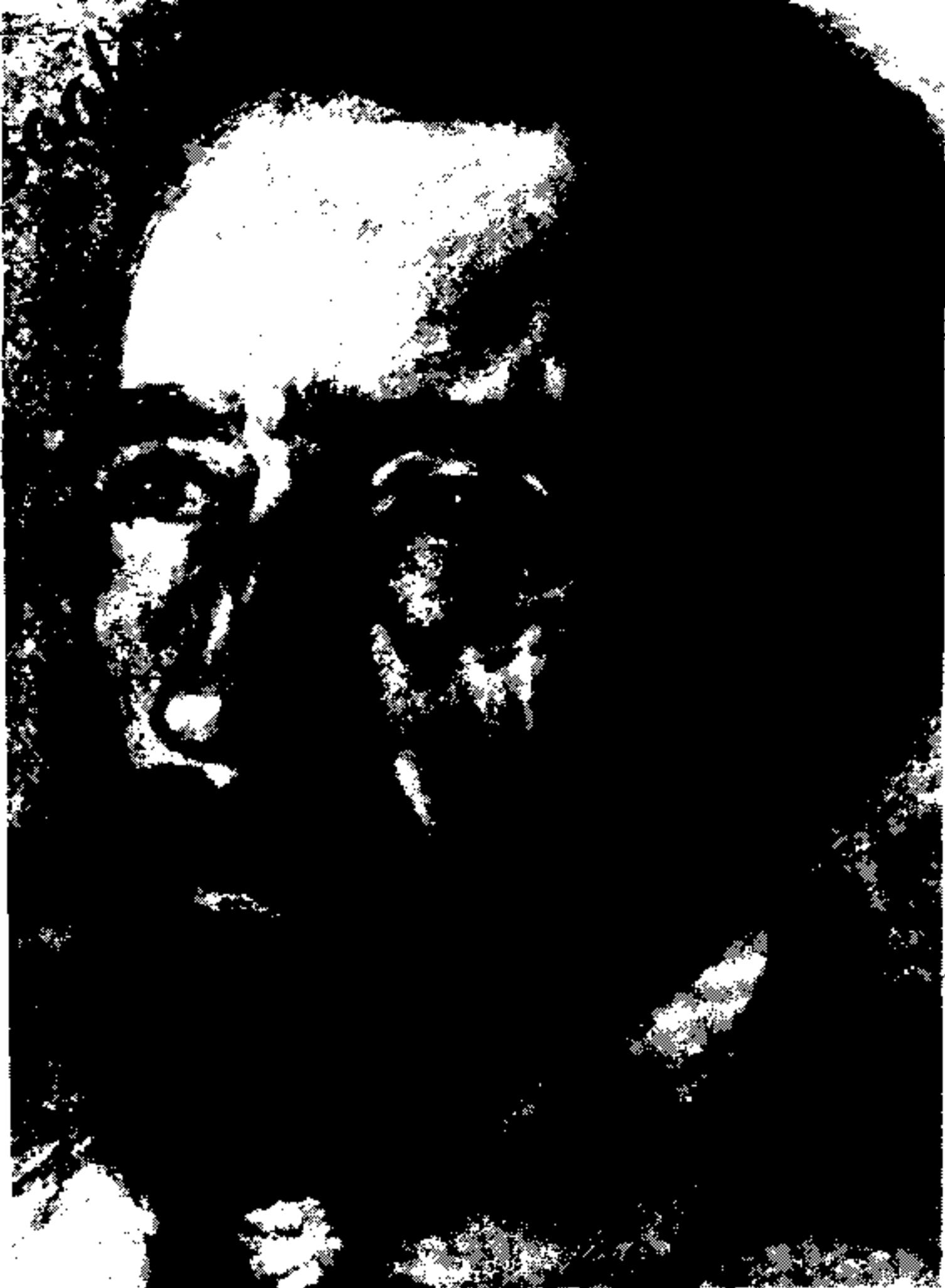
It is very difficult in the present situation to make any predictions except some global hypotheses — for example, that the new Parliament will not last out its five-year term, that there will not be social peace, that the bourgeoisie will not be able to stabilise the regime, and so on. But apart from these generalities I think we will have to wait one or two months to see how the working class reacts to the defeat it has just suffered.



The Paris Ch
We had always been sure of the revolution,
only about the vanguard party
and the role of women.
Ten years on we are realistic about kids
in the street and the lethargy
of men and women.
The colours have changed from grey coats,
to a stained glass window of
pinks and oranges.
Organs reflecting a new genderless light
coalesce now; more effectual
with their generation.
Like the canal bathed in sunlight appearing
behind corrugated iron, changes
are still glimpsed.
But this time we know years will go by
before the whole built-up area
is dispersed in sea,
before the flutterings of bright paper birds
are transmitted from the room
to the street
for ever.
James Ash



THE SOCIETY FOR THE OFFICIAL CELEBRATION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY (and getting it right this fucking time)



Joseph Conrad was perhaps the only English novelist ever to look critically at imperialism. But then he had the advantage of escaping the national limitations of most of his contemporaries. For he was not English by origin.

Born a Pole, he had been on the receiving end of great power chauvinism (Poland, as part of the Russian empire until 1918, knew what it was like to be under ruthless, foreign oppression); and he had wandered the world as a sailor for ten years of his life. Consequently, by the time he settled in Britain, the country he lived and worked in from the early 1890s till his death in 1924, his experience was wider, less hidebound and more international than the majority of his fellow writers.

On the other hand, he was no radical. Even though his father had been punished for being one of the leaders of the abortive 1863 uprising against tsarist tyranny his family background was conservative and aristocratic.

He belonged to a ruling class, albeit a ruling class oppressed by another ruling class. And in seeing the world from the deck of a ship it was not with the humble viewpoint of an ordinary seaman — it was

with that of an officer and captain.

In choosing England he pledged his allegiance to the British flag, under which as under no other, he claimed in a letter written during the Boer war, the idea of liberty was to be found. Alien though he was (and occasionally made to feel it in a society increasingly prone to jingoistic and racialist hysteria), he desperately wanted to be British — and proud of it.

So Conrad was a bit of a contradiction himself, a fact that emerges as he ponders the contradictions of imperialism. Take, for example, *Heart of Darkness*, the short story he wrote at the turn of the century.

As a condemnation of the effects of imperialism it is probably unparalleled. But then the reality he based his story on was so appalling, even by imperialist standards, that it provoked an international scandal.

Although Conrad rarely names the places visited in the story the references clearly point to the Belgian Congo. This vast tract of land, now known as Zaire, was virtually the private possession of Leopold, King of the Belgians.

By means of a company he set up, Leopold ruthlessly

exploited the natural resources of that area for his own personal gain.

He made attempts to disguise this exploitation with the philanthropic pretence, common to other imperialist powers, of bringing light to the benighted heathen. But there is little doubt that it was, in Conrad's own words, 'the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration'.

Conrad knew what he was talking about. He had gone to the Congo himself, employed by the Company as a captain of one of their river steamboats, and it this journey to Africa and up the river Congo that formed the basis of his story.

Through Marlow, the narrator and chief character (who shouldn't be automatically identified with Conrad) we get an unequivocal recognition of imperialist atrocities. Right at the beginning, for example, he has this to say about the Romans colonising Britain (the parallel with the Belgian presence in Africa is unmistakable):

'They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind — as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness.'

And what Marlow sees in his travels bears out this view. He witnesses a French warship firing casually on an unseen camp of natives behind the shore-line; and later, in a horrific scene, he stumbles upon a group of dying black workers, crushed by disease, starvation and the alienating effect of being uprooted from their traditional way of life.

Everything he comes across is marked by aimless violence.

Marlow also measures the dehumanising effect imperialism has on the imperialists themselves. There are the adventurers, whose one passion is limitless self-enrichment.

Because of their devotion to the 'noble cause' Conrad ironically calls them 'pilgrims'. And there are the administrators of the Company who compete ruthlessly amongst themselves to obtain the most lucrative positions.

Marlow never ceases to be amazed at their ability to keep up appearances — he compares one immaculately dressed agent

Essence and Excess

to a hairdresser's dummy and attributes the success of another simply to his capacity never to fall ill: 'perhaps there was nothing within him', Marlow comments.

But the most important of these 'hollow men' is the chief agent and most 'efficient' collector of ivory, Mr Kurtz, whom Marlow has been instructed to bring back to 'civilisation'. Everyone looks up in envy to him and Kurtz combines all the most extreme impulses of imperialism.

He has started with highflown ideals to justify himself and has written a report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, which contains such ominous phrases as: 'By the simple exercise of our will we (the whites) can exert a power for good (amongst the 'natives') practically unbounded'. But at the bottom of the report he has scrawled the brutal reality that this 'power for good' amounts to: 'Exterminate all the brutes!'

At the end of the story, as he lies dying aboard Marlow's ship, the fevered phrases he utters reveal the black depths of the ruthless, murderous megalomania that life in the Congo has unleashed. He dies with the words 'The horror! The horror!' on his lips.

What compromises Conrad's exposure of imperialism, however, is his inability to break altogether with imperialist ideas. Marlow claims, for example, that although 'the conquest of the earth is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much', nevertheless 'what redeems it is the idea only... an unselfish belief in the idea'.

This is to condone the essence of imperialism while condemning its excesses. A little later on, while looking at a map of the world, he admires those parts of the globe coloured red (the sign of British

imperialism) as 'good to see any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there'. And Marlow never ceases to call the blacks 'niggers', apparently without any sense of the racist insult involved.

Most revealing, though, is his treatment of Kurtz. Conrad makes Kurtz's descent into brutality a product of his giving way to the savagery of his surroundings.

'The wilderness had found him out early,' Marlow tells us. In a sense, Kurtz has 'gone native', to use the words of that old imperialist myth.

Black tribespeople are never seen in the story as belonging to their own complex, ordered societies. Instead they are portrayed as fearful primitives who practise abominable rites and are barely restrained from gratifying their cannibalistic appetites.

Conrad does not condemn them — they are innocent in their savagery. But they do represent what Conrad supposed man essentially to be when released from the constraints of social conduct. It is this surrender to 'human nature' that defines for Conrad the most important aspect of imperialism. Consequently he obscures the central fact that imperialist savagery is the export of the most backward aspects of European capitalist society into the rest of the world.

Because of this reactionary view of 'human nature' Conrad's criticism of imperialism inevitably comes up against certain limits. He can expose the pretences and hypocrisies of imperialism but he can't separate himself off from participation in imperialism itself.

Marlow's fascination with Kurtz comes close to sympathy and support. Kurtz has, after all, let himself go completely and broken with conventional, hypocritical morality (unlike the other characters). And despite his criticism of imperialism Marlow is unable at the end of the story to bring himself to tell the truth to Kurtz's fiancée.

He pretends that Kurtz's last utterance had been her name. Marlow remains bewitched by imperialism, unable to break free. Willy nilly he must protect the lies of European civilisation that he himself has shown to be so uncivilised and brutal.

For this reason *Heart of*

Darkness is a fascinating, baffling story. Every socialist should make a point of reading it if they wish to understand some of the contradictory responses to imperialism at the turn of the century.

It helps us to see why Lenin insisted so forcefully on uncompromising opposition to imperialism. Any response to the horrors of imperialist conflict, he argued in his polemic against the orthodox 'marxist' Kautsky, which failed to go beyond condemnation of the 'excesses' of imperialism and avoided consideration of its essence amounted to a sell-out.

Marlow's outrage, as we have seen, falls into this category — he finishes, as did Kautsky (Marxist though he was), by defending 'civilisation'. Even Conrad must have been worried since he felt obliged to create Marlow as a character quite distinct from the author. In that way he could be absolved from responsibility for his character's views.

If you get something out of this story you should try reading Conrad's much more ambitious novel, *Nostromo*, which deals with the impact of American imperialism on a backward Latin American society. Don't be put off by the complication of the narrative and the time sequence.

In the end Conrad's purpose can be clearly seen: he is, in his own way, exposing the illusion that capitalist development brings order, peace and stability. In fact, exploitation of the country's silver brings quite the reverse and destroys the lives of those involved.

Nostromo must be one of the few novels in the English language to demonstrate that revolution is neither accidental nor avoidable, that, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'all history is the history of class struggle'. At the end of the novel, just as society is settling down to apparently unlimited capitalist prosperity and harmony we hear the first whispers of working-class revolution, a revolution made inevitable because of imperialist development.

As a conservative Conrad may not have liked that unpalatable truth. But he was too far removed from the conventional pieties of his class, too much of an outsider, not to face up to it. *Gareth Jenkins*

Women stand and cheer

For coloured girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf
Ntozake Shange
Eyre Methuen, £1.50

Ntozake Shange, an American, wrote *For coloured girls* at a time when the pressures on black women to reject feminism were particularly strong. Many blacks saw the progression made by white women from the Civil Rights Movement to the Women's Liberation Movement as yet another manifestation of the concerted white rip-off of black advances.

To them the WLM appeared to be using much of the theory, strategy and rhetoric they identified as their own. Additionally, the demand for fertility control and abortion sounded dubious to the have-nots in that dual, divided society. For many blacks it seemed inextricably linked with genocide.

The American WLM gathered strength around the time of the assassination of Malcolm X when black consciousness was at its height. For any black woman to 'step out of line' and take a feminist position was downright divisive. It was a considerable step to take for those women who, additionally, had no desire to identify with white culture in their struggle for self-determination.

For coloured girls came into being in 1974 when more than a few black women were starting to assert their feminist identity. It is a collection of searing poems welded together with wit and rhythm into a devastating, dramatic scenario.

It is unstructured and free-wheeling and gives the feeling of improvisation as seven women tell the story of a young black woman's journey from adolescence to adulthood and self-realisation. Shange holds up a mirror for black women, enabling them to recognise their ethnic beauty and cultural worth as well as reflecting the communal experience, but the difference in mood between her writing and that of white feminists illustrates only too clearly the dual oppression that continues to exist for black women.

This is a powerful work,

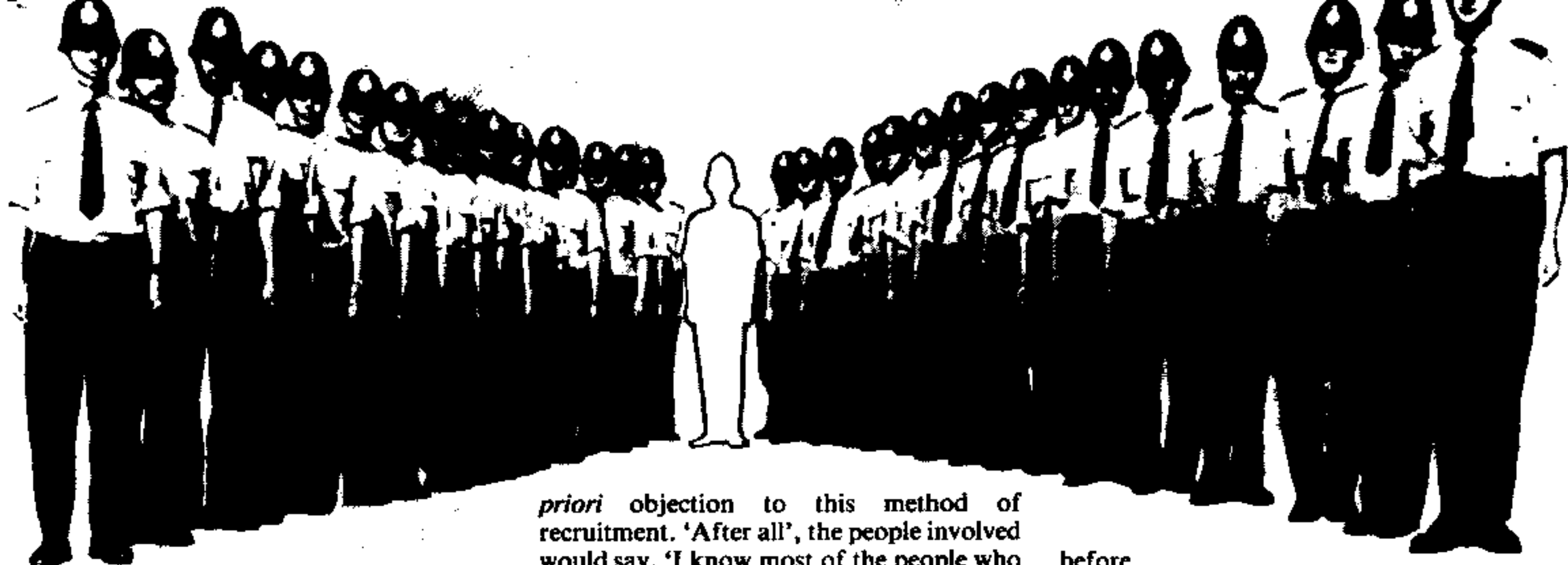
full of devastating insights that fairly leap off the page, yet the mood, though angry, is often sad and pessimistic.

Throughout the play, Shange weaves in references to various black culture heroes like the musicians Archie Shepp and Sun Ra as well as Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of the famous slave revolt in Haiti. She talks about following the speeches of Imamu Baraka (Leroi Jones), thereby confirming the link that exists between revolutionary music and revolutionary thought in a community where the people's music can be said to contain their oral history.

The author credits a feminist environment with lending the work its energy and part of its style, and her studies of women's history and her African roots with giving it a wider perspective. Part of her own self-realisation took place through the dance and it is regrettable that this aspect of the live performance, like the music, cannot be translated to the printed page.

Reading *For coloured girls* can only give an indication of the impact it has as a stage production, but it is sufficient to realise why when she hit Broadway a couple of years back, Shange made black men angry and women of all races stand and cheer. *Val Wilmer*





Most of us watch a good deal of TV — if current viewing patterns continue, the average person will have spent about eight years of their life slumped in front of that little box by the time they die. Most of the time most people will not have a very clear idea of how what they are watching gets onto the screen in the first place. Two employees of the British Film Institute have just spent several months studying in detail the making of a popular detective series — *Hazell* — and have written an informative book about it.*

The book records the complex process by which a new series is put together. Some of the things they say are specific to the problems of making a series, but many of the main determinants are of general interest in television production.

A number of things emerge very clearly. One is that it is very difficult to talk about the old traditional concept of the 'artist' — the making of this series involved the work of many people — while actually being shot in the studio about 100 people are involved. TV programmes of this type are therefore overtly collective products in a way that easel paintings or lyric poems are not: they are socialised artistic production. Of course, within that socialisation, the capitalist logic of production predominates, with a very strict hierarchy of authority and a minute division of responsibility.

In this series, the overall power rested with the 'producer', although that control itself was circumscribed by a further chain of command up to the money men who run Thames TV.

The peculiarly capitalist form of socialisation keeps on cropping up throughout the book. For example, it turns out that Bernard Allum, as the graphic designer, had the job of choosing a typeface for the title sequence.

No doubt it took him many hours of purely aesthetic agonising to finally decide to use one that he himself had the patent on. Time and time again this sort of thing occurs — most notably it seems in terms of giving a job to one of your mates.

Now, as the people employed all seem to have been fairly competent, there is no a

priori objection to this method of recruitment. 'After all', the people involved would say, 'I know most of the people who can do a good professional job and I chose from them — surely you don't want a non-professional job?' What this sort of answer neatly avoids is the question of how far this type of closed world influences the final product.

On this, the book is no help. The authors explicitly and rigorously avoid critical judgements on the product. Part of the reason seems to be that this was their intention; I suspect another part was that they were rather seduced by the glamour of the whole thing.

The reason why this was a peculiarly sad omission from the book is that *Hazell* set out to be rather different. It was not designed to be yet another in fast-and-nasty genre of *Special Branch/The Sweeney/The Professionals*.

The idea was to make a series along the lines of what is known as a 'film noir' and more precisely that derived from the novels of Raymond Chandler — for example *The Big Sleep*. It is my opinion that they missed by several miles.

The authors do consider some of the factors which led to this. For example, lack of studio space (i.e. inadequate finance) meant certain restrictions. The technical standard demanded by the IBA meant that certain sorts of lighting could not be used. There are other examples.

What they do not look at are the consequences of some of the other information they give. Some of the writers employed, for instance, had also worked in the fast-and-nasty genre. Now this does not automatically make them bad.

In this series, however, there was a problem in generating the 'running characters' who help the thing hold together over several weeks. One of the few that emerged was, surprise, surprise, Detective Inspector Minty, another copper. Hazell's relationship with him is fashionably strained but it remains in the end a working relationship.

There are a number of possible reasons why this catastrophic inversion could occur. The most charitable is that a hard-pressed writer groping to fulfill the demand for running characters should fall back on the easy option they have written

before.

What all this boils down to is the fact that the way in which TV production is organised — the constraints, the personnel, the ideological universe — remain firmly within the bounds of capitalist respectability. It is not that there is a great deal of overt manipulation — although there is some — but the working practices themselves force TV into the bland and boring affirmation of 'what is'.

Actually, the mould is not exactly that of 'what is'. Rather it is a very particular view of what is. Consider the handling of police matters. These have come a long way since the earlier days of *Dixon*, and we now have televised policemen who do bend the rules a bit.

Once a series or so they even get investigated by their peers — usually referred to as the 'rubber heels'. Of course they get off — they have to or the series would grind to a halt. Now this is quite amazing.

The most cataclysmic set of events to happen to the British police in the last ten years was not the issuing of riot shields at Lewisham; not the growth of the Special Patrol Group; not even the mushrooming of the Special Branch. It was the collapse of the Metropolitan CID under the weight of its own corruption.

It is quite easy to see how a TV series — working title *A.10* — could be written around that. You could catch some particularly nasty crook every week — up to their eyeballs in extortion, perjury, bribery, grievous bodily harm or whatever — and still have a series.

The consequence, of course, would be to show most cops as moronic, thuggish, greedy and very bent — which does seem to be what the London CID consisted of. Somehow I don't see it being made.

Not just because it would have McNee and Mary Whitehouse climbing up the curtains. It is just so far out of the way that good professionals think about things that it will never occur to them.

Both of the authors of this book have a critical view of society. It is a pity that they did not make more use of that in writing about *Hazell*. As it stands, the book is worth a read just to find out how it is done.

Colin Sparks

Manual Alvarado and Edward Buscombe *Hazell: the making of a TV series (BFI/Lathner £2.95)*

Do not adjust your set The fuzz is intentional

A socialist epic

1900

1900 traces the interplay between two Italian families during the 40 years which saw the total transformation of the Italian countryside, the formation of the Italian workers movement and the victories and eventual defeat of Fascism.

The uneasy friendship between the two central figures, Alfredo (Robert de Niro) the heir to the Berlinghieri estate and Olmo (Gerard Depardieu) a bastard son of the teeming peasant Dalco family, is the core around which the film is built.

In the Hollywood epic, the historical events would just be a picturesque backdrop for the love affairs between the star characters. In *1900*, the director, Bernardo Bertolucci, shows how political forces deeply influence what happens within families and between individuals.

The tensions between the three generations of Berlinghieris isn't caused by the individual psychologies of the family, but by changes in society at large. Their estate has to be organised like a factory and the 'Padrone' (the master) can no longer be an earthy father-figure.

The new owner has to be ruthless with his employees, while his son plays no part at all in the running of their land. These changes turn the family against itself, and it collapses.

Likewise, the peasants lose their small-holdings and become labourers. They have to abandon their old ways, and form leagues to fight their masters together.

In these fights they discover

a new sense of community far greater than the old family ties. They realise they have common class-interests, and Olmo becomes a communist.

Bertolucci presents Fascism not as some natural, inevitable disaster, as, say, *Cabaret* does, but as the calculated response of the landowners to the militancy of the labourers. The clergy and the gentry are blamed for the success of Mussolini, while the Blackshirts, personified by Atilla (Donald Sutherland) are men who hate the labourers, but have no hope of becoming landowners themselves.

These insights put *1900* miles apart from the epics it superficially resembles. Unlike, say, *Gone With the Wind*, it doesn't separate the personal stories of the individuals involved from the broad sweep of events.

Its characters responded to what happens around them; they support or oppose Fascism and become more grasping or patient as a result. What action they take also affects the wider political scene.

They exist as both credible individuals and as members of a class. So you become interested in them as Alfredo or Anita and as an example of a landowner, etc. That is part of the film's appeal, because it combines these two roles so successfully.

1900 is a great socialist film. It portrays how modern class society works and condemns what it depicts.

It is an exciting, moving, and in places very funny work. It does have blemishes; the final scenes try to avoid criticising the policy of the

It is not often that a Marxist is given access to the vast resources of the big movie companies and therefore Bernardo Bertolucci's 1900 should receive special attention from socialists. It is an extremely long and complex film, running to over four hours in its edited two-part

version, and Paul Cunningham highlights only some, certainly very important, aspects.

There are other aspects of the film which have received much criticism on the left — for example, its treatment of women. What did you think of the film? Write in and give us your views.

Communist Party in 1945 and there are some dubious implications about the sexuality of women.

But don't let those, nor the high ticket prices, nor its length, deter you from seeing both parts of this marvellous film. *Paul Cunningham*

Sci Fi The Spectacle

There are three new Space Fiction films showing in London at the moment: *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Dark Star*. The first two, at least will make it to most provincial cinemas. That is quite enough to make this genre a new fashion.

The three films are very different. *Star Wars* is very firmly within the tradition of science fiction known as 'Space Opera' in which an imagined technology of gigantic size and powers provides a backdrop for the most mindless kind of goodies v. baddies action.

Close Encounters is another example of a veteran tradition — the first meeting between man and another intelligent life-form.

Dark Star is more difficult to classify, but one major element is the equally traditional theme of machine intelligence — in this case a bomb whose computer controls malfunction. The astronauts attempt to prevent it blowing them apart by teaching it philosophy — how does it know that it exists, etc.?

Despite the differences, however, these films also have very strong elements in common. In particular, they all assume that intelligent aliens are at least as nice and as nasty as us humans.

They are capable of being friendly. This is quite a change.

At one time there were a number of science fiction films which assumed automatically that aliens were out to take over the earth, especially America. They were irrationally hostile, devious and ruthless.

They were quite capable of taking over the minds of decent American citizens and forcing them to carry out very un-American activities. They were clearly extra-terrestrial equivalents of Communists.

Later, in the famous 2001 they were benign but infinitely superior beings moulding our evolution. Now they have been humanised.

The films also share a vaguely populist ideology. *Star Wars*, in so far as it contains any ideas at all, has a vague commitment to democratic resistance to despotism and militarism. *Close Encounters* has a sharper anti-bureaucratic and anti-militarist thrust — the aliens reject the well-drilled specimens selected by the US military and choose to welcome an ordinary American power worker who has had to fight his way past the military to reach the point of close encounter.

Dark Star has a crew whose military morale has collapsed and one of whose members is a base electrician shipped aboard by mistake.

So much for the good things. They show us at least that the big money in the USA thinks that its likely audience (Americans under thirty are what they are really interested in) is a great deal more relaxed and open to humane values than it was twenty years ago.

There are, of course, bad things too. *Star Wars*, despite its fascination with technology, hinges on anti-rationalism: at the key moment, the hero turns off his computer and trusts 'the force'. *Close Encounters* collapses into the crudest sexism at the end — the woman

who has also made the journey to the climax retires from the event as soon as she has recovered her

child. *Dark Star* is ultimately nihilistic.

All of this amounts to saying that, ideologically at least, these films are not much different from the average high-budget film. At this level, the films could easily have been about something else than



space. In terms of the forms of film-making they are equally uninteresting — all three are standard professional pieces of filming.

But underneath all this there is something which divides *Star Wars* from the other two and makes it very much more interesting. Both of the other films have very severe narrative problems.

In particular, *Close Encounters* starts badly and continues for most of its length in the same vein; only the actual encounter has its own internal logic. The consequence of this is that the special effects amount to just about nothing. They are pegs around which the film is hung; very clever and very pretty pegs, also very expensive ones, but they are not integral to the film.

Star Wars is a different thing altogether. That is not to claim that it has a masterly narrative or anything so pretentious. Much more modestly, it can be said that it only exists in and through its technological special effects. It is a film in which what you see is of the first importance. Now this is not what makes



large-screen cinema films — which is quite important. *Star Wars* follows the logic of this with a monomaniac determination, and this gives it a very definite impact.

In the early days of film, the Lumière company made a short silent film of a train coming into a station. When it was shown, audiences panicked trying to get out of the way of the train. That naive response to the cinema is almost lost today, at least amongst adults. *Star Wars* attempts to recover that sense of *spectacle*. In my opinion, that makes it very well worth watching. *Colin Sparks*

Would you like to write reviews? Then write and ask us and we can try and arrange it. Anyway, writing reviews is not a specialist activity. So if you see a play or film, watch the TV, read a book, or go to an exhibition, or whatever, and think that others would be interested, write us a review — preferably getting in touch first to avoid disappointment.

Books

The poison pawn of participation

Workers' Participation in Industry

Michael Poole
Routledge and Kegan Paul,
£2.50

**Conflict or Co-operation?
The Growth of Industrial Democracy**

John Elliot
Kogan Page Ltd, £4.95

Addicts of the *Financial Times* who get vicarious pleasure from reading about the daily trials and tribulations of capitalism, will not be disappointed by this book by its industrial editor, John Elliot. He focusses mainly on the Bullock Report and the idea of worker directors.

The debate is firmly situated within the context of the social contract, and the need to incorporate the 'real centres of trade union power', the shop stewards. He deals with the fairly immediate origins of Bullock to bring out clearly the importance of Jack Jones' influence, as well as Britain's entry into the Common Market, whose legislation on worker directors will at some time have to be adopted.

Elliot seeks to persuade employers that Bullock and other forms of participation are not workers' revolutions. Workers' participation will give greater legitimacy to management decisions. Risks there may be, but only if 'genuine' participation is offered will shop stewards stop being 'negative', and start playing a 'positive' role, leading to Britain's industrial

regeneration.

Quoting Lord Bullock, he argues that giving industrial workers the vote in the 1860s was not such a suicidal leap in the dark for the ruling class, whatever the fears might have been at the time. Just as unions have co-operated at a national level since 1974 in establishing the social contract, so is it desirable for co-operation at company level with shop stewards in the boardroom.

Provided the Bullock proposals were implemented slowly employers should not have much to fear. Bullock may be hard to swallow but proposals less than single-channel trade union representation, unitary (as opposed to two-tier) boards and some form of union-management parity would not encourage stewards to play a 'positive' role in management.

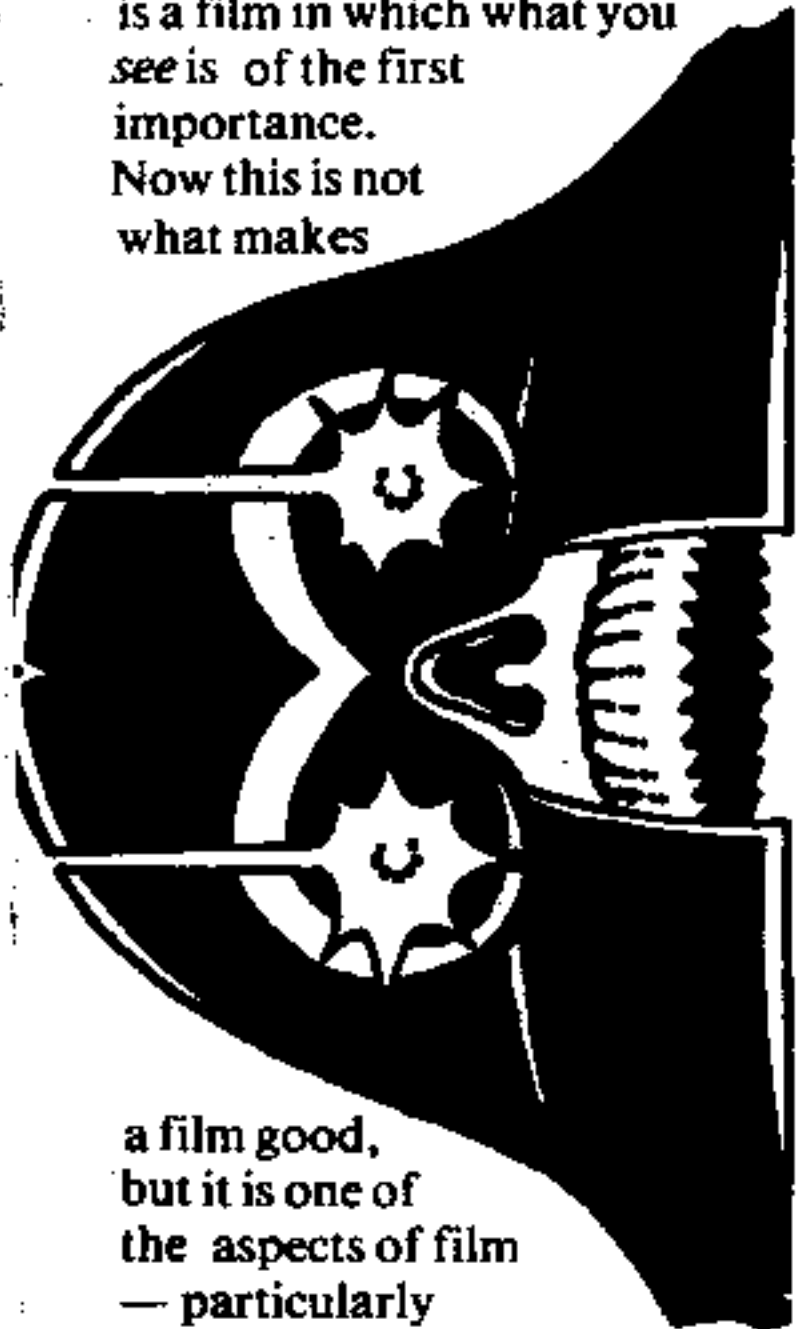
Those who think that more workers' participation means more power should ponder Elliot's assurances to the employers: 'the greater the proportion of seats in the boardroom by union-based employee representatives, the harder it would be for the unions throughout the company to maintain their old habits. There is nothing to stop them trying to maintain these habits, of course; the point is rather that a board would not function effectively, and in one way or another would not remain the centre of corporate decision-making if habits did not change' (p. 254).

The book contains other interesting details that show the worker directors' proposal is no gift horse. Union leaders are reported as saying that worker directors will give shop stewards a new role since their old one is disappearing with continuing incomes policies.

Even if trade unionists disagree with the sentiments expressed in the book, it makes for interesting reading. But although it attempts to be realistic, the question of whether it will be possible to recruit shop stewards to management ideology in the way Elliot imagines is not adequately explored.

In contrast, Michael Poole's book is disappointing. It bears all the hallmarks of an industrial sociology PhD in style and intention. It attempts to be analytically precise, only to end up abstract and confused.

Neither for those involved



a film good, but it is one of the aspects of film — particularly

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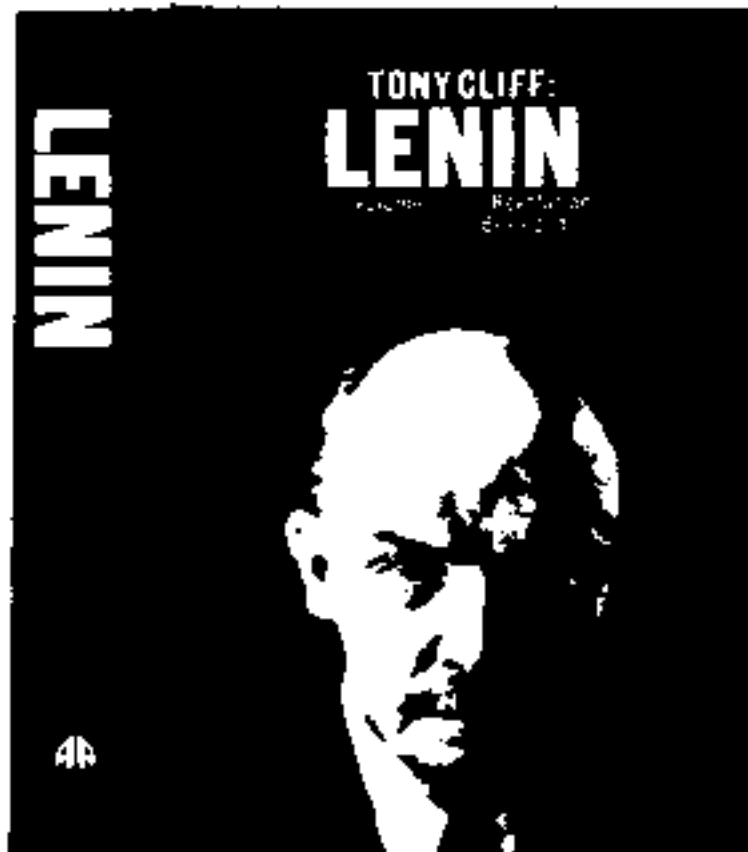
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in the struggle for workers' power nor for students of industrial sociology is this book to be recommended. Poole tries to build a 'general theory' of 'why workers' participation?' He sees it as a product of a combination of workers' 'latent' (i.e. underlying) power and the values that exist in 'society' at any given time.

Leaving aside the question of whose values and whose interests workers' participation serves, the central weakness in this book is that no distinction between participation and control is made. For example: 'it is our view that the attainment of participation and control is consequent upon the growth of workers latent power' (p. 46).

So he can oppose the revolutionary left's view that participation emasculates the rank and file, because after all it is the *result* of shop floor strength: 'it is by the development of their own independent power that workers acquire the right to participation and control... participation is only likely to occur on any scale when the workers' organisations are also in an advanced stage' (p.36)... Why worry about accepting a workers' participation scheme? It symbolises your power!

Little hint is there that participation is a management technique to increase its power over the workforce by seemingly sharing it. If Poole had made a clear distinction between participation and control, and had located participation historically in the conflict between capital and labour, he would have been in a better position to explain such things as Whitleyism after the First World War and Bullock today. Those with suicidal tendencies may enjoy this book. *Jules Townshend*

Coming out

Coming Out: homosexual politics in Britain from the 19th century to the present
Jeffrey Weeks
Quartet, £3.95

Recent studies in sexual politics have shown how the family, accompanied by its two offspring, adultery and prostitution, has adapted itself



to and was modified by the change from feudal to capitalist society.

Weeks' book performs a similar service to homosexuality by showing how, in the course of the 19th century, law, the church and the new church of medicine and education interacted to name and separate certain types of behaviour as homosexual and how this punishment and moral censure in turn interacted to form our modern homosexual identity.

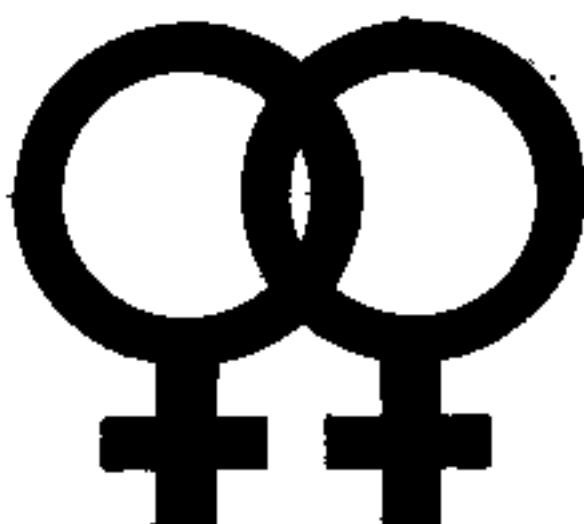
Weeks argues that we have to distinguish between homosexual behaviour which is universal and a homosexual identity which is historically specific — and a comparatively recent phenomenon in Britain.

This Marxist perspective is a welcome and long awaited contribution to our understanding of gayness, not as a separate and different area of sexuality in itself to be treated in footnotes on works on the horrors of the family, but requiring a central part in the main text, as neither homo or heterosexuality can be understood outside the context of each other.

By placing the homosexual reformers within the wider context of hostility towards gay sexuality he shows how much their search for positive aspects of homosexuality was mediated by a justifiable reluctance to confront the central question of the validity of being gay.

He shows how their lack of knowledge of sexism, the division of labour, the family and public and private life led to the creation of theories about 'a woman's soul in a man's body', the third sex or congenital homosexuality for which, like the colour of our eyes, you can't be blamed.

Such acceptance of biological determinism could only lead to demands for



toleration and law reform or to the sort of utopian socialism based on the matey and vaguely misogynist love of comrades of the Sheffield socialist Edward Carpenter, or the resolute hostility to politics of the Homosexual Law Reform Committee and certain sections of CHE today.

Weeks argues vocally against the current apologist reactionary view that assumes a continual unchanging homosexual identity which makes Da Vinci the same as Quentin Crisp or Tom Robinson today and thus vindicates the rest of us as culturally important like roses growing on (temporary) open space. He emphasises the positive aspects of oppression such as the Wilde trial or the prosecution of *The Well of Loneliness* which do give a moment to previously unnameable feelings.

A member of *Gay Marxist* and from 1975 of the Gay Left Collective, Weeks is an active member of the gay movement and in the latter part of the book he's writing his personal history charting the post '67 Sex Offences Act gay movement. He details its radical rupture with previous reformist groups, and details its gay pride marches, its pamphlets, its zaps om medics' conferences, its split with the lesbian movement, its reunions 'more like celebrations of



gayness than business meetings', and its spurning by the left.

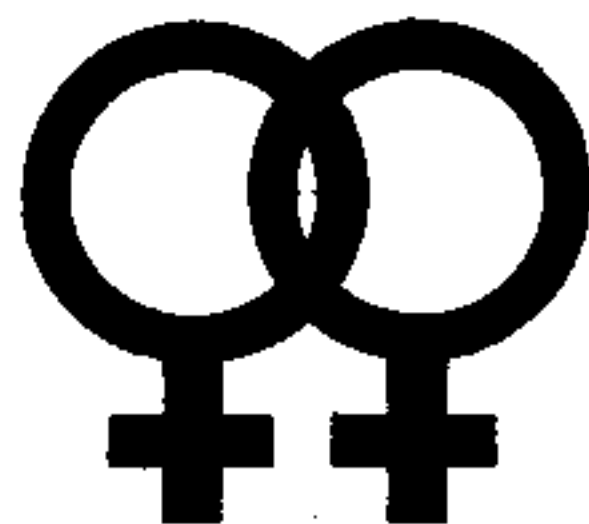
But the historian handles defused bombs, the militant is actively making grenades and the latter part of the book is considerably weaker than the first, as he fails to draw conclusions from the failure of the gay movement to prove relevant to the majority of gay people who are working class and suffering from marriage.

Weeks declares himself on the side of those who view their homosexuality as social oppression and not as a social whirl, whose perspective on gayness leads them to form links with the revolutionary left, the trade union movement and the women's movement as

homosexuals and who seek to unify the revolutionary potential of each into a coherent workable whole.

Nevertheless this theoretical commitment to socialism does not enable him to put forward any concrete proposals on the way forward. Means of being gay in our private lives are more available and varied than before but without that having changed the oppressive terms we view ourselves in from day to day.

Now, when we are seeing the limited gains of the last ten years being eroded and directly attacked, Weeks suggests 'The only way to succeed is to combine an unremitting



struggle for personal relationships with an active and open commitment as a homosexual to socialist ideals'. His views are limited by their hesitancy, their reluctance to come to terms with the fight when gays are witnessing a trial as major as the Wilde prosecution — an area where Engels didn't fear to tread.

The book's title, *Coming Out*, is no accident as it was one of the strengths of Gay Liberation to recognise that the private is in fact political and to explore this. Coming out, the process where you acknowledge yourself as gay, then tell friends, parents and workmates, with its stress on gay pride, its challenging of accepted division between private and public life and its implicit rejection of 150 years' anti-gay training is central to the post '67 gay view of homosexuality.

Paradoxically it's only by acknowledging differences that you can begin to see similarities, and Weeks' highly readable and rich account should prove an invaluable blueprint for the understanding of the origins of those differences from a gay point of view. *Paul Morland*

Books

Bread and revolution

Conquered City
Victor Serge
Writers and Readers, £1.50

The conquered city is Leningrad, Leningrad in 1919. Leningrad is a city you can't ignore. There is something surreal about it — its stern elegant Italian buildings, its bridges and canals perched under a cold Northern sky. It is a city wrenched by despotism from the marshes, Peter the Great's 'Window on Europe'; it is Trotsky's 'beautiful red Petrograd... the torch of the revolution'; it is the city saved at incredible cost from the Nazis.

It is, above all, a city about which people feel. Ask any inhabitant of Leningrad today and he will tell you 'the Soviet Union can go to hell, but Leningrad, Leningrad is my city'.

It is the haunting presence of the city that holds this book together. It is a collection of rapid sketches of the lives of its different inhabitants — from the white guard and the speculator, to the officials of the Cheka.

Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev play important parts in it, but their names are never mentioned. Victor Serge wrote it in Russia in 1932 and smuggled it out in 'detached fragments... which could if absolutely necessary, be published as they were, incomplete'.

His description of the living revolution is so vivid that you almost feel you can reach out and touch it. Serge arrived in Petrograd (as Leningrad was then still called) in January 1919, at the height of the Civil war. It was a time when 'hunger, cold, disease and



Emigre cartoon of sadistic Cheka employee

terror stalked the country like the four horsemen of the Apocalypse'.

One year on, the revolution was being strangled by blockade. Serge shows us the material consequences of this — the long lines of women 'waiting for the bread for which they had waited long hours in vain yesterday outside under a blizzard'; the food trains being pillaged; the small boy stealing wood; the piles of frozen excrement in the courtyards which will bring typhus when the thaw comes.

He is though, a bit of a fastidious Frenchman in his disgust for the staple rations of black bread and dried fish. Leningrad today is a privileged city and you can buy meat. But every Thursday and often every Tuesday as well, by government order, the cafes sell only (stale) fish.

The book is about the decadence and corruption that

the land, now murdered the 'Communist' commissars who came to take away their harvest, and left them lying by the roadside, their bellies stuffed with grain.

The workers who had made the revolution now hooted down their communist leader: 'Give us bread! Bread! No speeches! We've had all your bullshit before!' With White armies and hostile peasants without the city, spies, oppositionists, speculators and demoralisation within, democracy had to wither and terror take its place. 'Do people vote on a ship which is taking water? No, they pump'.

It is the question of terror that really worries Serge. His book focusses on scattered individuals, some real conspirators, others completely innocent, all eventually drawn into the Cheka's net. One of the Cheka's best men, Arkadi (in real life Serge's friend Chudin) became accidentally compromised and was shot.



'The defence of Petrograd,' when civilians took up arms under Bolshevik control to fight Krasnov and Kerensky (Soviet painting)

the deprivation causes. It is a situation in which 'we have conquered everything and everything has slipped from our grasp'.

There was famine, so the Party had to give itself privileges for it and the revolution to stay alive. From privilege corruption flowed inexorably. Comrade Zvereva of the Cheka has a closetful of requisitioned boots 'while half the female workers at the Wahl factory go barefoot'.

Support for the revolution had dwindled. The peasants, who had welcomed the 'Bolsheviks' who gave them

Serge's political position was peculiar. He was an anarchist, but he had joined the Bolsheviks to help the revolution win. As a result his attitude was ambivalent. On the one hand he correctly recognised that the revolution was in peril, and terror necessary: it was 'Man's renewal by fire'. At the same time, he felt that it was a logical result of the authoritarian nature of Leninism, and perhaps not really necessary at all — a position no different from the bourgeois one which identifies Stalinism with Leninism.

Books

In his memoirs he even says that 'the formation of the Chekas was one of the gravest and most impermissible errors that the Bolshevik leaders committed'. He behaved in exactly the same contradictory way over Kronstadt, in 1921.

He ends the book on a more optimistic note. Moscow and Petrograd are both encircled by the Whites. Lenin wants to abandon Petrograd and concentrate all their forces on Moscow. Trotsky wins the day and rushes to Petrograd in his armoured train with an army of wild Bashkirs.

At Pulkovo the exhausted proletarians of Petrograd fight 'like mad dogs' at the 'sight of officers dressed English-style going elegantly into battle' and the city is saved.

Perhaps, Serge says, everything would have been all right, Leninism wouldn't have turned sour if the proletariat of Europe had come to our aid...

Jean McNair

Nuclear politics

The Fissile Society
Walter C. Patterson
Earth Resources Research Ltd,
£1.50

In his earlier book, *Nuclear Power* (Penguin), Patterson gave a good introduction to the history and technicalities of nuclear fission. *Fissile Society* takes up some of the political and economic issues involved.

From the beginning of the public electricity supply in Britain in 1882, Patterson points out there was a tendency towards monopoly under state control. In 1926, the Central Electricity Board, now the CEB, set up a national grid and electricity supply was operated as one unit by 1939. Today, in terms of assets employed, the CEB is the 11th largest business in the USA and UK together.

The development of the atomic bomb added another twist since a power station like Calder Hall, near Windscale, could produce power as a by-product of plutonium production.

With nuclear power, an unholy combination appeared.

It consisted of the Atomic Energy Authority, committed to nuclear power, and the CEGB and SSEB, the only customers for nuclear power stations in Britain.

The industry has its problems. Because a power station is planned before it enters service, an estimate of future demand for electricity is essential.

In an unplanned economy this estimate cannot be accurate and in Britain when demand was expected to rise over the last five years, it was almost constant. The result is that one third of British generating capacity is never likely to be used, even at times of peak demand.

Another point is that productivity in the industry nearly doubled between 1967 and 1976. Since wages now form only 3 per cent of the CEGB's costs, any large strike in the industry would be very effective.

Patterson argues that nuclear power will reinforce these trends since nuclear power stations will be bigger and need proportionately fewer staff than conventional power stations. His argument (and that of Friends of the Earth) is simply 'big is bad' and he gives some reasons to support it. However, he has not got to the bottom of the story.

The nuclear power industry did not grow by accident. The state and parts of British capitalism are heavily involved for good reasons.

For example, the state wants to protect the economy when oil goes up in price next century. State capital (CEGB) and private capital (GEC, etc) will both benefit if the economy expands enormously and nuclear power is used on a large scale.

Without an analysis of these factors, Patterson's remedy, a mixture of alternative power sources and smaller power stations, expects that big reforms are possible. Patterson hopes the nuclear scales will fall from the Government's eyes as they learn the 'true state of affairs'.

His reaction to the favourable report on Windscale was 'I was flabbergasted... It is incomprehensibly onesided...' (*Nature*, 23 March 1978). I wonder when the scales will fall from Patterson's eyes?
John Gordon

SOCIALISM ENERGY AND



A mass movement against nuclear power stations, like that in France and Germany, has not yet developed in this country. No doubt this is in part because the British government has not yet adopted a large programme of building the modern fast-breeder reactors.

Although there are a number of nuclear power stations in Britain there is at present only one fast-breeder in operation (a small prototype) and so far the government has placed orders for only one more. Nevertheless the decision to expand the nuclear fuel processing plant at Windscale represents a further commitment in this direction and has opened up something of a public debate.

The discussion of this issue on the left so far has not really been adequate. It is very important for us to oppose the further development of nuclear power in its present form, for reasons that I argue below.

We should not, however, accept uncritically all the arguments put forward by the conservation/ecology people who have up to now made most of the running in the movement against nuclear power.

A central plank of the 'ecological' case against nuclear power as presented at the Windscale enquiry for example, is that 'exponential economic growth' along with the corresponding growth in energy needs can and must cease. A crucial part of revolutionary socialism, on the contrary, is the idea that economic growth can and should take place not slower but much, *much* faster than under capitalism.

We are in favour of raising the living standards of the world's poor to the levels currently enjoyed by the highest paid workers in Western Europe and North America. That requires a tremendous increase in world production.

From the point of view of three-quarters of the world the industrial revolution has hardly begun and it is in order to complete it that we want to overthrow capitalism. We therefore cannot accept the idea that economic growth must cease at this stage in human development.

Now it is of course true that our present society is extremely wasteful of energy, for example in a ludicrous transport system geared to the needs of the private car. No doubt a more rational economic order would make for considerable energy savings in that sort of area. Nevertheless the unprecedentedly high level of economic growth that we hope will follow a world socialist revolution makes it likely that the world's overall energy requirements will be greater than they are now and they will certainly grow much faster.

Where is all this energy going to come from? One possibility is an increased level of use of fossil fuels, i.e. coal, oil, etc. Although some opponents of nuclear power have advocated this, it is not really a viable policy, for two reasons.

There is a finite stock of fossil fuels in the earth's surface, at the present rate of use enough for perhaps three centuries, less if we assume an accelerated rate of use. These stocks of coal and oil represent an *irreplaceable* source of organic raw materials. To burn them as a fuel at all is



NUCLEAR POWER

really a pity; to burn them up altogether in the next few generations would be an unforgivable crime against our future descendants.

The second reason why we should not continue to look to fossil fuels as a solution to our energy problems is the so-called 'carbon dioxide question'. The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by 15 per cent since the industrial revolution; given our present habits in the next forty years it will *double*.

This is primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (a secondary cause is the destruction of the world's forests by agriculture). Such a change in the composition of the atmosphere is likely to lead to a highly undesirable and possibly very dangerous alterations in the world's climate. In order to make sure this does not happen we need to drastically reduce our burning of fossil fuels in the near future.

For both these reasons, then, the world's energy needs cannot continue to be provided by burning coal and oil. This leaves only two possible sources of energy:

- (a) solar energy and other 'renewable' sources of natural energy — winds, waves, tides, etc.

- (b) nuclear power.

The total amount of energy potentially available from source (a) is very large but astonishingly little research has been done on the practicalities of harnessing it on a large scale. Existing devices tend to be very low power — for example a well designed modern windmill delivers about 30 kilowatts, an ample power supply for a private house but quite inadequate for any but the lightest industrial use.

Very large amounts of power, however, could be obtained from the tides by erecting barrages in such places as the Severn estuary. There is also the possibility of harnessing solar power on a large scale in areas of high sunlight. The great attraction of such energy sources is that they are completely non-polluting and that they can go on indefinitely since they do not depend on any fuel supply.

Possibility (b), nuclear power, is of two fundamentally different kinds. The form which has been developed up to now is called *nuclear fission* and is very much the less desirable of the two. This process uses an expensive and very dangerous fuel (enriched uranium in the older reactors, plutonium in the new fast-breeders) and produces large quantities of radioactive waste.

The other possible form of nuclear energy is called *nuclear fusion*. This would use as fuel a substance called deuterium, which is present in unlimited quantities in ordinary sea water and could be extracted very cheaply.

Deuterium is completely harmless and not at all radioactive and the fusion process is likely to produce only a very small quantity of waste products. Finally, the amount of energy available from this source is vast — far larger than that which could be obtained from nuclear fission or indeed from any other possible source.

Generating power by nuclear fusion is known to be technically possible but huge

capital investments would be needed to develop it on a commercial scale. As with possibility (a), our rulers are unwilling to make these investments so long as other energy sources are more profitable in the short run, no matter how dangerous or undesirable they may be.

The growing use of nuclear power in its present form is desperately dangerous, basically for two reasons. The first is the ever increasing quantity of completely indisposable waste products, which will remain intensely radioactive for *tens of thousands of years*.

The world's public authorities are at present incapable of enforcing safety standards even in a comparatively simple matter like shipping oil from one place to another without spilling it all over the coastline. They cannot conceivably be trusted to administer the necessary safety standards in handling something as deadly as nuclear waste.

The second point is that the programme of fast-breeder reactors presently being adopted by a growing number of countries will lead to an enormous increase in the amount of plutonium available in the world (fast-breeders actually create more plutonium than they use up — hence their name). Since plutonium is the material from which nuclear weapons are made the inevitable result will be that many countries which do not possess these weapons will acquire them. This can only serve to make a nuclear war very much more likely.

What we will have to oppose, however, is nuclear power in its present form, as it is being developed under capitalism. We cannot oppose it in principle, for all time. In its more advanced and safer form it might become a major energy source of the socialist world economy.



by David Turner

In the first part of this article, I tried to show that socialist theatre has been limited both organisationally and artistically by the absence of a mass revolutionary movement, and a consequent mass-revolutionary culture. Since the relative decline of the agit-prop form in the mid-1970s (a set of techniques borrowed from the 1930s), socialist theatre workers have explored a number of alternative theatrical strategies.

One common experiment has been the attempt to draw upon traditions culled from popular culture, most notably the music hall and folk music, either as total formal structures, or at least as cultural reference points. The *General Will*, is a case in point.

In our three chronicle plays about the Conservative Government (*The National Interest*, *State of Emergency* and *Dunkirk Spirit*), we drew images and reference points from a number of sources, including what we saw as popular culture.

What became clear was that the images the audiences related to (in the sense of those that they remembered and commented on afterwards) were not those that were drawn from popular-cultural traditions. It was rather those images that we drew from bourgeois populist culture (films and television) that created the greatest resonances.

The Tory Cabinet portrayed as Chicago hoods and productivity deals related to *The Generation Game* were the metaphors that stuck, rather than those drawn from the music hall. When we made a whole show based round melodrama (a popular form of the 19th century) we achieved some success; but this was due to the fact that the form naturally fitted the tasks we demanded of it, rather than any specific references to the form had to our audiences' cultural experience.

The *General Will* was not the only group to realise that it was employing forms that had expired more than half a century ago. Further, the awareness grew that even those popular forms that had survived the electronic onslaught had degenerated into populism.

It is true, for example, that remnants of the music hall tradition survive in club entertainment, but the grossly reactionary nature of the content of club acts is evidence that, though orientated towards the working class in form, the culture of the clubs has become bourgeois in essence (it is no coincidence that the uniform costume of club entertainers is the evening wear of the upper-middle-class).

Some groups and companies have indeed drawn successfully on other popular-cultural forms, but it is interesting that they have achieved most when they have employed forms actually peripheral to the urban British working class. Joan

DAVID EDGAR

PART TWO

Littlewood's *O What A Lovely War*, for example, used the Pierrot show (a basically Italian form, translated into British seaside entertainment), and 7:84 Scotland's use of the *celidh* form in *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil* succeeded precisely because it drew on a rural folk-form, and, indeed, was directed at audiences in the rural highlands of Scotland.

Faced with the atrophy of popular culture, some revolutionaries have sought to move into enemy territory, and to inject socialist content into mass-populist forms. One example is the writer Trevor Griffiths who explained his use of the Drama Serial (in *Bill Brand*) as follows:

"Strategic penetrations" is a phrase I use a lot about the work of socialists and Marxists in bourgeois cultures...I simply cannot understand socialist playwrights who do not devote most of their time to television. That they can write for the Royal Court and the National Theatre, and only that, seems to me a wilful self-delusion about the nature of theatre in a bourgeois culture now. It's just thunderingly exciting to be able to talk to large numbers of people in the working class, and I can't understand why everybody doesn't want to do it.'

Griffiths then goes on to confront the formal problems of the medium, justifying his use of 'realistic modes as against non-realist alienating modes' in the following terms:

'I chose to work in those modes because I have to work now. I have to work with the popular imagination which has been shaped by naturalism... One of the things about realistic modes is still that you can offer through them demystifying, undistorted, more accurate counter-descriptions of political processes and social reality than

people get through other uses of naturalism.

'So that if for every *Sweeney* that went out *Bill Brand* went out, there would be a real struggle for the popular imagination'.

Finally, Griffiths discusses the implications of the 'realist mode' for the treatment of characters, particularly those with whom he himself disagrees:

'I try to occupy the space of all the people I'm talking about. I have actually met almost nobody who goes around saying to people, "Well the trouble with me is I'm a total shit. I tell lies all the time, and all I'm about is self-advancement; I don't give a fuck for anybody". People don't seem to operate that way.

'But when I read about these people in *Socialist Worker* there is a sense in which the guy knows he's a shit. So that everybody who does not agree is in some way cynically distanced from his own reality, and wholly self-consciously so. I've never found that to be the case. So when I write this way, it's with a feeling that it's kind of truthful.'

In order to assess how successful Griffiths has been in this project, it is necessary to distinguish between the inherent problems of the medium of television, and the further problems posed by the nature of the dramatic forms that television has developed. It seems to me that it is possible to counter the former only if one resolutely refuses to be bound by the limits of the latter.

The inherent problem with television as an agent of radical ideas is that its massive audience is not confronted en masse. It is confronted in the atomised, a-collective arena of the family living room, the place where people are at their least critical, their most conservative and reactionary (the dwelling-addressed postal vote will always get a more reactionary response than any other form of balloted decision).

The television audience, approached in the midst of their private and personal existence, are much more likely than collectively-addressed audiences to take an individual, personalised (and therefore psychological rather than social) view of the behaviour demonstrated to them.

This problem is exacerbated, however, by the forms that television has developed (forms that are *suitable* to the medium, but not necessarily *inherent* to it). Format scheduling, for example, has the effect of dulling the audience's response to challenging material by placing it within a predictable and familiar framework of regular programme slots.

This can, of course, be countered by employing atypical techniques (the Battersby-Welland play *Leeds — United!* was made at unslottable length on black and white film), but *Bill Brand* itself was placed firmly within a conventional timing.



"General Will" in *State of Emergency*

Furthermore, *Bill Brand* was written in a form — the Drama Serial — which demands that the audience identify uncritically with its central character or characters.

The degeneration of the serial *Z-Cars*

from a portrayal of working class experience in which the linking factor happened to be involvement with the police to a soap opera about specific policemen (who, as they became more popular, could not be implicitly criticised to the extent that their audience could no longer identify with them; Watt and Barlow could behave in certain morally-dubious ways, but not to the extent that they had to be taken out of the series) was a classic example of this process in action, on which John McGrath (one of the originators of the series) has frequently commented.

The danger of a project like *Brand* is that, by the end of eleven episodes, the audience is identifying with Brand exclusively as the pivot of the story (my hero right or wrong), and sympathising with his views and actions only insofar as that it is necessary to a satisfactory dramatic experience.

In other words, identification with Brand's socialism is equivalent to the identification with certain chauvinistic ideas that it is necessary to share in order to enjoy Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The audience is prepared to share Brand's socialism for the duration of the play, but no longer.

Moreover, as has been pointed out, the countless other drama serials, series and plays that are part of a television audience's experiential baggage will lead them to take an individual-psychological view of events if they are given any opportunity. (Griffiths in fact gave the audience ample opportunity to judge his central character's actions psychologically, by giving him a broken marriage and a feminist mistress).

Further, this experiential baggage will allow audiences to relate to Griffiths' concentration upon individual experiences ('I try to occupy the space of all the people I'm talking about') in an uncritical way. The writer no doubt wishes to present a realistic dynamic between the surface naturalism of his characters' represented behaviour and the political essence of their activities, but audiences will react only to the surface unless powerfully prevented from doing so.

This leads on to a third problem with Griffiths' approach. He himself gives an example of how he tries to counter the surface with the essence, in a scene where a trade union leader used the moral pressure of his service in the International Brigade to counter Brand's argument that he is renegeing on the interests of his class.

Griffiths seeks to undermine the emotional force of the union leader's speech by ending the scene with a shot of a portrait of Lord Citrine. What is immediately obvious (beyond the device's reliance on the audience knowing what Citrine looked like) is the lightness of this device compared with the power of what it has to counter.

As Griffiths himself admits, 'I don't know how you can prevent people getting out of the plays what they want', and what they want is defined by the barrage of programmes surrounding Brand which use the *same* form to present an *opposite* view

about human behaviour. (On commercial television, the problems of 'strategic penetration' are even more acute, as the experience is itself strategically penetrated back by raw capitalist propaganda at 20 minute intervals).

It might be true that 'if for every *Sweeney* that went out, a *Bill Brand* went out, there would be a real struggle for the popular imagination', but it is a 'wilful self-delusion' to think that such a struggle would be allowed to take place. In summary, therefore, television realism has all the problems of contemporary realism writ massively.

I have dwelt on what I regard as the limits of the contrasting approaches of Trevor Griffiths, and the author of the *Wedge* article because of their theoretical exclusivity. In the absence of a mass-revolutionary or popular culture, socialists will wish — and should wish — to exploit the opportunities presented by television, and to employ the techniques of agit-prop in stage-plays for the working class.

However, the theoretical limits of these strategies seem to demand that theatre-workers should consider whether new forms of — and even new roles for — socialist theatre can be found.

I believe that the germs of such new forms — and, more obliquely, of such new functions — are in fact present, though in a place that one would least expect to find them. Bertolt Brecht once remarked that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating', a comment that might appear blindingly obvious until one observes that the major preoccupations of many socialist theatre-workers are with the origins of the recipe, the cleanliness of the spoons, the decision-making processes employed by the chefs and the address of the restaurant.

It seems to me demonstrably if paradoxically true that the most potent, rich and in many ways politically acute theatrical statements of the past ten years have been made in custom-built buildings patronised almost exclusively by the middle class.

This is not to say that touring socialist groups have not produced acute and resonant images. The metaphor of the man's pint and the woman's half-pint in Red Ladder's *A Woman's Work Is Never Done*, for instance, does a great deal more than explain the difference between parity and equal pay.

But I have seen nothing in touring theatre to compare, in terms of memorable (and therefore *usable*) dramatic power, with the tearing down of the wall at the end of Edward Bond's *Lear*; the decision of the hideous Bagley dynasty to move into the Chinese heroin market in the last act of Howard Brenton and David Hare's *Brassneck*; and the sustained fury of Barry Keefe's *Gotcha*, in which a working class teenager holds three teachers hostage in a school boxroom by threatening to drop a lighted cigarette into a motorcycle petrol tank.

There was also — significantly —

nothing in the whole of *Bill Brand* to compare with the climax of the second act of Griffiths' stage play *Comedians*, where the white-faced, football-scarfed, totally unfunny stand-up comic Gethin Price screams at two upper-class dummies he is terrorising: 'There's people'd call this envy, you know. It's not. It's hate'.

Nor is it easy to think of a series of images that say so much in so little time as those in the last half-hour of Howard Barker's *Claw*, the tale of a working-class boy who rejects the politics of his class, becomes a pimp to the aristocracy, and, after a scandal involving the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, is arrested by the Special Branch. The last act is here described by the critic John Ashford:

'The third act opens with an even more extreme stylistic jolt than the second. Two waiters serve Claw breakfast. They do not speak to him. They speak to the audience about themselves.

'They are both men of violence. One tells the story of the first time he planted a bomb in Northern Ireland. The second tells of his experience as an apprentice hangman

audience's ignorance of what is going to happen.

The same is true of *Gotcha*. The last scene of *Brassneck* is nothing more than a build-up to the revelation that the selling of lethal drugs is the purest form of the market economy.

The whole of the first two acts of *Comedians* build up to Gethin Price's macabre performance, and depend on the audience not knowing what he will do until he does it.

This use of suspense and shock is, of course, a fundamental break with the Brechtian tradition. Brecht's concern was always to demonstrate *how* events unfold (having already revealed *what* was going to happen in the headings to the scenes).

On the other hand, the content of the plays I have described is contained in *the fact that the events occur*. As in Brecht, the aim is to force the audience to respond analytically; but instead of distancing the audience from the occurrences, these writers involve the audience, provoking them into thought by the very surprise and shock of the images.

Conscious, perhaps, of the degeneration of Brecht's techniques to the condition of theatrical cliché, these writers are forging a style that uses opposite methods to the same end.

The shock factor is not just a matter of internal dramatic effect. Another point to note is that these writers are employing given forms and structures, but they are not using them as a bridge into people's familiar theatrical experience; they are deliberately disturbing and disorientating the audience by destroying the form and denying expectations.

The motor of Bond's *Lear* is the way he *alters* and even reverses the original Shakespeare story. *Brassneck* is, in fact, that hoary old stand-by, the chronicle of a family through three generations; the shock element is provided by the fact that the generations are defined not by their domestic relations, but by their different methods of capitalist appropriation.

And Gethin Price's turn in *Comedians* depends completely on its denial of the basic principle of the form; Price is aggressively and deliberately *unfunny*.



From Trevor Griffiths' TV serial *Bill Brand*

before the abolition of the death penalty.

'Both speeches are written with an extraordinary clarity and sympathy. The men also gossip about the grubby sexual origins of pop stars, and it gradually becomes clear that they are not waiters but warders. This is a mental institution of a very special nature, and they have been selected to work there because of their particular experience.

'Claw appeals to his warders but gets no response. He appeals to a vision of his father. Old Biledew, now dying, condemns Claw's individualism, regrets that he did not have the vocabulary necessary to pass on his experience, and advises Claw not to despise his class but to win them.

'Claw again appeals to his warders. They swiftly and efficiently drown him in a bath'.

I have quoted this description at length because it demonstrates a vital element of the aesthetic that sets these plays apart from most touring work. The ending of *Claw* is a series of shocks, reliant on the



This upending of received forms reveals the cultural heritage of these works, and, further, goes some way to explaining their revolutionary potency. Bond has never put his own work in the counter-cultural tradition, and Brenton feels himself to have moved on from the aesthetics of Portable Theatre.

But the techniques I have described clearly arise out of the spectacle-disruptive Situationist era of the late 1960s, and, indeed, the success of Bond and Brenton's metaphors may well be explained by their place within a genuine (if politically misguided) revolutionary culture, a culture, furthermore, whose preoccupations with consciousness render it, in a revised form, eminently suited to confronting the gap between the objective crisis of the system and the subjective responses of the human beings within it.

The techniques of shock and disruption, therefore, serve the same function today as Brecht's methods performed forty years ago: they pre-empt the degeneration of

realism into naturalism, and preserve a genuine dynamic between the surface and essence of society.

It is, however, obvious that the form's exploitation of literary and theatrical sources (one might, but only might, except *Comedians*) render it inaccessible to those without the dubious advantage of a university education. The writers I have mentioned are in fact much further from political activism than most touring socialist theatre-workers.

The plays themselves are not, of course, performed anywhere near the working class: most of Bond's work has been premiered at the Royal Court, who have also produced two of Barker's plays; Bond and Barker have both recently written for the Royal Shakespeare Company; Brenton has worked and Hare is about to work for the National Theatre; *Brassneck* and *Comedians* were both premiered at Nottingham Playhouse, and the latter was transferred, via the Old Vic Theatre, into the West End.

To reject the contribution that these writers' discoveries might make to a socialist theatre on those grounds, however, seems to be a mechanical error, based on a false and one-dimensional view of the way in which artistic processes occur. I am not alone in this view. As Leon Trotsky warned a Communist Party cultural committee in 1924:

'One cannot approach art as one can politics, not because artistic creation is a religious rite or something mystical... but because it has its own laws of development, and above all because in artistic creation an enormous role is played by the sub-conscious processes — slower, more idle and less subjected to management and guidance...

'Artistic creativity, by its very nature, lags behind the other modes of a man's spirit, and still more the spirit of a class. It is one thing to understand something and express it logically, and quite another thing to assimilate it organically, reconstructing the whole system of one's feelings, and to find a new kind of artistic expression for this new entity. The latter process is more organic, slower, more difficult to subject to conscious influence'. Furthermore, this analysis explains, for Trotsky, the apparent contradiction that as an artist grows in political sophistication, the quality of his work may actually regress; speaking of the work of the fellow-traveller Boris Pilnyak, he remarks:

'It has been said here that those writings of Pilnyak's which are closer to Communism are feebler than those which are politically farther away from us. What is the explanation? Why, just this, that on the rationalistic plane Pilnyak is ahead of himself as an artist'.

This phenomenon is not only clearly central to the matters I am discussing, it is

also observable. Many people have commented, for instance, that Brenton's *Weapons of Happiness* falls down precisely at the moment when it confronts the factory occupation at the centre of the play.

What is obviously needed is a way of transforming the techniques that have been developed in metropolitan theatres into forms that are formally and geographically accessible to audiences directly involved in struggle against exploitation and oppression.

There are, I think, signs that such a transformation is beginning to occur; as, at least, that certain signposts on such a road are becoming visible. One group that is acting as a bridge between the Royal Court and a wider audience is The Monstrous Regiment, a company with a majority of women members.

Since their formation in 1976, they have produced a series of increasingly confident and powerful plays (presented largely but by no means exclusively in arts venues), and have done so at a time when many of the groups from which their members came (including, classically 7:84 England) are racked with internal division and doubt.

The success of Monstrous Regiment seems to me to be directly attributable to the fact that their subject matter (concerned primarily with sexual politics) allows them to effect the kind of transformation I referred to above.

The styles and techniques developed by socialists working in conventional theatres are clearly appropriate to the areas of experience with which Monstrous Regiment deal, and, indeed, the group has performed two plays written by Caryl Churchill, much

of whose work has been premiered at the Royal Court. Further, and most importantly, the work of Monstrous Regiment can speak relevantly and *usefully* to the audiences that it is actually likely to gain.

It has been pointed out that socialist theatre has not built up a mass working class audience. What it *has* done is to create substantial support among the socialist movement (by which I mean members of revolutionary parties, and non-aligned supporters of various Marxist organisations, causes and campaigns).

What groups like Monstrous Regiment have done is to acknowledge this audience (rather than pretending, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that they are not there) and to concentrate on the presentation of content that can speak appropriately, authoritatively and also controversially to that audience: appropriately in the sense that the subject matter can speak directly and importantly to an audience that does not consist in the majority of manual workers (without, of course, excluding such an audience); authoritatively in that the plays draw on the direct experience of those who create them; and controversially in that sexual politics is an area of theory and practice on which socialists have tended to be at best woolly and at worst downright reactionary.

Finally sexual politics is clearly an area of experience which can be much more illuminatingly and richly discussed in a representational rather than a purely descriptive medium of communication, precisely because it is at the interface of the personal and political.

It is this realisation that there are subjects with which theatre is uniquely fitted to deal that has led, I believe, to an increase in plays about various aspects of political consciousness, and explains, for me, the large number of plays presently being made or performed about race, a development recently quantified — not uncritically — by Sandy Craig in *The Leveller*.

Craig himself concludes his piece by saying that socialist companies should 'come to a much fuller and more exact understanding of the function, purpose and effects of theatre'. It appears to me that, over the last ten years, socialist theatre-workers have spent much time and energy discovering what they cannot do, to whom they are not appealing, and in what forms their work is least appropriately presented.

The seemingly modest aims of a group like Monstrous Regiment, to perform aesthetically and politically mature plays to an existing audience, are refreshing in themselves. But this is not, of course, the end of the story, and the realisation that socialist playwrights cannot themselves change the world may yet help them to discover ways of contributing and in no small measure, to the work of those who can.



The Chairman's New Clothes
— Mao and the Cultural Revolution
Simon Leys
Motive Books, £2.95

More myths have been built around the Cultural Revolution than probably any other event over the last ten years. The Western Maoists who publicised and popularised these myths took the official view of the Revolution from the regime and blew it up into a world-shaking event.

For the European Maoists the Cultural Revolution was important for three reasons. First, it was seen as a genuinely revolutionary alternative to the discredited Russian route of socialist alternative. If moves to bureaucratisation were to be avoided then the masses had to be periodically mobilised in order to purge the worst officials and keep the rest under control.

In this way, the masses would continue to be the leading force in Chinese politics. Secondly, it was important for certain western Maoists because it seemed to introduce a whole new stage in the development of Chinese society.

It appeared to people like Charles Bettelheim that the social relations of production had been transformed with what he saw as mass participation in the planning of production with an increase of democracy (if limited to the level of the factory and the streets).

Finally, many European left groups, especially in Italy and Germany were profoundly influenced by the Cultural Revolution and did their best to deduce from the Cultural Revolution some semblance of a strategy for their own countries. These then are the myths.

Over the last 18 months they have taken a hammering. The most important event was the purging of the 'Gang of Four', all of whom had played key roles in the Cultural Revolution. If the leaders of the Cultural Revolution have gone does that mean that its 'achievements' have disappeared as well?

In addition, there was the way that the purge was carried out: there was no mass mobilisation as occurred in the Cultural Revolution. Instead there was mass manipulation

The Chairman's new clothes



as the whole propaganda machine swung into action with the most incredible stories about Madame Mao's life.

The workers and students who ten years ago had been throwing up their own forms of organisation, were confined to well-rehearsed bit-parts. Where the masses did manage to break through the official barriers they were, to Western Maoists' horror, overwhelmingly against the 'Gang of Four'. For instance in Shanghai which was thought to be a base for the 'radicals' there was a demonstration of some two to three million people.

Finally and most embarrassingly for the more orthodox Maoists, the Chinese regime is also rapidly re-assessing the Cultural Revolution. Already most of the changes in policy that the Cultural Revolution initiated have been reversed. Renewed emphasis is put upon skill, material incentives and the creation of experts.

The continued harassment of the cadre within the Chinese CP appears to have fallen off. The dictatorship that the 'Gang of Four' exercised over cultural life has been broken and there is a very limited process of liberalisation going on. The regime's judgement of the entire process has shifted rapidly. Two years ago, it was the basis of 'socialist' China; now, while still being in some undefined way 'good', it is seen as being a period in which all the problems of China in the 1970s started to develop.

It seems that the only reason that the present leaders of the CCP do not ditch the whole embarrassing memory of

the Cultural Revolution is that to do so they would have to ditch the memory of Mao, which would in turn leave them dangerously exposed.

The myth of the Cultural Revolution then is rapidly on the decline, and hopefully Leys' book will be another nail in the coffin. Very clear and forthright it lays bare much of what really happened in 1966 to 1969. For Leys:

'The "Cultural Revolution" had nothing revolutionary about it except the name, and nothing cultural about it except the initial tactical pretext. It was a power struggle waged at the top between a handful of men and behind the smokescreen of a fictitious mass movement.

'As things turned out, the disorder unleashed by this power struggle created a genuinely revolutionary mass current, which developed spontaneously at the grass roots in the form of army mutinies and workers' strikes on a vast scale. These had not been prescribed in the programme and were crushed mercilessly.'

The rest of the book is a filling out of this theme. Divided into two main parts, the first is a very straightforward account of the build up towards the Cultural Revolution. The rest of the book is a personal diary written by Leys in those stormy years.

The book adds up to a very long, and detailed analysis of the Cultural Revolution, certainly the most detailed one readily accessible. As such it is to be welcomed, since the analysis and documentation is very good. However, a few

words of caution should be added. The main problem is that because the work is so specific in its subject, the reasons for the turbulent history of post-revolutionary China are not fully explained.

Indeed the author appears to say that the major reason for the twists and turns in Chinese politics was the fact that the politics of Mao Tse Tung, formed in a time of Civil War, were out of date in a period of social reconstruction and economic growth.

Very little is said of the fundamental economic and social barriers that confronted China after the Liberation and nothing is said of the whole tradition of Stalinism, in which the politics of Mao were rooted. If it were only that simple then all that would be necessary was a new political leadership and the country would be on its way again.

But of course the zig-zags of Chinese domestic policy are not the results of the personal characteristics of one set of rulers or another. They are the result of the whole social reality of China today. That reality is of an under-developed country attempting to industrialise from its own internal resources. The contradictions involved will not be solved by any faction within the leadership — and in fact Leys recognises this and fully supports any mass movement against that leadership.

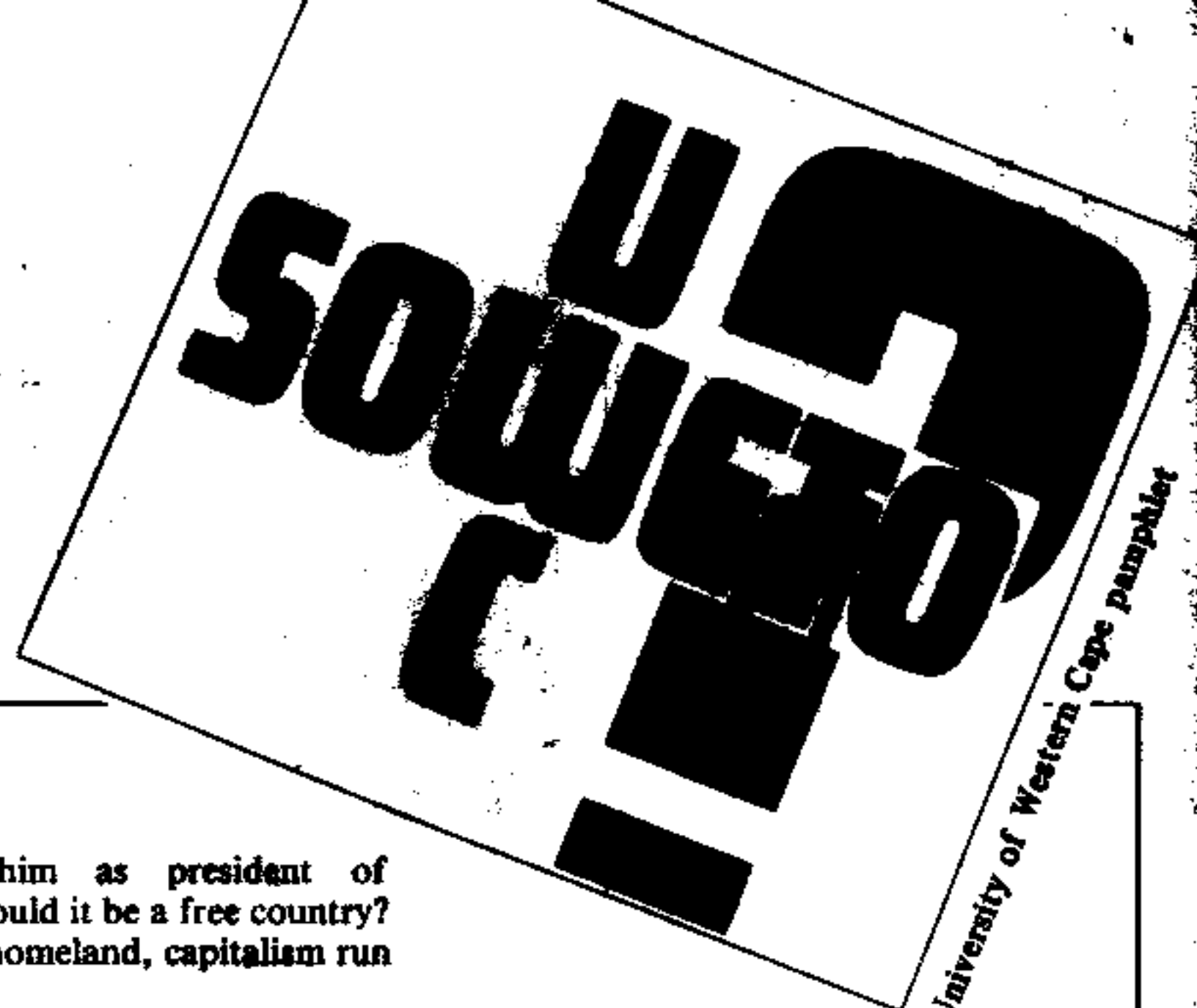
This book then cannot function as a general introduction to the politics of modern China. That we still need; but as a myth-destroyer Leys' book deserves to be read.
Tim Potter

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I do see myself as a socialist. But I don't think it's just a theoretical thing. It means doing something to put socialism into practice. At the moment I can't really be part of the struggle at home, though we are all prepared to go back as soon as we can.

I can say 'I want this or that system in South Africa' but really it is for the people themselves to decide. We'll tell them why we think socialism is better than capitalism, what the differences are, but it's not for us to force them. We can tell them what Britain and other countries are really like. Some black people in South Africa think that Britain is really democratic, that black and white people live together and get the same education and so on. They realise that Britain is taking a major part in exploiting them in South Africa, but I know as well what it's like living in Britain. I know that the democracy isn't real, that Britain is a capitalist country, that there is racism and corruption.

Socialism for me means that people are equal, that they share the wealth of the country equally. Capitalism keeps some people illiterate so they only do unskilled work. Socialism would give everyone the same education. Everybody would work, but for themselves and the country, not just to earn enough to live on.

Socialism would also eliminate the difference between the countryside and the towns. Even in South Africa, people in the towns think that they are superior. They do dirty jobs but not as dirty as the ones in the country and the mines. Rural people think they're inferior, and the urban people, especially the ones who do mental jobs, think they're better. If we had socialism the dirty jobs would still have to be done, but they would be thought of as necessary, not inferior.

Socialism would eliminate long hours of work. It would enable people to be more sociable, to meet each other more, be together like a big family. Capitalism creates a situation which teaches a person to think as an individual, as alone or just with his family. It makes a person think more of things than people.

I don't think we should look at other African states and follow them just because they are run by blacks. They are not really practising socialism. It's the right system which is important, not just black men in power.

They can misuse their power. Look at Kapuo in Namibia, the one who just got killed — anyone can see that if the South

Africans chose him as president of Namibia — how could it be a free country? It would just be a homeland, capitalism run by blacks.

I've read books by Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, where he said that he wanted people to be free of all suppression and oppression. If that's what he's doing in Mozambique then I think that's socialism. But I'm not sure what is happening there. I don't know enough about it.

People like Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of Kwazulu Bantustan, are just using the people to free themselves. People can be illiterate and uneducated but they still know what they want. Just because a person is an 'international figure' or is well educated or talks in a flowery way doesn't mean people will fall for it. They will ask, 'What side is that person really on?'

There is a lot of talk about compromise in Zimbabwe. How can you bring criminals and freedom fighters together? They can never be brought together. Vorster's is a government of criminals — how can you expect justice from criminals? They have murdered people physically, socially, mentally. Thousands of babies die before they are five years old. Children don't get an education. People die of starvation. The bantustans have to beg the government for everything. How can a person or a country be free if they have to beg from their oppressors?

I think we got some things wrong in the Soweto committee. We thought that we would hand over the township to be governed by the people, and each other township committee would do the same. But we were fighting for the whole of South Africa. We didn't want to run our own labour camps.

The state decided to create Soweto — why should we govern it? We were struggling to take over a whole country, not to build a fence around ourselves. The government said blacks should live 'here' and 'here' and not anywhere else. We're not going to accept that.

The black unions are still very weak. They don't fight on things like getting better conditions, or getting blacks into skilled jobs. Even when they get wage increases the whites get them as well, so it doesn't get equality. The government makes out that the black unions are legal,

but all the time they're banning and locking up trade unionists.

We need political organisations to represent, educate and lead the people. Just because we have guns with bullets in them doesn't mean we should go around shooting them off all the time. We need targets, we have to prepare and aim. We have to judge if the target is in reach before we fire. That's what we need organisation for.

The people have the potential to overthrow the state. They have hatred in them and the willingness to fight for freedom. People are sick and tired of having their blood sucked for nothing.

It's only the capitalists who are afraid of socialism. They hate the idea of sharing what they've got. Carter and Owen go around the world talking about 'human rights' but it's only because they see the Russians as a threat, not because they want to see black people free.

I'm not sure about the Russians' motives, but it does mean that the West has had to shake itself up. They are afraid of losing all the wealth in South Africa, that's all. They talk about law and order — but how can there be law and order without freedom? I'm in favour of 'crime' if it's done by the right people to the right people. I advocate it. We will have to use force to repossess what's ours, because it's been taken from us and kept by force.

No system since the beginning of time has been as bloodthirsty and corrupt as capitalism. It's not a miracle that people in South Africa are looking to socialism as a solution.

The time for compromise is past. They only start talking about it when they've got their backs to the wall. When the people raise their voices in anger they get a little of the cake. We want the whole bakery.

Barney Mokgathe

Barney Mokgathe was secretary of the Soweto Student Representative Council which led the uprising of June 1976. He now lives in exile in London.