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Britain

The great revolt

From Tehran to Tilbury workers on strike have had one thing in common: the committee. Those managers in the Iran national oil company who need the committee's approval before they use a company car obviously have a little more on their hands than the road haulage managers queuing outside T&G strike head-quarters for a permit.

But the rank and file in this country has answered those who thought that years of the social contract and high unemployment had buried the instinct for independent action and do-it-yourself.

The signs are not all one way. The hospital and council disputes have been fantastically uneven, for example. There hasn't been much linking of the docks pay claims this year. The organisation of even quite militant disputes, like the drivers', has been patchy.

A common element on the negative side is that there is still a great lack of confidence about the ability to take on the employers and the government. On the other hand the organisation in several disputes shows that once well-organised and determined sections moved, those hanging back nearly always followed.

The exception is Leyland; but this may not have been the great victory for management that press and TV claimed.

Drivers' Organisation

One of the 'mysteries' of the lorry drivers' action was its precision and its rapid effects.

There were no picket line confrontations for the press to seize on. There was a very big effect on industrial production, which employers and the government first exaggerated and then tried to play down.

Not surprisingly the companies tried to find a conspiracy. The *Sunday Telegraph* was reduced to quoting the president of the Food Manufacturers' Federation that 'the whole thing was planned six months in advance. Who by? The SWP. I have no doubt'.

This somewhat flattering assessment, was a distorted echo of what some Road Haulage Association members knew: that the unofficial Birmingham containerbase committee played a considerable role in tying up road transport.

The Birmingham-based committee was established about eighteen months ago after a strike at Brain Haulage and West Midlands Roadways, the two best-organised firms, which paved the way for a ten per cent-busting deal for Birmingham and then drivers nationally.

The strike committee sent delegates to Southampton docks (the main outlet) where they were well received contrary to mythology which divides dockers from drivers. The committee set up since the strike covers dockers, containerbase handlers and drivers across a wide area of the country.

The Birmingham containerbases settle earlier than anyone in the industry — on September 1 and so are the natural

spearhead for any rank and file wages campaign.

Uneven

While the Birmingham committee played a key role despite West Midlands full-timer's hostility to any strike action, the organisation in other areas was quite varied. Leicester-based drivers for example were originally against the strike, and the strike committee hardly ever met.

In Nottingham 'next door', the strike committee met on a 24-hour basis and organised all picketing. In Leicester the pickets which were organised visited known customers on a company-by-company basis.

The election of strike committees was also quite varied. In the North West several committees were elected by and accounted to mass meetings. In the East Midlands stewards elected themselves.

Support

It's also important to bear in mind the very widespread support from other trade unionists. The press found just two examples of factory workers reacting against the drivers.

There were a host of incidents pointing the other way: for example stewards committees in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Scotland organising their own internal checks to turn back goods carried by hauliers. In Nottingham the NUM agreed to provide full facilities for one picket per pit to turn away non-union drivers.

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Railway Committee

It isn't clear how many of the drivers' committees will remain linked in the future—some operated exclusively on their own patch anyway—but several of the stewards' leaders in East Anglia, Manchester and Scotland announced that the network set up will be continuing in future.

There is no doubt about the unofficial committee linking railway workshop staff, however, which recently emphasised its strength by calling the first of a series of monthly 48-hour strikes for parity with engineering minimum rates. The strike was most successful in Scotland and the North East, but was also supported in Yorkshire, Liverpool, Bristol, South Wales and East Anglia.

The regional shopmen's committee was in fact surprised by its success: several militant depots had voted against the strike, but then came out when other depots stopped. British Rail management also blundered when they got supervisors to fuel trains.

In response, several depots prolonged the strike to four days, there was widespread blacking of locos in depots not on strike and the key London depots renewed their contact with the committee. There is now a real likelihood of a nationwide organisation being built.

Information

Both the road and rail disputes are examples of how accurate information is crucial in keeping rank and file struggle up. Details of what stronger areas were doing kept weaker areas out in the drivers' dispute—and the confusion sown by official 'dispensations' and company by company deals towards the end of the strikes nearly snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in several areas.

Information is seen as so important in the BR workshops confrontation that management actually shut off the internal phone links to Yorkshire depots. The result was the rest of the country thought that all Yorkshire was out, instead of three-quarters!

Telephone communications have also been the key to success in the ambulance strikes. On the occasion of the first London stoppage, constant phone calls between ambulance stations and sub-stations en-

sured that people not only knew which southern area stations to send flying pickets to, but also meant that stewards could organise a delegate meeting in the morning, well in advance of the union machines.

Since then, as the officials have steadfastly tried to avoid any further action, the established network has proved crucial.

The recent response by the national ambulance stewards committee to a lockout threat in West Glamorgan was to call for a national stoppage—which shows how far this particular group of workers has come in a very short time.

Scale of Revolt

These examples and others—London firemen, local journalists—show how quickly the mood of defeat, which seemed to have deep roots, has been dispelled in different industries and different unions. The other side of the coin is that an indecisive lead—for example in the hospital dispute—can very quickly lead to confusion, apathy and collapse.

The confidence and aggression needed to win is not automatic, it needs to be argued for and organised for more strongly than in the past. Where credible rank-and-file groups and committees exist, however, the response can also be stronger than in the past—especially as the spineless behaviour of national union leaders can lead existing unofficial groups to join forces.

Even the very limited joint pickets by train and lorry drivers, the potential links between Freightliners, lorry drivers and railway workshop grades, are well in advance of the organisation achieved in the last major strike wave—autumn 1974.

The fact is that such organisations take a long time to build; there is the problem of keeping such links in cold storage. And organisations cannot be contrived. There was little or no general support for meetings about the Ford strike among trade union activists—the issue didn't click. Yet the strike saw the birth of an excellent rank-and-file group, complete solidarity on the docks and women organising to defeat the media's 'back-to-work wives' campaign.

Finally, there is a much greater willingness abroad for more than a small minority to get involved in organising dis-

putes. Ford, Longbridge, the bakers, the drivers—all in different ways show this to be the case. But two very contrasting examples show it even more dramatically—construction workers on the North Sea rigs and journalists producing magazines for IPC.

The 4,000 rig workers went on strike for a series of demands including full union recognition and the right to time off on a one-for-one basis. Regular mass meetings, steward report-backs and demonstrations in Glasgow united the strikers against officials from all unions who instructed them to return to work.

The strikers sent delegations to the Shetland oil terminal, to the east coast terminals and to airports in an attempt to block supply of the rigs and the flow of oil.

The journalists took action a work-to-contract before Christmas to force management to honour commitments on allowances and house negotiations made more than a year before. The dispute was more about principle than cash and NUJ chapel officers were not hopeful of much support, in view of only partially effective action on two previous occasions.

In the event much tougher action was demanded and policed by chapel members and officers alike. Faced with the loss of every IPC magazine management threatened a selective lockout, met with an almost unanimous vote to carry on with the sanctions—and collapsed.

It isn't only the Ayatollah who faces problems with the committees. *David Beecham*

China

People's war

Ten years ago, in March 1969, Chinese and Russian troops clashed along the Ussuri and Amur rivers. The Chinese invasion of Vietnam on 17 February has brought the prospect of war between the two 'socialist' giants closer than ever before.

It also pitted against each other those two great symbols of national liberation in the third world—the People's Republic

of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The occasion of the war was the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese strong-man, had explained during his visit of the United States that the Vietnamese needed to be 'punished' for removing Peking's closest ally in south-east Asia, the Pol Pot regime.



Vietnamese casualty 1979



Vietnamese artillery position near Lao Cai

The Chinese could claim in their defence the fact that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was motivated less by distaste for Pol Pot's murderous and barbaric policies than by traditional nationalistic aspirations to control the whole of Indochina (see *Socialist Review* 9 February 1979). They could point to the stream of Chinese refugees from Vietnam and to the anti-Chinese propaganda pumped out by Hanoi's media.

But the Chinese action was as much a matter of **real politik** as the Vietnamese conquest of Cambodia. Peking undoubtedly saw the dispatch of troops across the Vietnam border as another stage in the long-term struggle against the main enemy, Hanoi's close ally and backer, the Soviet Union.

That is also how the Chinese invasion has been seen in Washington. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, agrees with Deng Xiaoping that the main threat to world peace is Soviet expansionism as evidenced by the Cuban military presence in Angola and Ethiopia and the recent seizure of power in Afghanistan by a pro-Moscow communist party.

The *Economist* (24 February 1979) suggested some interesting reasons why US criticism of the Chinese action has been so muted:

"If H. China makes Vietnam drunk twice before trying to expand its south-east Asian zone of influence any wider, this will be the first time in recent years that an expansionist ally of Russia's has been checked by military counter-measures.

Mr Deng Xiaoping raised some smiles when he said during his American visit three weeks ago that the Vietnamese were the 'Cubans of Asia'.

But President Carter agrees: in an interview published in the *International Herald Tribune* this week, he called both Cuba and Vietnam 'surrogates' of the Soviet Union. A healthy Soviet-American relationship is hard to imagine until the surrogates have been restrained.

"2) The evidence of China's willingness to fight complicates Russia's military planning, by making it riskier to move troops and weapons from its eastern front to its European front . . .

"3) If the Americans manage to deter the Russians from taking any effective military counter-action against China they will have demonstrated that they can still make their weight felt."

Taking these factors into account, one does not have to imagine collusion between Peking and Washington over the invasion to detect a growing convergence of interests between western capitalism and the Chinese regime, underpinned by the latter's need for western loans and technology and their common fear of Soviet military power (see Nigel Harris's article elsewhere in this issue). Are the Chinese to become America's 'Cubans', fighting proxy wars for Washington in Asia?

The Chinese have emphasised that their military aims are limited, and appear to have planned a quick in-out operation along the lines of their border clash with India in 1962.

The military balance along

the Sino-Vietnamese border appeared to favour Peking's plans. US intelligence estimated that the Chinese have at least 170,000 troops and 800 attack aircraft on the border, heavily outnumbering 100,000 Vietnamese troops, many of whom were local militia-men.

The Chinese hoped to exploit the fact that 16 (out of a total of 30) Vietnamese divisions were reported to be in Cambodia. The cream of Hanoi's army seems in danger of being bogged down in a long guerilla war against forces loyal to Pol Pot in the west of Cambodia (supplied by China via Thailand, even though Peking still theoretically supports the Thai Communist Party, which is somewhere in the jungle trying to overthrow the Bangkok military regime).

The Chinese seem to have calculated that they couldn't lose: if the Vietnamese withdrew troops from Cambodia to defend their own border this would help the Cambodian resistance; if the Vietnamese occupation forces stayed put in Cambodia then the Chinese would have an easy time making mince-meat of Hanoi's border troops.

Things may not work out quite this way. The border country is mountainous terrain which makes it easy for the weaker Vietnamese forces to avoid head-on confrontation with the Chinese. Rather than withdraw without inflicting a definite defeat on the Vietnamese, the Chinese invasion army might drive on to the nearest big target—the capital, Hanoi.

As a US official told

Newsweek: 'Even if their intention is only to advance a few miles, that could change in the course of the fighting. The Chinese are on the classic invasion routes toward the Red River delta, moving towards the same towns that Ho Chi Minh seized from the French' during the 1946-53 war of independence.

If they were to decide to drive further into Vietnam, the Chinese may well find that they have bitten off more than they can chew. The Vietnamese army is perhaps the most battle-experienced army in the world, enjoying superior air-and fire-power to the Chinese, thanks to equipment supplied by the Russians and captured from the Americans.

Hanoi and Haiphong have the densest air defences in the world. The Vietnamese people defeated the French and all the might of the American war-machine—why not the Chinese as well?

These considerations aside, deeper Chinese penetration into Vietnam could provoke Russian military intervention. There are 44 Soviet divisions on the Sino-Russian border, and the Kremlin bosses, paranoid about China at the best of times, are unlikely to ignore a Chinese march on the capital of their closest ally in Asia.

Deng and Co almost certainly do not want to fight the Russians yet, because they would almost certainly lose. The basic reason for the 'four modernisations' at the heart of current Chinese policy is the need to build up their armed forces to a level of training and equipment comparable to the Russians'.

So Deng Xiaoping, despite the taste for stetson hats and rodeos he displayed during his visit to Texas, is unlikely to follow Lyndon Johnson in attempting to conquer Vietnam.

Nevertheless, the Sino-Vietnamese war ought to have removed any lingering doubts that 'socialist' states behave towards each other in any way different to what capitalist states do. Indeed, it may have convinced some people that these countries have nothing to do with socialism understood in any sense recognisable to Marx or Lenin.

'Workers of all countries unite': the words have a hollow ring when uttered by the bureaucrats of Hanoi, Peking or Moscow so intent on the

pursuit of their own narrow national interests that they are prepared to go to war

Meanwhile, the Chinese should get out of Vietnam. The Vietnamese people have suffered enough without the final insult of being invaded by a 'socialist' country.

The same formula, however, should apply to Cambodia. If the Vietnamese 'communists' were consistent supporters of the principle of national self-

determination, rather than Vietnamese nationalists, they would leave the Cambodian people to settle their own problems.

The last two months in south-east Asia have been full of ironies. The Vietnamese army have become colonial occupiers French or American style; the Chinese architects of 'people's war' have become foreign aggressors. What next? *Alex Callinicos*

TUC/Government

Leader games

Just what is the TUC up to? After failing to agree a pay and prices deal with the government last November (described in *Socialist Review* No. 8) it has now put its name to a very strange document.

The title alone - 'The economy, government and trade union responsibilities' is ambiguous enough for the deal to be dubbed 'The social Compact'.

A large part of the 20-page document is simply blather. The government is praised for its 'programme of reform', Tory-type 'legalistic intervention' is harmful, 'technological change must benefit the whole of society' and so on. This portion of the deal is obviously written for electoral show.

A second element in the pact is more dangerous. Here it's stated that there needs to be an 'annual economic assessment' - an idea that the employers have been pushing through the CBI and through the Tory party.

The TUC accepts that we should get the annual inflation rate below five per cent 'within three years from now' - and hold it there. And so, the document explains, there should not be a 'general rise in the level of money incomes which significantly outstripped the rate of output growth'.

Taken literally, this would mean people's real wages falling by about 8 per cent this year!

To back this up the document goes on to talk about the 'going rate' and claims, unbelievably, that 'this does not in our view form a proper part of real collective bargaining, which should have regard to the merits of the particular situation,

The 'going rate' concept can be highly ambiguous and destabilising - it has the disadvantages from the trade union standpoint of a pay norm, coupled with the inflationary effect of successive groups building a higher 'going rate' on the basis of settlements previously made'.

Of course this last statement completely contradicts itself - how can you have a 'norm' which keeps on going up? But it also leaves the TUC endorsing a really right-wing position.

Damage Done . . .

But the real sting of this joint document is in its tail - three TUC 'guides' on negotiating, conduct of disputes and union organisation. By far the most poisonous of these is on picketing (see box). The TUC claims it is a collection of advice 'previously issued'.

It's thus rather odd that no full-time official, let alone steward or rank and file member can recall seeing it.

True or not, this very public statement by the TUC could be very damaging in future: it leaves almost any serious picketing open to arrests and sentences on the basis that the picket was outside 'even TUC guidance'. It's a can of worms.

Argument

It is not the case that the joint statement went through on the nod. In fact they nearly reached deadlock on it. With Len Murray doing his best to mess up the *Times* dispute it was left to TUC assistant general secretary, David Lea, to write the final document. Mr Lea, needless to say, is elected by no one - not even for life.

How the TUC sees disputes

Extracts from advice to unions, issued February 14th: 'Some unofficial action may arise because of faulty communications within the union...where unofficial action does take place unions should take energetic steps to get a return to normal working...'

The General Council strongly recommend the following principles to unions... to provide for ballots to be held where a strike is contemplated or during the course of a strike... The right to picket is subject to the following legal restrictions... pickets may communicate or obtain information 'peacefully' but may not 'interfere' with persons entering or leaving premises.

Interference includes unlawful obstruction of the highway, the use of such methods as lying down in the road, linking arms to prevent the entry of lorries to premises, jostling or detaining persons entering or leaving the premises and making threats of violence or engaging in acts of violence... Lawful methods of persuasion are limited to 'oral or visual methods' and do not permit pickets to commit acts such as physical obstruction of a vehicle or person...

Badges or armbands should be carried or worn by pickets so that they are clearly identifiable as authorised pickets... trade unions need to be aware that it can sometimes be difficult to control a large group of pickets... it is also important that demonstrations of this kind do not convey the impression that the object is to blockade a workplace.'

When it came to a vote there was another embarrassing problem. TUC members such as Ken Gill didn't want to support the document, but they didn't want to vote it down either. So there was no vote. (It's wonderful how they deal with democracy at the TUC).

There was, however, some real argument - particularly over the TUC guides. Harry Urwin for the TGWU, was apparently most distressed that the courts might take advantage of the TUC putting its name to documents on the closed shop and picketing.

Both he and left wingers such as Ken Gill, Bill Keyes, Stan Pemberton and Alan Sapper (all members of the TUC Employment Policy and Organisation Committee) were eventually satisfied with official explanations that the guides are only advisory and not meant to be applied in all circumstances.

And this was the line Murray took at the press conference with Callaghan which launched the document.

Considering not one union conference has debated picketing tactics in living memory, let alone pronounced on the legality of 'linking arms to prevent the entry of lorries to premises' (for example), this fawning to the right wing of the bureaucracy is quite amazing.

Centralisation

Does this matter? And does it matter that Murray presumes to recommend council and

hospital workers to accept a 9 per cent deal that their executive rejected? Grotesque TUC General Council interference in the affairs of member unions is not new.

Readers of the London busworkers paper, *Platform*, were recently reminded of the example of how the TUC moved in 1958 to stop other unions supporting them and advised the TGWU 'against any extension of the stoppage to other groups of workpeople'.

And the TUC in the 1960s also made many statements 'on behalf' of its members without consulting them.

Much of this - and the present bout of power-mongering represents the more or less open desire of the TUC's own bureaucracy and the Labour Party right wing to build up a centre which would dominate the unions, and especially unofficial strikes and organisation.

Chapple/Boyd axis

There doesn't seem much chance of this happening, most of all because it would probably require rebuilding the trade unions from scratch, as in Germany. Where the danger now lies is in the new right-wing axis and in particular the projected merger between the engineers and electricians.

Chapple, Duffy and Boyd now have dominant positions on every major TUC committee - finance, economic, international, employment policy and nationalised in-

dustries. Much of the recent debate within the TUC represented a personal triumph for Chapple.

He got so carried away that he took his personal contempt for the public sector unions into the pages of the *Sm* and had to be personally rebuked by Murray before even right wingers like David Bassett would continue working with him.

For years Chapple has been personally isolated within the bureaucracy. He no longer is. His particular brand of politics is not yet dominant. The AUEW-EETPU merger is a very long way from success.

But if it does take place, bits of TUC guidance on picketing will certainly no longer just be pieces of paper tacked on the end of election manifestos. *Bill George*

Picketing

On the line

Fifty of us were picketing at the Wimpey building site in Dagenham. Two sacked building workers had occupied a tower crane, and in solidarity we were waiting at the site entrance to call to the two, 150 feet up, and to appeal to those others who were still working.

All went well for two hours, and a good proportion of the workforce respected our picket line. The police profile had been quite low, though their attitude to the two in the crane 'starve 'em down' had been quite brutal.

But then with a great show of military precision two sergeants came onto the scene. 'Where are the armbands?' one shouted. 'And your leaders, who are the leaders. A picket has a leader'. The two of them, like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan, chorused 'We want to see armbands, and we want the leaders. No pickets without leaders. Who's responsible?'

On this occasion, after a few cool replies, Sergeants Tweedledum and Tweedledee wandered off, frustrated, to find fault with their constables standing guard at the gate. For, as one picket was able to spell out to them, picketing isn't illegal yet - not quite yet.

For the police the ink is already dry on the new statutes against the picket. The anticipated legislation - restriction on numbers, place and type of picketing, the use of armbands, the requirements to have 'proper' control of the picket - all those things trumpeted by the Tories as part of the anti-union trade are as good as law.

And indeed most police interventions on picket lines over the last two years have been far from the 'restrained'

approach at Dagenham. We can go back to the builders' strike of 1972 and the subsequent the Shrewsbury trials to see how governments will react to effective picketing, but to account for the current ruling class attitude we can best think back to the events at Grunwick.

It was there that the power of the picket was written large for all to see. For even if our efforts ended in defeat, the many minor successes against vast numbers of police, the pitched battles involving workers from throughout industry, and the daily television record of thousands standing up to the worst the state could organise all sent shivers of rage down the collective ruling class spine.

Here were extremists doing battle against the most sacred of our institutions, and doing it, worse, in the streets, where all could see. We were trespassing on holy ground.

The Lewisham events further raised the temperature, and by the time, a year later, that industrial struggle began again in earnest, the stage was set for widescale confrontations.

This winter the picket line offensive has been advanced on two levels. Where groups of workers have been quite small, or where they have been weak, the crudest violence has been used to smash the picket.

The bakers were first in line. Their strike was pathetically misorganised on a national level, without communication or even the elementary forms of leadership. Often picketing, tragically, within smelling distance of scab-baked bread, they were clearly the sort of group the police felt they could go for with impunity.

And their eagerness was no doubt sharpened by the sight of



Liz Mackie

so many Asian workers as targets. The result was a series of cruel incidents, particularly at Walthamstow in East London, and at Bradford, which hospitalised many pickets. There were mass arrests, including 60 in Gloucestershire on the last night of the strike.

Encouraged by their 'successes', the police repeated the dose for the journalists. Strikers found themselves beaten to the ground by the same policemen who they met weekly for their court reports.

There were again dozens of incidents, with those at Uxbridge, Barnet, and Rochford amongst the worst. Journalists were sometimes arrested two and three times on the same picket line, courageously going back for more, only to see the police batter their lines apart to force scab lorries through.

The end of the strike has brought further incidents at Nottingham, where picketing in support of twenty-eight sacked

journalists has brought scenes reminiscent of the early days at Grunwick - the police seeming to act as if on strings from the management offices, arriving in squads to beat back the lines just as the scab vans arrive.

But where the stronger sections of workers have been in struggle, a very different approach has been used. At Fords, with the plants silent, police were hardly seen. And for the tanker and lorry drivers, with their impressively effective 'secondary' picketing, hardly an incident was recorded.

In recognition of the difficulty of confronting for example, both lorry drivers and dockers at Tilbury or Hull, the offensive was directed through the subtler channels of the press and the courts.

A flood of the foulest poison was directed against the pickets. Every Tory public speaker, and a good number of Labour ones, opted for the scapegoat approach - the nation's ills



John Sturrock (Report)

being attributed to the unbridled militancy of the wreckers and hoodlums of the picket line.

The question 'who rules?'—last provoked by the miners' strike of 1974—was again raised as the picketing bit good and hard enough to win the tanker drivers 15 per cent and the lorry drivers a very impressive 22 per cent.

The courts were brought in to find against lorry driver Reg Fall, picketing at Lodgers and Nucoline in East London. 'Secondary' picketing in effect picketing anything apart from one's 'own' workplace, was defined as 'contrary to the interests of the nation'.

This decision echoed those made by generations of High Court judges and Tory governments from Taff Vale down to the acts of the early thirties—which barred effective picketing until 1946. Tory glee at the decision was quite public—it seeming to open the way for a coming (?) Thatcher government to go the whole hog and crush the picket.

But Labour too have contributed to the ideological assault. Callaghan and Owen have boasted of their pleasure in breaking picket lines. Quite clearly legislation may come from their camp too, and with the trade union officials ready to apply it, they could cause serious damage to traditions of physical solidarity built up over the years.

The trade union movement's own disciplinarians, who have so consistently policed their own members, have also had something to say about the pickets.

The top trade union leaders have played a leading role in deadening the effects of the picket. Moss Evans of the T&GWU has striven to make the appellation 'official' a kiss of death for any strike.

He and the T&GWU executive hurried to approve the lorry drivers' action so as to better bring it under officials' control, adopting a 'code of conduct' agreed with the government to water down the picket line. The sites for picketing, the numbers permitted, the dockets of exemption, the armbands to be worn; all foretell the sorts of limitations which the next government will certainly introduce.

But let's leave the last word to the Tories' favourite top man in the unions. Frank Chapple of

the EETPU showed his trade union principle by denouncing the low paid pickets as 'terrorists'. With his mates in

the right wing of the labour movement giving the police a licence to sharpen its teeth on the picket line, Chapple has at

least spelt out what we can expect over the next year. The fight will be on to protect our most basic rights. *Phil Marfleet*

Spain

Election fever

On 1 March Spain goes to the polls to elect 555 deputies and senators to the Cortes (parliament). The background to these elections involves the continual restriction of free speech, heavy police repression in Euskadi (the Basque country) and a 'bosses' offensive'—a situation that has been the norm since the first 'democratic' elections in 40 years, in June 1977.

The ruling UCD and the PSOE (Socialists) are expected to end up neck and neck, while the Communists (PCE) may increase their 20 seats slightly.

On the right the 'Democratic Coalition', a grouping which includes the pro-constitution elements of the Popular Alliance are *not* expected to make significant gains, although the fascist coalition 'National Union' might well win a seat or two.

Suarez, the prime minister, called the elections immediately after the ratification of the new constitution (see *Socialist Review* 8) in order to capitalise on any new-found credibility.

More importantly, the first municipal elections for 40 years have been called for 3 April, and Suarez hopes to overcome the chronic weakness of the UCD's local organisation (previously the municipal elections had been continually put off for fear of a left victory) thanks to the massive £5½ million UCD campaign in the parliamentary elections.

The December referendum on the constitution produced a 35 per cent abstention rate—at least 10 per cent higher than expected and indicative of a certain popular disenchantment with the UCD-PSOE-PCE consensus package.

Absentions were particularly high among youth, the unemployed, white-collar workers and other sections not so traditionally well organised as male industrial workers who, on the whole, voted 'Yes'.

Above all, Suarez and his reformist friends were massively rejected in Euskadi. There were 60 per cent absentions and

11 per cent 'Noes' in the two main Basque provinces, reflecting the widespread support there for a real break with the centralised state of Franco.

Meanwhile, on the industrial front the bosses and the UCD have had a hot winter. The reasons for the great increase in industrial disputes are complex.

On the one hand, after a year of rapid inflation (the prices rose 16.5 per cent in 1978 but basics such as food and public transport went up much more), mass unemployment (now 1½ million), and wage restraint (thanks to the Moncloa pact between the government and reformists), many workers weren't prepared to remain passive.

On the other hand, the PCE and the PSOE have not been above some mock heroics, calling out the stage army as part of their election campaigns.

Similarly, the bosses have been accused of taking intransigent lines in pay negotiations in order to provoke strikes and thus give the right's public image a bit of a lift by raising the spectre of 'labour disorders'.

In general the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the socialist-controlled UGT have confined any action to one-day stoppages and demonstrations.

This is particularly true of the metal industry, where all the big car plants—SEAT, Chrysler, Ford, etc—have had short strikes. The 180,000 metal-workers of Madrid recently had three one-day strikes in support of their £10-claim. Eventually they won £6.50.

There have been exceptions to this pattern. In the Basque province of Navarra the 25,000 metal-workers went on strike for 19 days. They barricaded the streets, occupied 20 factories and held daily mass assemblies and demonstrations.

One demo was attacked by the police, even though it had been legally authorised, and three workers were badly injured by rubber bullets. Nonetheless, militancy squeezed a

16 per cent wage-increase out of the employers.

In Valladolid, the workers' assembly, influenced by various far left 'assemblista' groups, rejected an official UGT-CCOO recommendation in favour of an employers' offer designed to end the long-standing dispute at Renault.

The pro-assembly workers have stepped up their action by occupying one plant and clashing with the police on the streets. The CCOO accused them of being allied to fascist groups inside the factory and intend to call a referendum to obtain the 'true feelings of the majority of workers'. Meanwhile, Renault have closed the factory indefinitely.

Most protracted disputes have taken place in traditionally weak sectors for example, there was a bitter and violent hotel strike in the Canaries.

The bosses have pursued an aggressive strategy lock-outs and victimisations are common, while the government's new anti-terrorism legislation includes measures against pickets which the police have not been slow to use.

The current dispute involving 170,000 bank-workers has brought out the timidity of the Communist Party's strategy. The UGT and the smaller unions are presenting a claim of 21 per cent, while the Workers' Commissions, which the PCE controls, in the light of 'the real economic situation', are asking for only 16 per cent!

The CCOO opposes any all-out strikes. Its aim seems to be to fragment the struggles as much as possible and to avoid clashes which might scare off middle-class voters.

The fiercest struggles have been in places like Navarra where the far left has some influence and workers have a recent history of militancy.

The other major election issue is 'terrorism'—which means, for most people, ETA (the Basque liberation army). The PCE and the PSOE, backed by the two main Maoist

groups, the PTE and the ORT, are campaigning against 'terrorism' as the main threat to 'democracy'.

The anti-terrorist laws have led to widespread arrests of ETA sympathisers in the Basque country, while the French government have been putting on the heat in the Basque areas in France, detaining or expelling numerous political refugees.

Meanwhile, the real danger to democracy, the fascists, continue to show the influence they have in the state apparatus, especially in the army and the police.

In November 'Operation Galaxia', a coup planned by some army and police officers, was uncovered. Only three of the culprits are being prosecuted.

It seems that the generals washed their hands of this premature affair. The effect of the plot was to strengthen the UCD-PSOE-PCE claims about the democratic credentials of the army and police commanders.

Then the funeral in early January of the military governor of Madrid, who was killed by ETA, was turned into a fascist demonstration.

Santiago Carrillo, PCE general secretary, commented: 'Without doubt the disturbances and worries have been caused by the terrorist attacks which can be used by certain forces to make propaganda.'

'But we are in a modern European society, and logically the army is becoming professionalised and increasingly plays the role of defender of Spanish independence and sovereignty and of the constitution'.

His number two, Ramon Tamames, pointed out that 'the king is the supreme commander of the armed forces and the king has opted very clearly for democracy'!

The MC (Communist Movement) and LCR (Revolutionary Communist League) have tried, with much weaker forces, to oppose the 'anti-terrorist' hysteria.

They point out that, mistaken though ETA's methods are, they are the product of years of repression and that the only solution to 'terrorism' is not more repression, but self-determination for the Basque people. The far left call for the purging of the army and police and the banning of fascist organisations like Fuerza Nueva.

The MC and the LCR in practice support the *Abertzales*, the radical Basque nationalists, who have organised strikes and demonstrations against repression.

The election campaign opened with the arrest of 40 *Abertzales*. MC and LCR candidates who had occupied the town hall in Vitoria. As a result, one famous *Abertzale* leader, Telesforo Monzon, is being prosecuted as an 'apologist for terrorism'.

Against this background, the UCD are posing as the true defenders of 'modern western democracy'. They hope to continue their 'democratisation' process, keeping most of the Francoist repressive apparatus intact but under their control.

The PSOE, 'a hundred years of firmness and honesty', and the PCE, 'put your vote to work', hope to consolidate their image as responsible democratic parties.

Both parties are proposing mild reforms. For example, the PSOE are calling for limited nationalisation, the PCE for 'democratisation of the police and Civil Guard' and the 'regulation' of abortion.

The last year and a half has seen a significant downturn in the class struggle after the radical upheavals during the death agony of the dictatorship. The one exception has been Euskadi, where both the national and class struggles have continued in a radicalised form.

The two main *Abertzale* coalitions, Euskadiko Eskerra (Basque Left) and Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity), are presenting programmes with much in common with the revolutionary left and, despite their intransigent advocacy of an independent Basque state, they represent a force, especially among young workers, well to the left of the reformists.

Euskadiko Ezkerra won two seats in the last election (when the coalition included MC), but has moved right recently in the hope of an alliance with the bourgeois nationalist PNV. HB in general identifies with the present ETA campaign.

On the far left, the ORT ('in order to advance') and the PTE ('for fresh air in parliament with a different left') are after seats and it is increasingly difficult to distinguish them from the reformists.

Among the plethora of other groups, the only relatively serious alternatives to the

PSOE and PCE come from the MC and the LCR.

They have broadly similar programmes: opposition to consensus, wage control, austerity measures, unemployment, the constitution, fascism, NATO, the EEC, etc; support for the republic, full democratic and trade union rights, women's liberation, agrarian reform, self-determination for the nationalities, etc.

The LCR's campaign focusses upon 'unity of the left'—specifically a workers' government of the PSOE, with or without the PCE, a government 'without bourgeois ministers'.

The MC, recently strengthened by the integration of the OIC (Organisation of Left Communists), sees as its main aim building the revolutionary left itself among 'the working class and the people' ('vote for the left that fights the right'). The MC is standing in 47 of the 50 provinces and will get as much

TV time as the main parties.

Perhaps more than any other party MC will emphasise the struggle for women's liberation. Free abortion on demand is one of the main points of their programme, and issue conveniently ignored in Catholic Spain by the PSOE, PTE and ORT. 40 per cent of MC's candidates are women, compared to nine per cent of the PSOE's and ten per cent of the PCE's.

The MC's electoral programme tends to blur over the limitations of working in *any* parliament, even a more democratic one than the Cortes for revolutionaries.

However, in their meetings MC candidates emphasise that a vote for them is not a vote for another MP, but a vote to continue the struggle where it counts—outside parliament, in the factories and the fields, the offices and the estates, whatever the outcome of the elections. *Doug Andrews and Mary Reid.*

Iran

Making the news

This winter low paid provincial journalists put an end to a myth—a myth that had held us back in the pay stakes for years. We showed that we are prepared to put our so-called 'professionalism' aside and act like trade unionsits.

For the first time in the history of the National Union of Journalists we had an all out indefinite strike in support of a £20 increase and a 35 hour week.

The support was overwhelming better than any of us expected. On the first day 95 per cent of the 8000 members were out. This in a union where for years any talk of a strike for the national claim was met not by arguments that it was the wrong strategy but that the members would not support it. And each year we were fooled

by this myth. We tried working to rule, selective strikes, regional strikes. And each year we got a derisory settlement.

Last year for instance we passed a motion in support of free collective bargaining at the annual conference, put in a claim for £30 and settled for 10 per cent of the industry's wage bill. Some indication of the members' dissatisfaction then was the fact that the increase was across the board—£7.09 so that the scandalously low paid juniors did not lose out yet again.

That time was a disaster. The majority of members took little action to win a settlement locally. But that left the weakest still in dispute in May to win the national claim on their own. The strongest had settled months before and were doing

very nicely thank you.

At the *Hendon Times* and King and Hutchins in West London we were picketing in summer clothes to win a national claim that should have been signed on 1 January!

Our claim is drawn up by a meeting of chapel delegates at Digbeth Hall in Birmingham—in itself an illustration that the NUJ is certainly among the most democratic unions in the country.

At the first one of this round in September there was a definite feeling that we couldn't have a repeat of last year's fiasco. There was not a murmur of settling for the five per cent. Journalists Charter supporters argued for keeping it simple—£20, a 35 hour week and an end to indentures, the contract that keeps trainees bound to the same management for 3½ years on exploitative wages.

But the meeting threw in a few more demands such as better maternity and paternity leave, sick pay, longer holidays and an independent inquiry.

The claim was submitted to the Newspaper Society. It was a formality. They would offer five per cent and we'd be back to Digbeth to decide how we were going to fight it.

There was a feeling that if we didn't do it this year we never would. Fords had already bust the Government's pay guidelines and provincial journalists were in a fighting mood—with good reason. Low pay—a 19-year-old taking home £28 a week after completing a year's training course—had forced the majority of local journalists to think like trade unionists instead of 'professionals'.

The Digbeth meeting decided to give in-office sanctions another go, to be followed by an all out strike.

The sanctions started on 20 November. Within a day or so several evening papers had either been stopped or badly hit, but no one was locked out. NS managements are not renowned for their tolerance of industrial action.

On the group where I work—*North London News*—we had operated sanctions so effectively that no work was being produced by NUJ members at all. We had blacked typewriters and refused to handle handwritten copy.

Yet our management was content to let us sit there on full pay and expenses.

A meeting of the London

Area Council and contact with other chapels showed similar experiences—elsewhere. So Charter members and supporters looked at the overall situation. What were the NS up to? Why was this notoriously hard employers' organisation being so tolerant?

No analysis or detailed long term strategy was coming either from the officials or from the Provincial Newspapers Industrial Council—a body of lay members who deal solely with matters affecting the provincial sector.

Could it be that the NS were very keen to avoid a strike that might hit their highly profitable pre-Christmas papers? If so we felt that we were being bought off by the tempting prospect of full pay. But we wanted to win this claim and invest in our future, not grab the money now and accept defeat later.

The necessity for an all out strike was clinched when one 'rogue' management the *Bolton Evening News*—sacked NUJ members, and the NS officials were keen to get them back to work. Again not a characteristic we've come to expect from the NS.

The rank and file in London felt that we had to take a lead. It wasn't coming from Acorn House. My own chapel voted to take unofficial strike action which was supported by a mass meeting of London Members.

Several other chapels followed and many more supported the lobbies to win support from members on the Industrial Council and our executive.

These lobbies were key to the calling of the strike. We managed to convince many of the members that what we were saying was sound.

Some said a strike would be a disaster, the members wouldn't come out, chapels wouldn't follow their lead before Christmas, we should wait until after.

We argued that a strike NOW was the only way to win, that the membership would unite around a clear strategy.

The Industrial Council gave their backing for a strike call and then it was up to the executive. It took hours and those of us already on strike thought we'd be back on Monday despite a massive lobby of the Grosvenor Victoria Hotel that morning.

But they took the decision. And 95 per cent of our members came out. Within a few days it was 97 per cent, despite the cold weather, despite the fact that

Christmas was three weeks away and that the union had very little money.

Suddenly in every town in the country journalists were on strike. The pessimists had said there would be massive resistance, but it only came not surprisingly from those big chapels like Birmingham who had already negotiated good house agreements and higher wages than the rest of us. Even in those places we were winning, more NUJ members were coming out. More than half the Press Association were on strike and at various times it had been closed completely through NGA blacking.

To stop papers we needed more print support. The leaders told members to work normally and not to do anything that would undermine our action.

To them that meant only dealing with editors' copy. To us it meant not producing scab papers. But relations between our members and the printers are generally not good, despite the fact that we work for the same managements and need to fight together on any number of issues.

We had to picket hard, show that we meant business and try to persuade the printers not to cross. In more places than we anticipated we were successful. Our papers in North London were stopped for the whole dispute, the giant King and Hutchins plant at Uxbridge was stopped for the second time in a year, we got some support from SOGAT in London and another massive plant at Edenbridge in Kent was stopped by relentless picketing some members did 18 hour shifts in the snow!

If we learnt one thing it was that we need to improve relations with printers. We have a lot of battles to fight in the future on pay, new technology, saving jobs. On the picket line it comes home to you how strong we could be if we stood together, and in some places how far we've got to go before we achieve that.

The old craft barriers die hard for a lot of people. But we also saw that if you persevere you can win support in the end. Some printers who had laughed at us at the start were supporting us weeks later.

By Christmas we were still going strong. No sign of the massive return to work. A New Year rally of FoCs (shop stewards) voted overwhelmingly to carry on. There were

speeches from the platform about 'no return to work until all our members have their jobs back'.

Some of us thought that meant Nottingham where 28 members had come out despite knowing that they would be sacked by a management—T. Bailey Forman—who had already cleared out other print unions to bring in new technology.

Police were showing which side they were on on picket lines everywhere, members were running out of money and picketing all hours, but they stayed out.

Many managements were offering to settle while the NS had got up to offering 11 per cent to the Institute of Journalists scab force. We were winning! Then the leadership took a disastrous decision. The NS were refusing to negotiate while we were on strike, so the NUJ agreed to lift mass pickets while talks went ahead. There was confusion and many pickets were called off. The members weren't sure whether the strike was being run by the strike committee, the officials or the Industrial Council.

Finally the 14.5 per cent offer came seven weeks into the strike. The Industrial Council was recommending rejection but didn't really say why. Could we get more? What was the strategy for going on? We never really found out because they held the ballot a day before the FoCs' meeting to vote on the offer. Delegates came along already mandated. There was no point in discussing it.

It was accepted by a massive 4000 votes to 1000 (3000 didn't vote).

But what about Nottingham? There was no guarantee on victimisation included in the settlement. The NS would 'strongly recommend' no victimisation. Some chapels raised Nottingham at the meeting. Journalist Charter had lobbied and produced leaflets. There was a move to carry on the strike until the sacked members were reinstated, but it was the first a lot of delegates had heard about it. Why wasn't it mentioned in the strike bulletins? We lost that quite narrowly in favour of a 'local campaign' to get their jobs back.

Our members there are still locked out. We have been holding regular Saturday pickets. But we need to close the place down if we are going to win. And we must. It is about

our right to join a union and take action, a principle that we must win if our action is to be so well supported in the future.

Amazingly enough after we had returned to work the negotiators went to the NS to try to get some concessions on the other parts of our claim. Their noses were put out of joint when the NS behaved like an employers' organisation. They saw that we were back at work and refused to give an inch on anything else. What more did they expect?

As a result the Industrial Council is floating the idea of ending negotiations with the NS. Journalists Charter will be campaigning against this.

This winter we built solidarity and unity in the NUJ. We pushed the NS from five per

cent to 14.5 and insulting deal for juniors by the way but we could have got more.

We did that by being united, by putting pressure on the NS where we were strong and standing together. We don't want to lose that unity but to strengthen it next year.

Journalists Charter has learned lessons this year. We have to start early on campaigning for a big claim, for all out strike action and print support. We have to bring together those rank-and-file members who support our policies to put pressure on the leadership and to improve on the union's democracy.

Most of all we have to make sure that no one goes back to work while our members are still sacked.

And there are other important changes that came about this year. Now almost every local journalist knows what it's like to be on a picket line, understands police violence and hopefully will remember their experiences when reporting disputes.

More and more chapels have understood the importance of the closed shop as an industrial weapon and the need to build solidarity with printers.

But most important in any future claim an all-out strike is on the agenda from the start as the best way to improve our wages and conditions.

The myth that 'even if you want to go on strike the chapel down the road certainly won't have been buried!'

Jean Grey

Bakhtiar's last despairing order for a 4.30pm curfew provided the opportunity for this. By denouncing this action as illegal Khomeini moved to reassert his leadership over the insurrection. In this, as later events have shown, he was only partially successful.

Yet Khomeini's call did lead to an escalation of the fighting, to its spreading and to the seizure of military and government buildings. In the fighting thousands of soldiers deserted their barracks yielding an estimated 100,000 modern weapons to the militants on the streets.

By early evening on the Sunday February 11 it was all over but the mopping up. When at about 6pm in the evening the radio station suddenly began to broadcast under the new name of the 'Voice of the Revolution' the nightmare that had haunted Carter, Owen, Begin and Vorster had come true. Their 'man in Tehran' was finished.

Before going on to look at events since the insurrection it is important to underline the significance of this last year in Iran. What the workers and poor of that country have done is to bring down one of the most notorious, brutal and well armed tyrants established anywhere in the post-war period.

All the might of the imperialist world did not save the Shah against the rising of his own exploited and oppressed. That fact has sent shivers down the spine of a host of dictators who by combining bloody internal repression with a direct link to one of the major powers have expected to rule securely.

The message of the masses of Iran is that they are not safe, that dictators military or civilian can be overthrown. So the message of Iran is a message of hope, hope for the blacks of South Africa, for the victims of Pinochet in Chile, for the workers under the heel of the rulers in the 'socialist' countries who sucked up to the Shah when he was in power etc. It is still too early to measure the extent and scale of such an impact. One of the tasks of revolutionaries the world over is to see that it is as wide and deep as possible.

To the victors the spoils?

Whilst the February insurrection gave the leaders of the opposition movement, by then under the complete political

Journalists

State power & the people

Nothing became the Shah's last prime minister so much as the manner of his going. For 38 days Dr Shahpur Bakhtiar struggled to become the beneficiary of the year-long bloody confrontation between the Shah's regime and the mass of workers and poor of the cities.

In that short period of time he had moved from being the number three in the liberal opposition group, the National Front (Jebhe-Melli-JM), to the ruthless master of the Imperial guard.

In his last two weeks in office,

Bakhtiar had recourse time and time again to the murderous thugs of the Shah's guard who were known as the 'Immortals' after the crack troops of the ancient Persian empire.

Ignoring the advice of the leading generals and assuming that most of the armed forces would obey orders Bakhtiar threw the 'Immortals' against the militants on the streets with orders to kill.

When the airforce cadets, after a meeting at which Khomeini addressed them, demonstrated in support of the

Ayatollah the 'Immortals' were sent to 'crush' them this was the evening of Friday February 9. Having heard reports of summary executions of rebellious troops elsewhere the cadets had no choice fight or have many of their number singled out and shot.

So they grabbed what arms they could, took to the roofs of the base buildings and so began what was to become the insurrection that overthrew Bakhtiar.

Moving quickly into support of them came the guerillas of the Fedayeen and Mujahadeen barricades were thrown up in the vicinity of the base which is in SF Tehran, a very poor and working-class area.

The mixed forces of cadets, guerillas and local people were able through the night and on into the following day to hold off the crack troops of the Immortals. This plus their knowledge of the extreme fragility of discipline among the rest of the troops was enough to persuade the generals not to move up any other forces to assist the Guard.

The Khomeini camp had kept a carefully guarded silence throughout the fighting so far. By the middle of the day on the Saturday it was clear that the generals would not mobilise. So Khomeini felt confident enough to order his supporters to join in the fighting.





dominance of Khomeini, a victory more complete than any that they could have engineered for themselves it still left open the answer to the question as to who was to share the spoils.

Looking at Khomeini's strategy in the two weeks preceding the downfall of Bakhtiar one sees something that is a long way short of a revolutionary approach to the question of power, of control over the state. The policy was one of eating away at the basis of the old state apparatus by combining the mass street demonstrations with attempts to win over former supporters of the Shah members of parliament, leading technocrats, business men and even generals.

Mehdi Bazargan, Khomeini's chosen prime minister, let it be known in the week preceding the insurrection that talks were taking place with the military 'at the highest levels'.

This basic unwillingness to sweep away the old order has shown itself in two critical ways. First, left to themselves Khomeini and co would not have met the onslaught of the Immortals by an insurrectionary movement. They would have pulled back.

Iran today is free of Bakhtiar because of the discipline, decisiveness and experience of the Fedayeen and Mujahadeen guerilla organisations. Yet Iran today is under Khomeini because neither of these groups were able then to make any challenge for power—they lack a serious base among the workers and urban poor.

The second way, far more important for the future, was demonstrated in the rapidity with which the forces around

Khomeini sought to exert control over the armed militants, over the remnants of the armed forces by appointing senior officers from the Shah's days to top posts, by the form of the popular councils that have been set up etc... Clearly for Khomeini and the JM the revolution is over everyone who says it is not is a counter-revolutionary atheist!

One of the first signs of things to come was the further change of name of the radio station by Monday February 12, it had become the 'Voice of the Islamic Revolution'. It is now almost as censored as it was under the old regime. Actions supported by the secret revolutionary council of Khomeini are praised anything else is put down as 'counter-revolutionary'.

The new head of TV and radio is a hard line anti-communist and many journalists and workers are known to be sullenly opposed to the new management. A purge of leftists in the media will no doubt take place once the new regime has consolidated itself.

In the army the policy of the new regime is equally clear. It's new head of staff General Gharehnay was previously one of the top officers in military intelligence. His major claim to political fame was involvement in an attempted coup in the early 1960s.

The leading figure in this failed attempt to oust the Shah was the notorious sadist Gen Bakhtiar (a distant relation of the recent premier) who was the first head of SAVAK.

Gharehnay has made clear his intentions. Soldiers who mutinied are being ordered back to barracks—he says that despite the fact that about half of the armed forces have run off it will take him only three months to restore the army, gendarmeries and police to normal. Commenting on the Kurdish movement he added 'the military will never allow any part of the country to secede'—what the 'country' might want doesn't seem any more important to this general now than it was when he was heading the 'tribal affairs' dept of military intelligence!

What about the links with the US and Britain, the Shah's major arms suppliers? According to the general 'Iran cannot do without foreign assistance. We have many sophisticated weapons for which we will need spare parts and technical advice.'

No doubt many who fought for the overthrow of the Shah believed that they were fighting to end Iran's scarce resources being used for just such wasteful and deadly purposes.

The so-called 'revolutionary worker councils' often do not contain a single worker already two leading militants in the oil fields have resigned (see letter of resignation printed separately) from the strike committee in protest at the dictatorial methods of these new councils.

Instead of workers these committees and the similar ones set up to run the cities and towns consist of mullahs, bazaaris and technocrats.

As such these local councils reflect the national government of Premier Bazargan. This is clearly a bourgeois government an alliance of the wealthy liberals of the JM with technocrats acceptable to the religious leaders. Along with these are about five generals all of whom held senior posts under the Shah.

Finally there is the pressing

question of the arms. Many militants, not just the leftists, see the arms they fought for and finally obtained as the symbol of their hard-won freedom.

All this last year they saw the Shah's troops shoot and kill thousands of their brothers and sisters with these self-same weapons and now that they have them in their own hands they're loathe to give them back. Despite the increasingly threatening nature of the appeals from the religious leaders less than 20 per cent of the liberated arms have been surrendered.

In order to try to get greater control the Ayatollah and the new chief of staff are recruiting for a 'National Guard' that is those armed and willing to take the orders of the new regime to be used to crush the rest.

And lest this should be seen as the beginnings of a popular army General Gharahnay has made it clear that once, in three months as he has stated, the army and police are 're-organised' then it will be disbanded.

take out a SUBSCRIPTION

Socialists have always been short of cash. Karl Marx was only able to write his masterpiece, *Capital*, thanks to the financial support given him by his lifelong friend and co-thinker, Friedrich Engels.

Engels' income came from his job as Manchester representative of the family firm, Ermen and Engels. He hated 'filthy business' as he called it but stuck to it for over 20 years in order to keep the Marx family going.

Marx acknowledge his debt to Engels when he finished Volume 1 of *Capital*: 'It was thanks to you alone that this became possible. Without your self-sacrifice for me I could never possibly have done the enormous work for the three volumes. I embrace you, full of thanks!'

Now, although we wouldn't dream of comparing *Socialist Review* with Marx's *Capital*, we too are short of cash.

Our hopes of finding our Engels were dashed when Ermen and Engels went bust in February (perhaps the final crisis of capitalism is really here).

So we will have to make do with your subscriptions. All we ask you is less than six pounds a year (a lot in Engels' day, but very little in these inflationary times.) Or else maybe we will end up the same way as Ermen and Engels.

As Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution*: 'Because society is split into antagonistic classes, 'self-arming' would lead to an armed clash. A state arises, a special power is created, special bodies of armed men, and every revolution by destroying the state apparatus, shows us the naked class struggle, shows us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it...'

One could go on and on to demonstrate what is becoming increasingly obvious - state power in Iran has passed from the Shah and his proteges and into the hands of a certain section of the Iranian bourgeoisie in alliance with leading technocrats who wish to join their club.

And so to these victors go the spoils, for history has shown over and over again that whilst the workers and the poor do the fighting, power passes to those organised to take it.

Without workers and soldiers councils and a mass workers party and while the movement as a whole under the demagogic leadership of Khomeini and the JM such an outcome is for the time being inevitable. That is why the new regime seeks to

stop all talk that the revolution has only just begun. For the Ayotallah and the class he represents such talk should it spread is the most dangerous thing of all.

Today the new bosses of Iran rule in the name of 'the Revolution' and of 'freedom'. Whilst they strive to restore order, re-start production and disarm the militants such slogans serve a purpose. This will not last for long.

The Left.

Having worked to a large extent in the shadow of the movement behind Khomeini the left was able to come to the fore during the insurrection and play a leading role - much to the annoyance of the religious and other leaders who were no doubt looking forward to the rapid silencing of Iran's fledgling left.

One group in particular, the Fedayeen-e-Khalgh (literally the People's Crusaders) who had been engaged in armed struggle against the Shah since early in 1971 proved the value of organisation and training at just such a time.

Since the fighting the Fedayeen have played the leading role on the left in

arguing for the continuation of the struggle. They have rejected the attempts to date to incorporate them into the security apparatus of the new regime.

Outside of the front of the left that has emerged around the Fedayeen lay the Tudeh Party (the CP of Iran-strongly pro-Moscow) and the maoists. The latter although they have nearly all switched to supporting Albania rather than China are not of much significance at present and are slavishly supporting the religious leaders who they describe as 'revolutionaries'.

The position of the Tudeh Party is predictable. Unable to match the Fedayeen in the fighting and under orders from Moscow to support Khomeini they have been of marginal importance in the last few weeks.

A recent issue of their youth paper, *Ayandeh*, argued that there was no contradiction between 'scientific socialism and Islam' and went on to say that as the views of Khomeini are similar to theirs then there can be no conflict between them.

The basis for this position is that Iran is going through its 'democratic and national revolutionary stage' so unity is necessary between the workers, peasants, intellectuals, petit-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie 'against dependent capitalism'.

The same article condemns the 'ultraleftists' who oppose the 'revolutionary religious elements' and ends quoting the Tudeh Party general secretary, Kianouri, that they are willing to work with Khomeini for a 'very long time to come and that this is possible is proved by the 'happiness of the Muslims living in the socialist countries' (sic).

Yet as was clear from the 100,000 strong rally in Tehran on 23 February it is the Fedayeen who are making the running on the left. Working as part of a left-front with them are most of the other socialist groups including the orthodox trotskysts of the SWP (Iran) and the supporters of Besoye Enghelab (Towards Revolution).

The size of the rally, its militancy and the tremendous feeling of unity amongst those present were an important step forward for the revolutionary left.

Nine demands make up the platform of the left, the main ones of these are the dissolution of the army and its replacement

iran



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by a 'peoples army', power to the workers' councils, nationalisation of major concerns, land to the landless and the abrogation of all rural debts and equality for women and the national minorities.

So whilst making clear their recognition of Khomeini as the man who has 'the people's respect as a fighter against Imperialism' the Fedayeen and allies are making a great effort to organise for the continuation of the revolution.

Khomeini's response has been to label them as 'non-Moslems at war with Islam' and when, the day before the rally they attempted to march on his HQ and present their demands he refused to see them stating 'I will not permit these opportunists to come to my house'.

As a result this proposed march was called off for fear of a serious clash with the religious forces.

In fact these events illustrate a key problem faced by the left. For the Fedayeen have operated on a guerilla strategy for several years, all their theory (an admixture of Che Guevara, Stalin and Ho Chi Minh) prepares them for just this and little else. Now taking up arms against the Shah, who was universally detested, is one thing - pursuing the same strategy against Khomeini who has obviously got massive popular support would be disastrous.

At present, despite the euphoria of the post-insurrectionary period, the left faces a daunting political task to win mass support amongst workers and the poor for the socialist revolution and to build a party capable of carrying this out. Yet here is where the politics of the Fedayeen are at their weakest—in the writings of Bizhan Jazani, the main inspiration of this group today, the party appears almost miraculously.

In his main theoretical work Jazani (who was murdered in prison in 1976) wrote 'If and when the conditions come about which help the development of the vanguard towards becoming a party, then the working class party will also come about'.

In fact the Fedayeen remain a heavily student/intellectual based group and although in recent months they will have picked up some support amongst both workers and students this is unlikely to change the organisation it may

actually confirm it in its traditional direction.

There is one immediate and obvious danger for the Iranian revolutionary left—as Khomeini gets heavier with those who want to continue the revolution they may tire of being spurned, of being attacked on the radio and TV stations that they liberated.

Under such circumstances and with the memory of the weekend insurrection still fresh in their mind they may be tempted to use their newly acquired fire power to settle things. This could lead to either an attempted coup by the left or more likely raids on

the radio station demanding that it broadcast a just report on their activities—these will amount to the same thing in the eyes of the new regime.

Engels said 'do not play at insurrection'. It is even worse to act as if insurrection were one's aim and then have to back off. There is nothing Khomeini would like better than to have an excuse to crush the left. It is up to the left to decide, do they have the necessary class forces at their disposal to challenge for state power or not? If they do not then they must not pretend that they do—even for the sake of appearances.

So the real danger for the

To all oil workers and those who fight for freedom

After 90 days of our heroic strike, during which we have cut off all supplies of oil - the livelihood of the reactionary regime and of its imperialist backers - and by the bloody struggle of the people we have succeeded in overthrowing the Shah.

Now there are still reactionary elements who want to place themselves, like those in the past, over us and to become the new bosses, MPs and ministers. Under the disguise of 'preventing splits in the movement' they have started a new repression, suppressing any freedom of thought.

As a representative of the oil workers—the heart of our industry—and as one of the initiators of the strikes in the oil fields I state my respect and belief in the fundamentally progressive nature of Islam and I say that all my life I have always struggled for freedom—for this I have suffered torture and imprisonment. Now I am resigning because I can see that reactionary elements working under the banner of Islam are consciously suppressing the people's freedom and rights.

Some of them in Ahwaz (an industrial city near to the oil fields) have gone so far as to threaten workers like myself if we do not accept their views. And it seems that this is going on all over the country.

A group under Bazargan (Khomeini's appointed prime minister) was sent to us by Khomeini to study the situation in the oil fields. Under the influence of the same reactionary religious elements from Ahwaz this group went beyond studying the situation and tried to take control over it for their own benefit. There was no link between this group and the striking workers—they only tried to take advantage of our struggle.

It was you workers who fought and suffered from sackings, imprisonment and the burnings of our homes and still we did not give up because we all felt a responsibility to the whole of the people of Iran. Myself and other representatives who were responsible for leading your struggle know better than anybody that it was you yourselves that made the victory - not anybody else.

Now to protest against this new repression I am resigning. I believe we should keep our unity and our revolutionary consciousness - this is our only guarantee for final victory. We must avoid any split from which the enemy can benefit and this means that we are willing to restore production for domestic use.

We do not accept any dictatorship and will always support those who fight for freedom.

Now that another repression has started I am resigning so as to warn you against all those who think that victory has already been achieved. We must remember and understand the nature of Imperialism which still has everything in its hands. We must remember what happened in Portugal, Argentina and especially Chile. Until Imperialism is completely smashed such things can happen again.

I am always ready to fight Imperialism and its reactionary allies in Iran.

Mohammad Javad Khatemi

most important section of the left is that its own past will be a dead weight on it, dragging it towards a hopeless confrontation with the Khomeini forces.

Hopefully the involvement of other comrades with the Fedayeen will act as a brake on this tendency and over time they will accept that there isn't a short cut to socialism, that socialist revolution is the emancipation of the working class by its own actions.

One encouraging sign is the report that the Mujahadeen, the Islamic guerrillas, have come out in support of a programme very similar to that of the left. This means that there are militants within the Islamic camp who share some or all of the left desire to go on with the struggle. Every effort should be made to involve them and prevent isolation.

If the left in Iran faces the danger of being drawn into futile militaristic gestures against Khomeini so he in turn faces the threat from a powerful and reconstituted army.

Like Allende in Chile Khomeini seeks to take over the state rather than smash it and although the executions of the better known butchers in the armed forces and forced retirement of many others are necessary to assuage the burning anger of the people against them it does not fundamentally change the army or its loyalties.

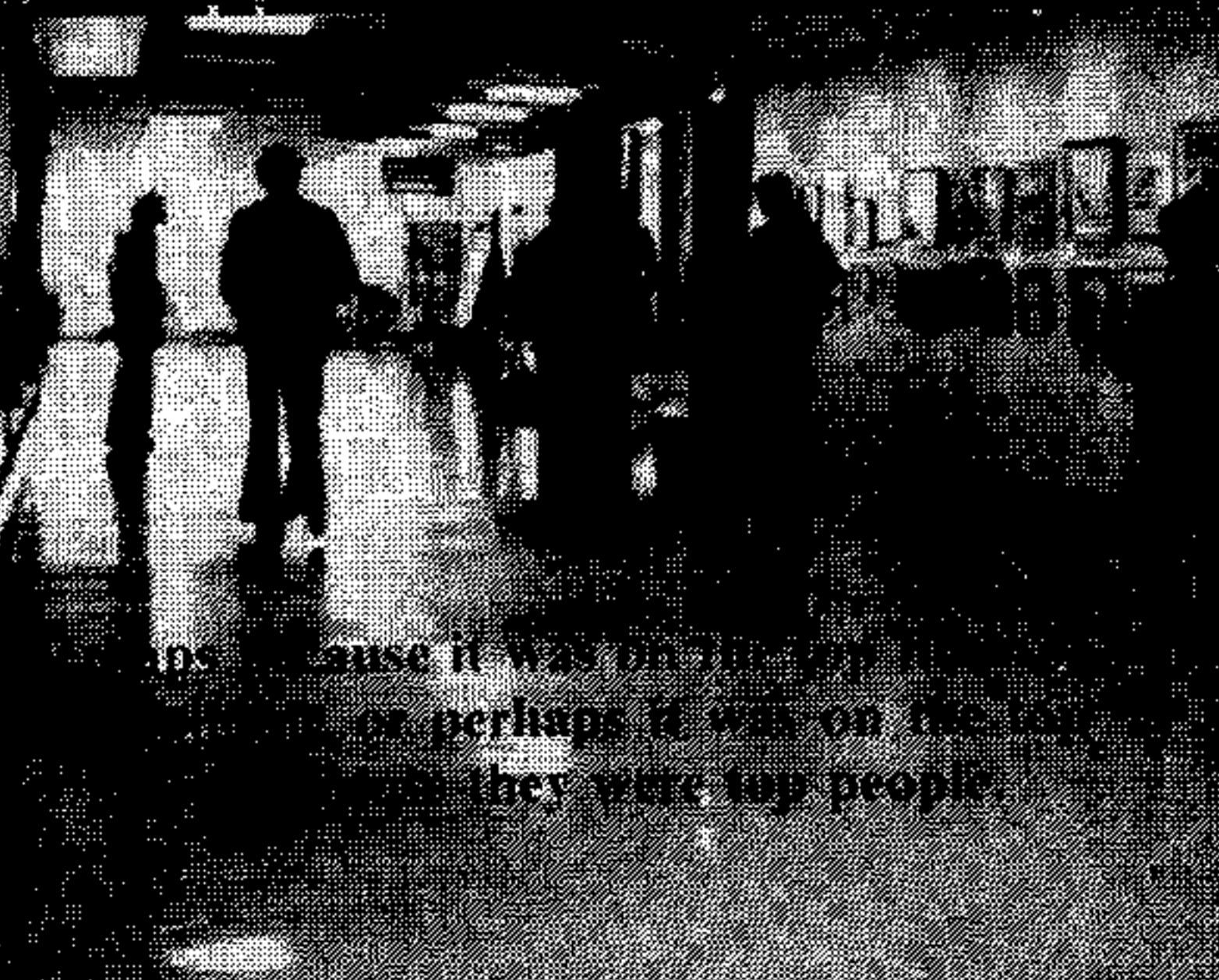
Those troops who mutinied to join the revolution are now being paid back by being ordered into the barracks where they will be once again subjected to the discipline of the same officer corps.

For the workers the return to work may at first sight seem a defeat. However without mass organisations of their own this is not necessarily the case. On the streets the workers are sucked up into the religious mass movement and subordinated to its demagogic leadership. The workers are brought together in the factory as workers and therefore are open to an appeal from the left on a class basis.

In the next few weeks and months whether or not the workers' committees survive, whether soldiers' committees are formed in the barracks will decide the basic balance of forces. If the left can make itself the advocate of these it will be much harder for Khomeini to repress them, if not then for the immediate future he will have a free hand. Terry Povey

I used to be a private consultant in London. There was a special ward at the hospital. It was called Top Corridor.

Top Corridor



...because it was on the top floor... or perhaps it was on the top floor... they were top people.

James Lauritz

The ward served the ruling classes of 15 or so countries, including the nasty little ruling classes of the Middle East. We also served patients who got health insurance as a tax free perk from their companies: personnel managers, engineers, journalists, and the like. (The next time you read about the NHS in *The Guardian* remember their reporters are all privately insured.) And we served ordinary Bedouin and peasants from the oil countries. Their governments paid for them to come. It took the government committees months or years to decide to send them, and by the time they arrived they were usually very sick.

This was no longer than it could take you to get many NHS operations. But eye operations are still readily available on the NHS. The patients at the eye hospital were not mainly paying for the privilege of jumping the waiting list. They were paying for the privilege of being operated on by the consultants there, who were some of the best eye surgeons in the world.

If you're frightened of going blind it's reassuring to know that you're getting the best that money can buy! They were also paying for the status, like travelling first class on airplanes. And they were paying for the privilege of ordering other people around. All their lives they gained security by giving orders. And when they were ill they got frightened and needed this security badly.

The hospital workers didn't like the private patients. We didn't like their orders, their rudeness, or their whining. And we didn't like the way they would ring for a nurse to come and change the water in their flowers. We didn't like their class privilege. We weren't ever going to get private treatment. And we valued the NHS and we valued our work. Private practice shits on that.

What's more, if there was going to be private practice, we wanted a share of the loot. But the consultants got the lion's share, with a bit left over for the anaesthetist.

Technicians and junior doctors got an occasional tip from the more decent consultants. For the rest of us, nothing.

Nothing but rudeness and lack of consideration. The theatre nurses had the consultants yelling at them during operations. The rest of us were treated like we didn't exist - consultants would walk right past us in the corridor without saying hello.

And two of them kept scheduling long private graft operations starting at six o'clock on a Friday night, so that all the theatre porters and nurses lost their Friday evenings. We kept threatening to walk out over this, but we never did. The theatre sister kept trying to do something about this, but never succeeded.

All things considered, we didn't like private practice. The union (NUPE) tried blacking the private patients. The management didn't mind; I suspect they disliked the consultants almost as much as we did. But the consultants themselves were outraged. They bellowed and ranted with that particular noisy bluster people put on when their money is threatened and they know in their hearts that they are in the wrong. Then they went off in a huff to do their operations at a private hospital.

Lots of hospitals were involved in the blacking. The national union took up the matter. They took it to Parliament and the whole thing got lost in a morass of white papers and green papers and promises that never seemed to make any difference. The blacking crumbled.

And the consultants crept back bit by bit. The nursing and technical services at the private hospital weren't as good. The private hospital couldn't afford some the expensive microscopes and laser beams used in modern eye surgery. And if they wanted to take a junior doctor or technician along, they actually had to pay him.

Modern medicine requires a tremendous investment in machinery and training. Even in a country like the USA the state has to

pay for most of this. Private practice has no economic alternative but to be parasitic off the public sector.

So the consultants had to sneak back, and the rich got the best that money can buy: the best consultants, and the worst care from everybody else. That was how it had always been. Nurses and cleaners avoided working on the private wards if they could. The staff ignored the patients. Porters were kind and gentle on other wards - on Top Corridor we gruff and hostile unless we smelled a tip.

In some hospitals the kitchen staff even make a point of keeping the private dinners back until they get cold! Private patients bought control. What they needed was caring, which comes from the heart. It was regularly provided free on NHS wards.

And the NHS patients got something even more priceless - the support of the other patients. It's hard to be in hospital for an eye operation. Some were going blind. Some were already blind and hoped for sight. Eyes are a very personal thing. You see out of them, they're close to where you live. And nobody else really understands what it's like.

Your family and friends have their own problems anyway. But the other patients on the ward, they know. Many of them have been through it all before. They sit on your bed, play cards with you, tell jokes, tell stories about their operations. They are quietly there when you need them.

I think that's where the patients got their extraordinary courage. I saw it in people whose operations had failed, newly blinded, learning to walk with their hands out in front of them, stumbling in the new permanent dark. Not complaining, just trying, starting out on a long road. I could see it watching a patient getting ready for the fourth graft operation, when the others had failed, knowing that his chances went down each time.

I saw it when I came to wheel them off to the operating theatre. Being brave not to be ashamed, brave to keep up the spirits of the others. I remember one patient who concealed a fag in his palm where the patients could see it and the sister couldn't. The ward cheered as we wheeled him out. In the corridor he threw away the fag and you could see the naked fear on his face.

The private patients don't get that, and they don't give that. Instead they get a special privilege: private rooms. During visiting hours their families can come - if they aren't 8000 miles away. The rest of the time they can go blind. Privately. They face the dark night of their souls, alone.

I'm sure that's why they're so rude and childish when you come to take them to the operating theatre. They've spent their lives trying to buy happiness by telling other people what to do. A fat lot of good it does them when they're terrified of losing their window on the world.

That's capitalist privilege for you. It gets you the best that money can buy in a world where money doesn't buy the best. The individualism of the bourgeoisie crumbles into the loneliness of the desperate. The best surgeons in the world care for you, and nobody cares about you.

John Blake

A New Elite

by Nigel Harris



The changes in China since the fall of the 'Gang of Four' in October 1976 seem dramatic. Consider these scattered items:

1) On 23 January 20,000 cases of Coca Cola were loaded on trains bound for Canton. McDonald's Hamburgers announce contracts to supply China. Intercontinental Hotels announce they will build a chain of 1,000 five-star hotels in nine major Chinese cities. In Paires, Pierre Cardin acknowledges that he has been intited to show his winter fashion show in Peking. 30 officials of the World Bank visit China to explore the prospects for loans.

2) The president of the Chinese Supreme Court deplores publicly the use of forced confessions in the courts and a physical torture in Chinese prisons. The People's Liberation Army announce the restoration of marks of military rank; new uniforms are being designed for ranks from marshal to lieutenant (perhaps the secret of Cardin's visit?).

China's ex-capitalists are repaid money and property seized during the Cultural Revolution, as well as the accumulated interest on their former assets. The *People's Daily* (29 Oc. 1978) denounces the use of Mao's 'Little Red Book'.

Most of the opponents of Mao, so violently reviled during the Cultural Revolution, have been rehabilitated. This does not so far cover Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-ch'i)* and Lin Biao. But even the most important pre-1965 opponent of Mao, Marshall Peng Dehuai (Peng-hai), purged in 1959, has been rehabilitated—as also Liu's widow, Wang Gungmei (Wang Kuang-mei); ex-Mayor of Peking, Peng Zhen (Peng Chen), and chief of staff Liu Tingyi. Even General Chen Tsai-tao, famous for gaoling Mao's emissaries in Wuhan in 1967, has resurfaced, now as commander of the army railway corps.

The changes were preceded by a fairly substantial purge, lasting from October 1976 to late 1977. Some two thirds of the provincial party leaders were changed, not without some violence (which was called civil war in 1976). The leadership prge was accompanied by the execution or imprisonment of many others, including the three top leaders of the former Red Guards.

It was not a purge of the supporters of the Gang of Four so much as a general 'rectification' campaign on the pretext of purging the Gang, reaching out to cover those who had not opposed the Gang with sufficient vigour, the corrupt, the lazy, incompetent and criminal, as well as simple victims of vendettas.

By the time of the Eleventh Party Congress (August 1977), the party was sufficiently 'reformed' to ratify a new leadership. In the elections of the new politburo, half the 23-man body held senior military posts (a repetition of the elections in 1969 at the Ninth Congress).

The all-important standing committee of the politburo identified the 'Gang of Five' which had defeated that of four: Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng), Deng Xioping (Teng Hsiao-p'ing), marshal Yeh Chien-Ying, and the newest rising star, Wang Dongxing (formerly commander of Mao's

personal military force, the 8341 Division, the body which actually arrested the Gang of Four).

By the following spring, the stage was set to relaunch the strategy for rapid industrialisation before the 3,460 representatives of the Fifth National People's Congress. To the year 2000, the programme was laid out, its centrepiece, the 'Four Modernizations' (in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence). The perspective had originally been presented in 1975 by the late Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), but was in any case an elaboration of the perspective of the mid-1950s formulated by Mao himself.

The targets are spectacular capital investment up to 1985 is to equal the total investment of the preceding twenty eight years, embodied in 120 large projects (including ten irons and steel complexes, nine non-ferrous metals complexes, eight coal mines, ten oil and gas fields, 30 power stations, six new trunk railways and five major harbours). Steel is, if on target, to reach 60 million tonnes by 1985 (against 25 million tonnes at the moment).

But the new leadership did not assess its own historical record and what preceded it. Hua did not attempt for Mao what Khrushchev did for Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The 'Thaw'

Nonetheless, the parallels with the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s were close. *Red Flag* (Feb 1977) called for an improved standard of living and 'a more colourful and varied cultural life'. Classical opera reappeared after its long savaging at the hands of Mao's wife, Jiang Qing (Chiang Ch'ing); the ancient Lu Hsiang-shan, one of the fallen of 1966, published his memoirs in which he had the impertinence to say Mao had revered his ancestors, bowing to their tombs in Shaoshan.

There were more tangible benefits in the pay increases of October 1977. Senior workers in organised industry (grades two and three) were upgraded, as also were staff (particularly technicians) and party cadres, covering about half the labour force in modern industry. However, the value of the increase was small (between £1.25 and £4.50 per month), and did not affect the mass of workers in 'co-operative enterprises' (who remained on the work point system).

Furthermore, in December 1978, the government announced 20 per cent increases in the prices paid for grain quota purchases by the state (and a 50 per cent increase for purchases above the quota), and promised to cut the prices of farm equipment, all of which would increase the disposable income of those cultivators with the largest surplus of marketable grain.

Poster campaigns bore witness to a broader excitement. Officially inspired in the beginning to press the candidature for high office of particular individuals (notably Deng) or denounce others, the intellectuals broadened the attack until it became a sharp reappraisal of Mao's rule. For some it has

been 'ten years of fascism'. Sixty six posters opposite Mao's mausoleum copied Mao's judgement of Stalin to apply it to Mao himself - 70 per cent right, 30 per cent wrong.

Others complained: 'We have had a socialist regime done? People do not have enough to eat or decent clothes to wear'. Why were Hua and Deng appointed without any popular consultation? Mao was a 'bragging despot', but the 'Four Modernizations' was just as empty a slogan as 'class struggle' 'verbiage... to bash out ear-drums'.

In December, there was actually a march along the half mile between Changan Avenue and Tien An Men Square; some three to four thousand demonstrators demanded 'democracy and freedom'. Unofficial newspapers appeared, one of them calling for a commission of enquiry into Mao's record. On the initiative of a group from Guizhou (Kweichow) province, a Peking branch of a new civil rights campaign was formed—to press for open government, the ending of the secret police, a free choice of work and the payment of unemployment benefits (in January it was reported a woman activist of this group, Fu Yuch-hua, had been arrested).

What the intelligentsia began, others quickly took up. There were visitors reports from Shanghai of worker demonstrations against low pay with the slogan, 'Down with starvation' (there had been earlier reports of troops firing on a workers demonstration) and of riots in Kansu. On 11 December, the ending of a national conference on *hsia fang* ('sending down' urban educated youth to rural areas) produced a demonstration in Peking by a delegation of rusticated youth from Yunnan province who claimed that 50,000 of their fellows were on strike in one district 'resolutely to oppose the local leaders who trample on human rights and the respect of intellectual youth'. On 14 January, some 200 peasants demonstrated in Tien An Men square 'against starvation'.

Work discipline

There was another side to the coin—a massive and sustained campaign to strengthen work discipline and the centralized control of the economy. Deng's recommendation to the 11th Party Congress—'less empty talk and More hard work'—summed up the aim. At the national level, this included the full rehabilitation of the state planning council, with senior economic planners joining the politburo.

The banking system was given the major role in exercising supervision of enterprises and monitoring performance through financial control (the role the banks had played in the 1950s). It was argued that, to establish accountability, all relationships should be governed by written contracts (it was not clear whether this meant also an increase in the use of contract labour).

The party central committee itself issued to enterprises rules on management, standards and accountability to the centre. The party also held some forty national conferences (with up to 7,000 in attendance)

on key industrial and economic questions in 1978 to mobilise cadres and officials. One of the proposals made to cut through the jungle of existing bureaucracy was to create specialised trusts as trial blazers. In all cases, profits must be made, and 'self-reliance' ended by increased interdependent specialisation.

Hu Chiao-mu, the new president of the new academy of social science and one of the inspirations of the new policies, publicly enumerated the basis for the new policies. If, he said, the increase in worker productivity had been kept up to the 1950s rate (8.7 per cent per year), output per workers by now would be three times higher than it was. To make up the 'loss', everything must be done to raise productivity:

"Each enterprise and each of its workers must never waste even a minute, otherwise the enterprise or individual will be held responsible and charged for the loss".

A system of legal punishments, administered by proper economic courts (as existed in the 1950s), should be set up with powers to dock wages, sack workers and managers, starve enterprises of raw materials or, if necessary, allow them to go bankrupt.

Who else but the capitalists know how to operate such a system? China's ex-capitalists are to be bribed to come back and work for the regime, and all China must learn from the foreign capitalists:

"Methods of economic management in capitalist countries contain factors worth our study because the bourgeoisie of big companies... consciously do things according to objective economic law, and in doing such work over a long period, they have accumulated quite a fund of experience and become proficient in applying these laws".

It was a thought loyally echoed by Deng on his visit to Tokyo: 'We must absorb advanced technology and efficient forms of management from the outside world if we are to propel the nation forward'.

The national conferences spelt out the detail. They also brought senior military officers into the role of supervising key national industries. Take for example, the railways. After years of sporadic conflict, in January 1977 Hua ordered military engineers to take over the key junction at Chengchow.

The following national railways conference was addressed by Defence Minister Marshal Yeh who proposed that the railways must be made into 'a mighty semi-military industrial force'. Later, the army railways corps under its new commander took over an extensive supervisory role of major junctions.

If this complex of policies had been implemented as formulated, it would have constituted a massive speed-up in industry. But the regime has probably moved much more slowly than the propaganda implies since, they cannot be sure there will not be serious opposition in the factories.

The newspapers air topics formerly prohibited—for example, 'socialist emulation'—without this necessarily meaning the full rigours of stalinist Stakhanovism have been introduced. In November 1977, a Peking conference agreed

on the need for productivity bonuses and skill premia—they were called, not the wicked 'material incentives', but 'material encouragements'.

But in practice, the government has been very cautious. A *Peking Review* (July 1978) account of productivity bonuses in Peking aluminium factory shows that the bonuses are awarded to teams, not individual workers, cover 86 per cent of the workforce, and are worth only £1.50 per worker per month. Yet still the writer found it necessary to guard himself against accusations:

"If a worker worked hard and got a first class bonus every month for ten years, he would have Yuan 720 (about £180, NH). Could he possibly become a capitalist with that?"

For school and university students, the tightening of discipline has been much more radical. Manual labour is being phased out; students are to be obliged to study. In October 1977, Hua announced the restoration of national examinations to enter higher education (after ten years without them), a general raising of standards, and an amendment of the rule that school students must spend at least one to two years in manual labour in agriculture or industry.

Hua stressed that the country needed competent experts and urgently. Because of the cumulative backlog of candidates, there was frantic pressure on applicants to enter higher education. Some reports said there were ten million candidates for 200,000 places (in Heilungkiang province, there was said to be one million applicants for 8,000 places).

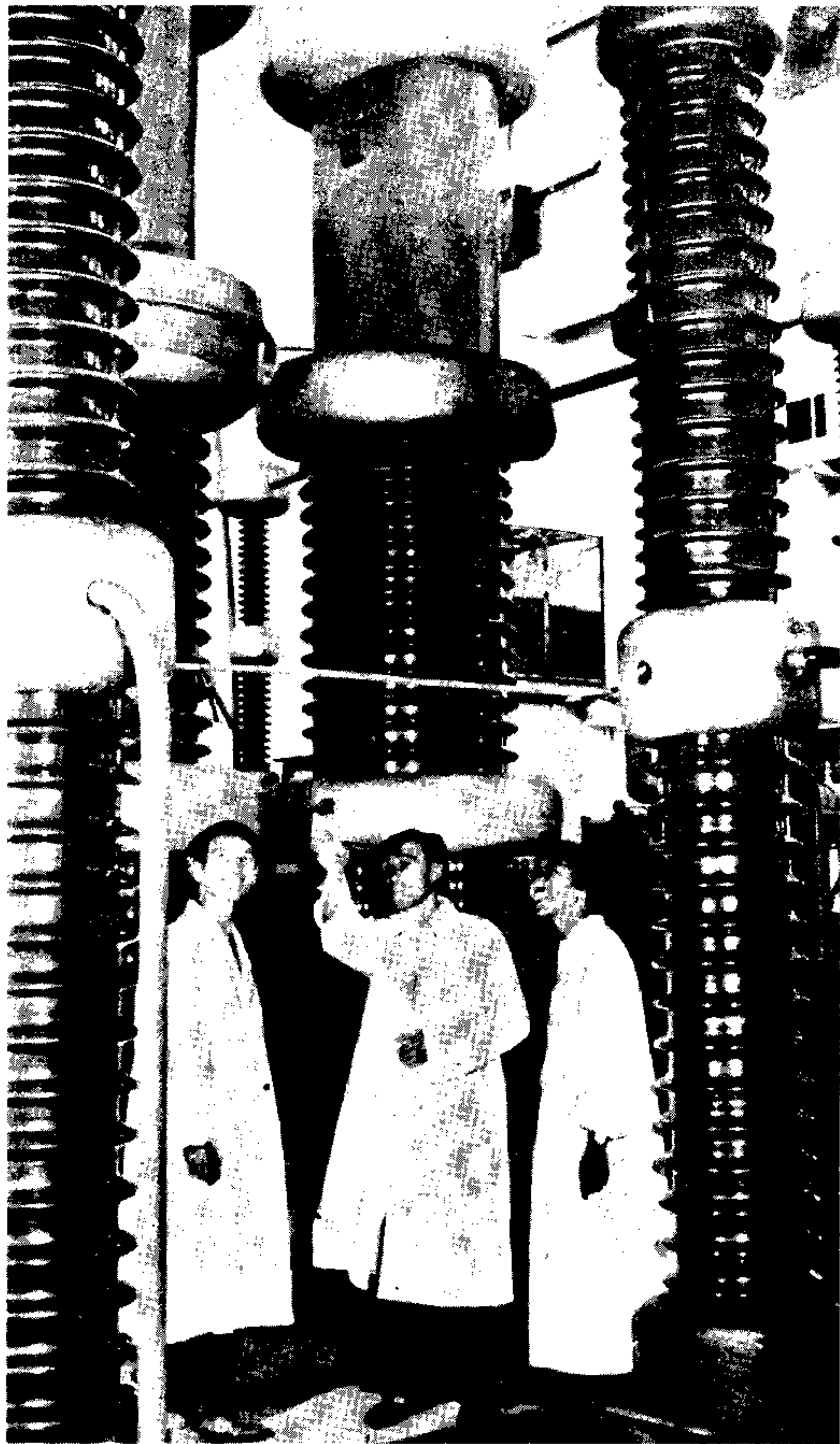
The reasons

On the surface, some of the changes appear dramatic. But that so many things could be changed so swiftly indicates the shallow penetration of the mass of the population by the ethics of the cultural revolution. In fact, the policies now reaching fruition were, in many respects, first begun in 1969 with, we can presume, the full support if not the inspiration of Mao Zedong.

In 1969, Mao finally succeeded in switching off the Cultural Revolution partly in order to prepare China's long-term response to the armed clash with the Soviet Union on the northern border. The conflict had quickly exposed the country's vulnerability to attack from the north. China's armed forces were, under the impact of the cultural revolution, in disarray, poorly equipped and poorly trained.

Much romantic talk of 'People's War' could not hide the fact that the bare treeless plains of north China were ideal terrain for a tank invasion and provided no cover for guerillas. The vice minister of defence, General Yu, summed up the lesson recently: 'rifles, machine guns, grenades and explosive packs can no longer deal with an enemy's attack. There must be anti-tank artillery and guided missiles'. However, the implications do not stop there.

It was Engels who, in 1892, spelt out the economic implications of what was then modern armaments:



"From the moment warfare became a branch of the 'grande industries' (iron clad ships, rifled artillery, quickfiring and repeating cannons, steel covered bullets, rifled artillery, quickfiring and repeating cannons, steel covered bullets, smokeless powder etc.), 'la grande industrie', without which all these things cannot be made, became a political necessity. All these things cannot be had without a highly developed metal manufacture. And that manufacture cannot be had without a corresponding development in all other branches of manufacture, especially textiles."

In terms of contemporary weaponry, Engels' observation needs a powerful

qualification. The technology of arms is determined by the rivalry between the two leading military powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. This establishes the standard towards which all other powers try to approximate insofar as they endeavour to ensure their own survival. But such a technology cannot in essentials ensure their own survival. But such a technology cannot in essentials be home grown without the cadre of technically competent backing present in the two leading powers.

The equipment must therefore be imported and paid for ultimately by exports. Thus the drive to rearmament not only transforms the modern economy of a

backward country in the interests of supporting the military (as Engels acknowledges), it also more powerfully than ever before subordinates the national economy to the mechanisms of world capitalism.

In China, the change of direction signalled by 1969 threatened the position of those who had risen in the Cultural Revolution on a totally different set of slogans. The central leadership of 1969 was packed with the military, ousting these newcomers. In 1971, we can presume, Lin Biao's opposition to the new direction led to his destruction. But Mao did not abandon his cultural revolutionaries in the leadership, for he needed them in the power play to balance against the establishment of party and army.

His support permitted the 'Gang of Four' to win increased positions in the central leadership in 1973. But they could not prevent Zhou Enlai making public the programme of 'Four Modernizations' in 1975, nor the massive expansion in imports, particularly technically advanced capital equipment, in the same year (in fact, the 1975 value of imports was higher than that of imports in 1978). However, if not able to influence policy seriously, the Gang could affect the individuals concerned. In early 1976, they succeeded in gaining the removal of Zhou's chosen heir, Deng Xiaoping, only then to be completely demolished following the death of their protector, Mao.

The task the new leadership has set itself is gigantic. Recent CIA estimates suggest the Chinese armed forces are 15-20 years behind the Soviet Union. The 16 Russian divisions that faced China in 1966 have grown now to 44, and have been steadily re-equipped with vastly improved weaponry. For ten years, the Chinese armed forces stood still, so that the technical gap has widened.

The issues involved could not even be publicly acknowledged up to late 1976. Since then, the main Chinese press has lost no opportunity to press the case for military modernization. Simultaneously, the size of China's total forces has been expanded to 3.95 million men and women (with 400,000 in the air force and 300,000 in the navy).

But manpower does not overcome the equipment problem. For example, the air force is very large, but its main bomber is the slow and elderly Russian TU 16. The Chinese government clinched a deal with Rolls Royce in 1975 to build a Spey engine plant in China, but this is still far from completion because of the shortage of skilled labour and technicians (a scarcity made extreme by the impact of the Cultural Revolution on higher education).

Similar problems arise with nuclear weapons. 22 tests have been held, but China is still weak in systems to deliver the weapons. So far, there has been no test of an intercontinental ballistic missile with an 8,000 mile range, although it is said that there are forty 1,750 mile range missiles in concrete silos along the northern border. However, even with these, they are still liquid fuelled (as opposed to solid fuelled) and therefore take some 36 hours to launch.

Thus, the 'Four Modernizations' can all be seen as relating to the central drive to rearm. Indeed, that theme was explicit in many of the national conferences held last year. For example, it was defence minister Yeh who addressed the national steel conference. He argued that steel was the key link in basic industries which in turn were decisive for defence.

Furthermore, 'we will not have enough modern arms and equipment, means of reconnaissance and highly developed communications and command systems without steel'. Steel was a defence industry, and it

was therefore extremely urgent to 'race against time' in expanding and improving steel output. A similar preoccupation has led Hua to stress the need to catch up in nuclear, computer and space technology. And the educational system must be slotted into a complementary role.

Simultaneously, foreign policy must be refashioned to give China access to the arms exports of the advanced capitalist countries. The two changes of 1978—the treaty with Japan and the virtual abandonment of claims on Taiwan to secure US recognition—conform to this aim. A stream of Chinese military buying teams has been scouring the advanced capitalist world—for example, 1978 saw three missions to Italy, shopping for helicopters, missile guidance systems, cannons, anti-aircraft and anti-missile guns for warships etc; delegations to West Germany ordered 20 helicopters, inspected Leopard tanks and rockets, and arranged for a high level German mission to Peking, led by former Chief of the NATO Central Europe group, Adolf, Count von Keilmanssegg.

Four delegations to Britain have finally clinched the sale of Hawker Siddeley Harrier vertical take off fighters; the Chinese hint they might ultimately want 300 of these, but the British have been holding out for a giant deal involving a package of capital and consumer goods.

Yet another delegation arrived in Australia to discuss the purchase of uranium—a somewhat confusing visit for the local Maoists who have been active in the Australian labour movement campaign to secure the banning of all uranium exports from Australia.

To increase the degree of self-reliance of the defence effort as well as lower its import cost in the future requires sustained expansion in the output of the modern economy of



China which in turn requires a comparable increase in agricultural output to support industry. In both cases, importing equipment is the only real method available to do this at the speed required.

So what has happened in armaments is repeated in all key sectors of the economy. Most major multinational companies and most more advanced capitalist countries have been invited to tender for, in some cases, contracts of considerable value, producing a wave of heady delirium among the capitalists: 'Any nation of 950 million', one merchant banker recently said, 'growing at a rate of 18 million a year, is a tremendous challenge'. No wonder—the estimated value of contracts currently under discussion is: 80 billion US dollars for Japan; 25 billion dollars for West Germany; 20 billion dollars for France; 30 billion dollars for Britain; and that leaves out of account the United States.

How is it to be paid for? Chinese financial reserves are adequate for normal trade but not enormous, as was shown in the balance of payments crisis China experienced in 1974 (in both early and late 1967, China found it necessary to sell a total of about 100 tonnes of gold on the London gold market).

The country's exports do not show great promise. About 40 per cent are agricultural goods, the type produced by many other backward countries, and the rest are mainly raw materials. Oil reserves are about 40 billion barrels, and production could reach 2.7 million barrels per day by 1980. But if the domestic economy expands, consumption at home will take the major part of this production—leaving between 2 and 600,000 barrels per day for export. Even that level makes necessary considerable expansion in imported equipment—pipes of a steel not made in China, refinery, dock loading and tanker equipment.

Furthermore, indigenous resources of iron ore seem to be limited, so that expansion of steel production requires increased import of ore—reflected in long term agreements signed recently to import ore from Australia and steel from Brazil, India, Japan.

If the Chinese government seeks to upgrade its exports, it similarly is obliged to consult foreign capital. So far the People's Republic has signed at least forty contracts with foreign companies for them to manufacture in China. For example, Host Pajamas of New York, in collaboration with Itoman of Japan, have contracted to set up a Shanghai plant to produce nightmare for the US market. Japanese and Hong Kong firms have been contracting to create other plants in electronics (television sets, calculators) and textiles.

In one of the Hong Kong deals the Chinese government promised for pay 70 per cent of the import of any equipment required, to permit the remission of profits, in full in hard currency abroad, and guaranteed a minimum profit rate of 20 per cent per year. H T Vong, leader of the delegation, told the Hong Kong press: 'The terms of the deal are very attractive. The land for the new plant will cost almost nothing, and overheads and labour costs

will be very low'.

In some of the deals, the government has been willing to accept a foreign ownership of 49 per cent of the capital, and in some, to consider a majority holding.

Exports will take time to be upgraded. Tourism might generate earnings rapidly. As a result the government is pressing hard to expand foreign tourism. This explains the startling innovations of Intercontinental hotels, Coca Cola and McDonald's hamburgers, and the major efforts made to improve domestic passenger railways and air services.

However, none of these efforts will quickly cover the debts Peking now proposes to acquire. Only borrowing from international banks and foreign governments will do that. Originally, the Bank of America estimated China would need about 40 to 45 billion dollars in loans over the next five years, but on current discussions, the figure has been pushed up to 80 billion dollars.

For that, China's domestic economy needs to be at least scrutinized by the main international financial agencies—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In five or ten years time, if the government finds difficulty Monetary Fund. In five or ten years time, if the government finds difficulty in servicing its cumulative debts, scrutiny may change to supervision. However, for the moment, all that is faraway.

The main international banks, despondent at the collapse of their activities in Iran, are falling over themselves to gain access to China, and being backed heavily in credit terms by foreign governments. In the auction, terms are being wade progressively easier—US banks are currently bitter in their complaints that Japanese and French banks are charging only 6 to 6½ per cent on their loans to China, when the agreed rate for backward countries is 7¼ to 7½ per cent.

Two questions arise. How far will the Chinese ruling class succeed in its current strategy, and what will be its effects on China? The Achilles heel of China is agriculture. Hu Chiao-mu recently confirmed what had long been known unofficially: the grain ration is no higher today than in 1955. Despite two good years in the 1970s, grain output has increased at an annual rate of about 2 per cent, and possibly below one per cent since 1974, a rate below that of the increase in population.

No wonder some of the slogans in Tien An Men Square included, 'Down with starvation'. Spectacular targets 400 million tonnes of grain by 1985 (the official figure for 1978 was 295 million tonnes), or an annual rate of increase of nearly five per cent per year will not wish away the central problem. At the moment, scarcity can only be kept at bay by massive imports of, in particular, Australian wheat (China has just contracted for ten million tonnes per year for the next three years, a further burden on the balance of payments).

To expand physical output, most ruling classes concentrate on bribing the richer farmers. Perhaps the Chinese government will do the same, encouraging the re-

emergence of a rich peasantry on the countryside. In such circumstances, perhaps output could be expanded rapidly, although not at the spectacular rate proposed.

If agriculture could be excluded, it is possible some of the equally spectacular industrial targets could be reached—provided the burden of foreign debt did not ultimately wreck the process.

Such observations are fairly academic without considering the likely changes in Chinese society. The new leadership has apparently and with gas to embraced world capitalism. They give all the impression of having been released from prison. Foreign capital, the full disciplines of the world market and the domestic drive for armaments, will speedily exhibit and enhance the existing class structure—whether this concerns the overt appearance of the rich peasantry on the countryside and in the party, the creation of an isolated but privileged high-productivity stratum of the labour force, or the conspicuous consumption of bureaucrats (the bar in the Intercontinental may officially be there for foreign tourists, but it will be the district party secretary who will its most frequent inmate).

For the moment, people are perhaps so relieved to shed the baleful oppression of the Gang of Four, to have the prospect of earning a little more to keep body and soul together, and to renew some contact with the world outside after the years of the ghetto, that they will absorb the changes with some tolerance. But the residue of maoist ethics—the demand for equality—is not washed away by foreign capital, and can at any time connect with the manifest injustice and inequality of Chinese society.

That connection will be enhanced by conflict within the party. World capitalism will colonize a section of the party, will corral it as its own domestic instrument, threatening the leadership with a loss of control. This may make necessary—on the assumption that the Politbureau retains some control—another 'left turn', a purge to retain the central perspective of the state.

However, the experience of the cultural revolution shows how dangerous left-sounding purges can be, how easily in China's fragile state they ignite real class conflict. The experience of the past 13 years must have made masses of people increasingly cynical, increasingly unincorporated in what must appear as the obscure ideological fantasies of the central leadership. Furthermore, the cultural revolution taught many people something of armed warfare.

All these factors might suggest that, while there may be tolerance now, it need not last very long. The opening up of China to the rest of the world will show also that the narrow conditions of life in China are not some necessary condition of existence but only the imperatives of the Chinese ruling order and its dedication, not to the welfare of all, but to its battle with the Russian ruling class.

* *The world press has recently changed its method of transliteration for Chinese names, from the former wade system to pin yin. In the absence of a glossary I have used both system here—Pin Yin where (with wade in brackets on first mention), wade where not.*

TIME WAS...

Bill Message tracks down the lost militancy of the Broad Left in the miners' leadership



Time was, and it's only a few years ago, that everybody looked at what the miners were doing before they jumped in themselves. If the miners were fighting, or looked like fighting, then millions of other workers gained in confidence.

This year the press has turned its venom on the lorry-drivers, train-drivers, hospital workers, grave-diggers—almost everybody it sometimes appears, except, so far, the miners. At the time of writing the miners' wage-claim is progressing at a snail's pace and all the signs are that it may well continue to do so.

The National Union of Mineworkers must be the only union in the country that has actually reduced its target for wage levels over the past three years. A couple of years ago the target was £135 for the basic weekly wage of a coal-face worker. Last July the NUM Conference lowered its sights and agreed to pursue a claim for £110 a week for face-workers. This more modest figure still represents an increase of 40 per cent above the current basic wage rate.

The right wing were prepared to go along with the high figures at previous conferences because they were confident of being able to police the government's wage limits. By the autumn of 1977, however, they feared that they could no longer hold the growing frustrations of the membership in check. They had to come up with some cash, and hence their determination to push through the productivity deals.

Initially they were rebuffed. In October 1977 a national ballot rejected productivity deals by a convincing majority of over 20,000. The rank and file certainly wanted more cash, but without the strings of a productivity deal. Within two months, however, the national leadership had overturned the ballot result and given the go-ahead for individual areas to negotiate their own deals within a national framework. In the early months of 1978 the opposition crumbled as area after area settled for a deal. Without the alternative of a straight increase without any strings a majority of miners opted reluctantly for the promised productivity bonuses.

When the right-wing controlled national executive overturned the ballot result in December 1977 the strong broad-left leadership controlling Yorkshire, South-

Wales, Scotland, North Derbyshire and Kent was paralysed—as a few of them are now prepared to admit. They simply didn't seem to know what to do about it. They thought they had won, only to have the victory snatched from their hands.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that, at the time the ballot result was overturned, a majority of NUM branches and lodges were still opposed to the deals. If the broad-left leaders like Arthur Scargill, Michael McGahey and Emyln Williams had organised those branches and lodges into collective and active opposition then they could have regained the initiative and pulled the carpet from under the feet of Joe Gormley and company.

Other key areas like Nottinghamshire were evenly divided at the time. If they had been offered a lead half the pits in Nottinghamshire would have responded thereby emasculating Len Clarke, the arch-right wing Notts Area President. Instead it was Joe Whelan, a Communist Party Notts NUM official who was made to look a hypocrite and a fool. At the same time as an article written by him in opposition to the deals in the *Yorkshire Miner* was appearing he was to be found voting in favour of the prod deals at the December meeting of the National Executive Committee.

So why didn't it happen? The answers are not just academic. They point directly at the political and tactical weaknesses of the broad left, which are relevant to the fight for this year's wage claim.

Talks did take place between some of the broad left leaders about the possibility of some kind of action against the prod deals but they foundered, largely due to the unwillingness of most of them to rock the boat too much.

During two years of government wage controls they had ritualistically gone through the arguments against the social contract, but had done nothing to encourage the rank and file to stand up and fight.

The broad left has consistently fought for and often won policies at annual NUM Conferences, and has then sat back, done nothing and protested indignantly when the right wing have torn up those policies and thrown the pieces back in their faces. Not once have they given the rank and

file any encouragement to take action themselves.

Last year when the Yorkshire rescue brigadesmen struck against their unfair prod bonuses, low pay rates and long hours half the coalfield was out in support of them after just two days. A hurriedly convened Yorkshire NUM Council meeting condemned the action and it was Arthur Scargill himself who persuaded the rescue men to call off their action.

The hatred and contempt for Joe Gormley that is felt among the rank and file in areas like Yorkshire and Scotland has to be seen to be believed. Twice in the past year he has been invited by NUM members on day-release industrial relations courses in Yorkshire to come and speak at meetings organised by them. Twice he has accepted and then cried off at the last minute.

The position of a trade union leader who dares not face his own members is not one to be envied; and, thick-skinned though he may be, there is little doubt that Gormley wants out. The rumour that it is only pressure from the government that stops him from retiring is almost certainly at least partially true.

The future of Lawrence Daly, once the blue-eyed boy of the broad left, is also in some doubt. His health is not good and a heavy question mark hangs over how much longer he can continue as NUM general secretary.

A lot of manoeuvring and gentle backstabbing is going on among the broad left to secure the nominations for succession to Gormley's and Daly's positions, for it is no secret that the right wing are very short of credible candidates with sufficient support to guarantee victory.

Consequently there is a great deal of rhetoric from the broad-left figureheads—backed up by very little action. No-one

seems anxious to spoil his chances by making a move which might possibly result in failure and electoral unpopularity.

In the great unofficial strikes of 1969 and 1970 and in the national official strike of 1972 the broad left in most areas provided the key organisation, particularly in Yorkshire. The result was the rapid rise to power of Arthur Scargill and Owen Briscoe as president and secretary of the largest NUM Area.

Since 1972, however, the emphasis has swung well away from any rank-and-file action and involvement towards playing things by the book and abiding by the constitutional niceties. Before his rise to official power Scargill had initiated the 'Miners Forum', a semi-rank and file group in Yorkshire that met regularly to hear left-wing speakers and discuss policy and tactics. The Miners Forum now appears to be well dead and buried.

The trouble with this slide into reliance on the official channels is that it plays into the hands of the right wing. People like Joe Gormley are old hands at swearing allegiance to the constitution and then brazenly bending it or tearing it up in order to suit their purpose. The only power that the left can call on is that of the rank and file. When they move then all the right-wing officials are forced to take a back seat.

But it is this crucial power that the broad left has chosen to ignore in practical terms over the last five years or so. In ignoring it they have also, unwittingly perhaps, helped to disorganise it.

In December 1978 the instinct of many militants in Yorkshire was to take action against the betrayal. But they allowed their healthy instinct to be over-ruled by their intellectual dependence on their leaders. They looked towards Arthur Scargill for a lead. None was offered.

The broad left has returned to its pre-1970s role of being little more than an electioneering and conference-mongering machine. By doing so it has trampled on the hopes of the rank and file and has spread confusion even among many of its supporters. Last year there was an election in Yorkshire for the area vice-presidency. There were over 10 candidates, over half of whom were from the broad left. Some of them stood because they didn't approve of the 'official' broad left candidate Peter Tait, whose record over the past few years has been appalling. But most of them stood because they wanted to get one rung higher in the union bureaucracy.

In the event Peter Tait, who appeared to have the support of Arthur Scargill, lost and Jack Taylor, another member of the broad left camp, won. Tait has since resigned from the Communist Party in order to facilitate his election as secretary of the Miners International Federation.

None of these 'anecdotes' are told in a spirit of malice or 'sectarianism'. The point to them is that they serve to illustrate one of the main reasons for the current ascendancy of the right-wing in the NUM and the apparent lack of confidence among the membership to stand up and fight.

The effect of the productivity deals has been just as was predicted by the left. The death rate has soared and there are huge gaps between pits where men earn £50 a week or more bonus and pits where they are lucky to get £2 or £3.

Inevitably there will be a reluctance among men earning high bonuses to strike for an increase in the basic wage. But it doesn't necessarily mean that the men in the low bonus pits are united. The deals can have a much more insidious effect.

Take the example of a pit in Yorkshire where the bonuses at the moment are just a few pounds a week. The faceworkers are paid the same bonuses no matter which face they work on. Two of the three faces, according to the management, are contributing up to 90 per cent of the bonus earnings. Instead of fighting the management the men are squabbling amongst themselves, with two faces blaming the third for pulling their bonuses down.

One can, of course, give examples of other pits where these divisions are being successfully overcome, but the point is that it is a constant struggle to maintain that elementary unity which before the introduction of the deals was taken largely for granted.

Another important element of division is to be found in the claim itself. Last July's Conference instructed the executive to submit a claim for a basic wage of £110 a week for faceworkers with appropriate rates for other grades.

When the claim was finally tabled at the end of November it included the demand for £110 a week of faceworkers - a rise of 40 per cent - but it asked for just 20 per cent for surface workers, to bring them up to £66 a week. The officials seek to justify this by talking about the need to 'maintain differentials', but what the claim actually does is seek to almost double the differential from £23.50 to £44.

Many surface workers are ex-underground men who have had to seek work on the pit top due to disease or

accidents. Their long-standing grievance is that the mining industry must be virtually unique in that as you get older you can only expect your wages to get lower. So many of the older men are rewarded for their services not just by having their bodies mutilated and diseased but also by having their wages cut!

The NUM leaders seek to cover themselves by including in the claim a demand for 'provisions to protect the earnings of men down-graded because of injury, illness or old-age'. But most surface workers regard this with cynicism as being just a piece of window dressing that will be dropped as soon as serious negotiations begin. They see the terms of the claim as being deliberately designed to introduce the possibility of 'special case' pleading for faceworkers at the expense of the surface men.

The claim also includes the demand for a 30 hour week, which was recommended by the Sankey Commission as long ago as 1919, and for the settlement to last for just eight months until November 1. This would mean a return to the traditional date abandoned by the Wilberforce settlement of the 1972 strike.

The NUM leaders waited until the end of January for a reply to the claim and were offered the insult of 3½ per cent. Nothing has been done up to the end of January to put any pressure whatsoever on the Coal Board and the government. At the time of writing it appears that the NUM leadership, the Coal Board and Energy Secretary Tony Benn want to try to keep the 'negotiations' going for as long as possible in the hope of riding out the storm of the low-paid strikes and allowing the worst effects of the winter weather to pass by. As spring approaches and the seasonal demand for coal and electricity declines then any aces that might be in the miners' hands are thrown away one by one.

The Coal Board are moaning that there isn't enough money in the kitty and it appears likely that the government will try to impose cash limits in order to keep the final settlement as low as possible.

We are probably going to witness a long drawn-out charade of the Coal Board pretending to unite with the NUM in begging the government for more cash aid to the industry.

With the approach of the general election none but the most principled members of the broad left in the NUM will have the stomach for a confrontation with the Labour government. The NUM, more than almost any other union, still maintains very strong links with the Labour Party at branch committee level. The two vital ingredients of political independence from a government that is pursuing blatantly Tory policies coupled with a genuine desire to see the rank and file take control of their own destiny are noticeably absent in the NUM broad left.

With the very real threat of pit closures and vast reductions in the work-force due to the introduction of new technology the miners face a bleak future without those two ingredients.



John Sturrock (Report)

WAUGH and WAR

Evelyn Waugh was a vile reactionary monster. His novels drip with racism, sexism and snobbery. Nowhere in his books will you find any understanding of let alone sympathy for, the working class. To be fair, it should be added that there is precious little for any other class either, but we are always readier to accept satire against the parasites than against ourselves.

Why, then, bother to read Waugh? Obviously not for his progressive aspects, which are nil. However, I want to argue that it was precisely because of his reactionary attitudes that he wrote three novels—*Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen* and *Unconditional Surrender*—which socialists can read with profit.

The trilogy concerns the military experience of one Guy Crouchback in the second world war. Previous to the outbreak of war, this scion of an ancient Catholic landed family had lived happily in self-imposed exile in Mussolini's Italy, and the opening of the first novel finds him on his way to Crete.

"Just seven days earlier he had opened his morning newspaper on the headlines announcing the Russian-German alliance. News that shook the politicians and young poets of a dozen capital cities brought deep peace to one English heart... When Prague fell, he knew that war was inevitable. He expected his country to go to war in a panic, for the wrong reasons or for no reason at all, with the wrong allies, in pitiful weakness. But now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle." Armed with this crusading zeal he sets out 'to serve his king'.

The three volumes trace his progressive disillusionment with this pathetic vision. His journey takes him via the boredom of military training, various minor fiascoes, training for the Commandoes, the disaster of the withdrawal from Crete and final agony of assisting Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia. In the course of that journey he discovers no great crusade but a morass of corruption, duplicity, cowardice, self-advancement, and generalised chaos.

Waugh succeeds in showing that war is not glamour and heroism but pain, misery and incompetence. Nowhere is this better sustained than in the account of the rout in Crete, which, in my opinion, is a magnificent account of the horrors of war. The Commando unit, specially trained for offensive operations, is landed at great risk in Crete after the battle has been lost and they immediately share the decomposition of the British forces. Training, discipline, morale and courage all prove empty in the face of defeat.



But Crouchback's final disillusionment is deeper. In Yugoslavia, the young officer de Souza, who is a secret member of the Communist Party, shows Guy the final basis of the war:

"I dare say you ought to know what's happening. Tito has left Vis and gone to join the Russians. He might have done it more politely. He never said a word to anyone. Just took off while everybody was asleep. Some of our chaps are rather annoyed about it, I gather. I bet Winston is. I told you he'd make rings round the old boy. Winston imagined he'd work the same big magic with Tito he did with the British Labour leaders in 1940. There were to be British landings in Dalmatia and a nice coalition government set up in Belgrade. That's what Winston thought. From now on any help Tito needs is coming from Russia and Bulgaria."

He finds himself in the centre of a cynical series of big power deals. He is inside the Modern Age and there is no escape from it. Even his humanitarian attempts to help a group of Jewish refugees prove ineffectual.

Waugh's peculiar version of hyper-reaction allowed him to write three novels which are distanced from the dominant myths about wars in general and the second world war in particular. That he does so from a viewpoint diametrically opposed to ours does not detract from the value of the work.

There is, however, a very contemporary reason why Waugh's novels are of some importance. Over the last few years, it has slowly become apparent that the fabric of 'national unity' which masks 1939 to 1945 is largely made up of myth. A number of historians have shown how there was a strong and growing current of radicalism in British society which culminated in the election of the Attlee Government in 1945.

Recently, a number of writers, of whom the most prominent is EP Thompson, have attempted to use this evidence, and in some cases their own personal experiences, to claim that period as one of a triumph for the

left. The upper class legend of patriotic unity has been challenged by a new interpretation of anti-fascist unity.

It seems to me that this new interpretation is highly suspect on a number of grounds, most importantly in that it suggests that the working class in Britain was fighting a quite different war from that fought by the British Empire. I would not seek to question the evidence that there was a current of popular radicalism during this period, or that millions of people sincerely believed that they were fighting for democracy against fascism. Nor would I seek to dispute the evidence that the British ruling class had no intention of fighting fascism until the threat to their empire forced them to it, or that their performance was characterised by a good deal of stupidity and incompetence.

Rather, it seems evident that, however sincere the radicalism of the war years, it did not find an organised form and neither was it independent of the ruling class. In the end, those workers who went out to fight fascism ended up propping up the British Empire which, for millions of Africans and Asians, looked every bit as nasty as did the Nazis.

The reason why Waugh is important in this context is that he explores the numerous little avenues by means of which the old ruling class was able to hang on to the reality of its power, despite the fear it felt at the stirrings of the masses. These range from the cynical exploitation of enthusiasm for Russia via the exclusive clubs in which transfers and promotions are arranged and the network of class allies who save an upper-class deserter from court-martial, through to the restaurants in which, at a price, it was possible to get mayonnaise made with real eggs at the height of rationing.

The coda to the trilogy reveals the same old ruling class, including Guy Crouchback, comfortably continuing to enjoy the fruits of the labour of others. In Waugh's account, despite the chaos of their own making, the ruling classes survive.

There is, of course, another reason why Waugh can be read with enjoyment: he was a very funny writer. Unfortunately, in many of his books, this humour depends upon reactionary attitudes—for example racism (in *Black Mischief*)—and thus poses severe problems for the socialist reader.

Perhaps there are socialists whose entire minds are free from reactionary attitudes, but I regret that I am not one of them: lurking deep in my psyche are the residues of many unpleasant things which I try to repress but which Waugh brings to the surface.

Consequently, the reading of many of his novels is at best a very guilty pleasure. Fortunately, much, but not all, of his war trilogy can be enjoyed with a clearer conscience. *Colin Sparks.*

POBox82

Put in our place

I would like to complain about your editing of my article, 'The Cult of Kollontai' (*Socialist Review* No. 8). In the text I said that the German marxist women build a **highly** successful women's movement. Only a male editor would have the arrogance to rewrite that as merely 'modestly' successful.

The German women's paper which you are so mealy mouthed about had a circulation of 120,000. Today the socialist women's paper *Women's Voice* launched by members of the Socialist Workers Party has a circulation of some 10,000. How would you describe that a 'failure'? Both papers have a circulation considerably in excess of *Socialist Review*.

Anna Paczuzca

POBox82

Who made the myth?

Duncan Hallas's reply ('The Making of a Myth', *Socialist Review* 9) to my article on IS in the *Socialist Register* 1978, reaches its climax in a personal accusation:

'However, Martin's understanding was purely intellectual. Emotionally and practically, he was unprepared for the situation which the great majority of the organisation, whether manual or white-collar, whether men or women, were not intellectuals in his sense, and in which the **relative** importance and influence of intellectuals markedly diminished'.

At the most basic level, I have little need to respond to this attack, since whatever 'intellectuals in my sense' are supposed to be I have always had the best relations with many comrades who would not claim to be 'intellectuals' in any special sense (but only in the sense in which all thinking socialists must be intellectuals).

And my record in helping to bring working men and women into IS is known to many especially in the north-east of England. They will know that what I objected to was never the greater involvement of workers in IS - how absurd that would have been - but what I have called 'workerism'.

Duncan agrees there was workerism - in the form of the starry-eyed romanticisation of

workers by naive students. He neglects its much more disturbing, less starry-eyed, wholly unromantic form - the hardened, often cynical and manipulative attitude to building IS which stressed that only manual workers, usually male and preferably in traditionally militant industries, really counted in the struggle for socialism.

This workerism let me repeat rarely affected workers themselves so much as some of the ersatz workers, ex-students and ex-teachers, who after a brief experience (if any) in a manual trade, graduated to full-time positions and local leadership in IS. It is this which I argued assisted the depoliticisation of IS.

unprepared for these changes. Emotionally and practically, a commitment to socialist democracy was at the core of our understanding of IS politics. We assumed that the leadership shared this commitment, and it was a staggering blow to find that they did not. Hence the loss of nerve of so many who left IS in this period, and the time it has taken to explain, as I have tried to do, what was happening.

My article provides a record of the changes in IS in the mid-seventies which will be profoundly disturbing to any serious socialist. Whatever else the SWP may say, it has to

manifestly bad history on many counts which I elaborate: I note that Duncan does not defend it on any of them.

Finally, I must correct Duncan's account of my removal from the SWP, which - as I stated publicly at the time - was by decision of the CC, not my own District, for the terrible crime of supporting non-SWP socialists in the local elections. I was re-suspended, after a brief reinstatement by the same CC, immediately after the 1977 Conference - for 'refusing to accept Conference decisions', although at the time I had not even heard what the decisions were. Duncan writes that the CC 'would have rescued me' - in fact, it received an appeal, but made no reply whatsoever.

This is, as Duncan says, water under the bridge now. In the last year the SWP has made a definite turn to more open discussion, both within its ranks and with the wider left. It has been a big change - less than 2 years ago I was thrown out of the party for advocating little more. I wholly welcome the new direction, but believe there are problems of politics and internal democracy which must be discussed to find a way to unity between the SWP and other sections of the revolutionary left.

Far from having a contempt for the membership of the SWP, as Duncan unworthily suggest, I am sure that there must be many among you who realise that a more honest and searching appraisal of the history of your party will help this process.

I trust that you will not allow Duncan's personal attack to deter you from reading my article.

Martin Shaw

POBox82

Systems & method

I'd like to comment on the science debate between Dave Albury and Alex Callinicos in the December-January issue of *Socialist Review*.

I think that Alex wins on points against Dave but I (as an interested layman) still have the basic problem unanswered. That is: 'what is the nature of the scientific method?'

Dave says 'I don't believe that under a socialist society 2+2 will equal 5'. In other words, 2+2 always equals 4. This is both totally true and totally false.

O'Brien in 1984 convinced the hapless Winston Smith that

Socialist Review

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Part consequence of this, I insisted, was 'a highly undemocratic internal regime'. Duncan now suggests there is 'precious little merit in this notion', and implies that only an undisciplined 'intellectual' like myself would see things in this way.

The problem with this sociological dismissal, however, is that it was not just Martin Shaw and a few like thinkers who saw IS as becoming undemocratic in 1974-76. A large section of workers in IS experienced the organisation in precisely this way (as I document).

And one Duncan Hallas also raised very serious criticisms. In 1974 he warned: 'We are we not in favour of five people running the organisation? Because the whole tradition and experience shows that the organisation cannot lead unless it has a healthy international life and there is debate on issues and feedback from that debate.'

One of the sadder ironies was that in 1975 the same Duncan helped to bring in a ludicrously centralised 6-man system of leadership. Did the sixth man, whoever he was, really make all the difference?

I will freely admit that like many workers as well as 'intellectuals' in IS I was emotionally and practically

come to terms with this more seriously than Duncan actually does in his reply.

None of his 3 examples of my 'non-facts' holds water: 1) Whatever earlier discussions of 'the party' had taken place, I was correct to suggest that the short-term launching of a 'Socialist Workers Party' was not discussed before 1975.

2) The name 'SWP' was, as I stated, never discussed among the membership: the fact that a last-minute alternative was produced by Cliff and others at a national council meeting does not alter this at all.

3) Similarly, the Right to Work Campaign was, as I indicated, not discussed in advance by the membership: the fact that a particular district put the proposal for it at a council meeting is neither here nor there. (The council, incidentally, was an advisory body in this period: decision-making rested with the Central Committee.)

Equally, Duncan is wholly wrong to imply that I have plagiarised Ian Birchall's articles on the history of IS. I make copious references to original documents, and when I quote Birchall (as a source, rather than to criticise his interpretation) it is chiefly because his articles are more accessible than internal documents, and also unlikely to be disputed at least by the SWP. But Birchall's work was

2+2 does equal 5—or anything else the state decides. Orwell grasped an essential point about mathematics. It is a creation of man's imagination in a way that, for example, physics isn't.

We decide whether or not 2+2 equals 4, in the end it is a numbers game so long as the rules you create are internally coherent. Dave's example doesn't help us to understand the scientific method.

Dave also states: 'I don't believe that in a socialist society apples will rise from trees rather than fall from them'. Now that is true irrespective of what the state says.

The story goes that Newton, having been hit by an apple, went on to develop the epoch-shattering theory of gravitation. This theory is not 'true' in the sense that it is 'true' that apples fall to the ground. As Alex states, 'Einstein's theory . . . supplanted Newtonian mechanics, explaining phenomena which Newton could not'.

I don't see anything wrong in the method by which Newton and Einstein arrive at closer and closer approximations to describing reality. That is, they observe events and try to find patterns in the events. These patterns are scientific theories, theories that are useful if they make correct predictions. Surely socialism would still use this basic method in order to understand the world? If not how would it change?

In conclusion, I think that Dave and Alex have stimulated an interesting debate, but neither have grasped the difficult nettle of what is the nature of the scientific method and would it change under socialism?

Mike McGrath
Leeds

Reinstating the Blues

'The worst enemies of blues are those who suggest that it fosters despair rather than mitigating or transforming it. The extremely naive think blues has been "outgrown", that only earlier decades were defined by despair—as if the present day is not'. (Paul Garon, 'The Dialectics of Despair and Love', *Living Blues* magazine).

Mike Garner in his letter and article on blues music, perpetuates many distortions fostered by white liberals about that most profound and majestic poetic movement—and I use 'poetic movement' intentionally.

'We will go so far as to insist that the defense and celebration of blues, and of black music generally, is a necessary component of principled poetic action in the English language today. For it is no small matter, that, during the very period in which T S Eliot and Jean Cocteau (and how many other "leading intellectuals") were bending their knees in the degrading rituals of Christian corpseworship, the bluesman Kansas Joe McCoy was singing his "Preacher's Blues" a lyric effervescing with the pride of a man courageous enough to follow through his destiny without the intercession of "divine" frauds'. (Franklin Rosemont 'A Revolutionary Poetic Tradition', *Living Blues* magazine.)

Of course the powerful rhythmic pulses that exist in blues music, that in Garner's own words 'swept the world' are vitally important. However, it is totally wrong to think that lyrics were secondary to musicians and to the black population in general. Lyrics always did, and still do, come first.

Take a listen to the most popular blues artists of the 30s, Leroy Carr, Walter Davis, Peetie Wheatstraw, if you want convincing. Unfounded statements to the contrary have a racist stench about them.

It is also a grave error to say that blues music was not commercialised. A great proportion of it was recorded and sold; the 'stereotyped' records that Garner is referring to (I suppose that means the Bluebird label in particular) have to me a great charm and diversity; remember 'stereotyped' has been used to insult forms of music from rockabilly to reggae to new wave.

As regards the learning process, and the claim Garner makes that for the most part musicians learnt from other musicians, well, people like Scott Dunbar learnt all their music from records while Robert Johnson, the Lautreaumont of the blues, learnt equally from records by Lonnie Johnson and Peetie Wheatstraw as from his peers, Son House and Willie Brown. This was a widespread experience among musicians.

While it is true that blues was the music of the black working class, it was not totally ignored by whites.

Two of the greatest country musicians, Jimmy Rodgers and Hank Williams, had repertoires studded with blues tunes, and blues were played quite exten-

sively by old timey, western swing, cajun and bluegrass bands. Country music would not be what it is today but for the considerable black influence.

Garner insults the militant record of the black working class when he accuses them of 'low consciousness' before the second world war. The creation of the Coloured National Labor Union in 1869; widespread black participation in the eight-hour struggle of 1886: 60,000 blacks out of a 700,000 membership in the Knights of Labour in 1886; these are just some examples to prove the contrary. One estimate of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) membership between 1909 and 1924 says that out of 1 million cards issued 100,000 were to blacks.

Southern black workers in the 1910s were the most advanced; three black miners were murdered by the cops in West Virginia in 1903 for their militancy while the New Orleans General Strike of 1892 and the postworkers strike of 1907 were splendid examples of black-white workers solidarity.

The establishment of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925 marked a new phase in black struggle; and blacks took an active part in unemployed struggles in the North as well as the South.

So, therefore, a 'low level of consciousness' is not reflected in the pre-war blues, and neither is a new consciousness reflected in 'Black, Brown and White Blues'. Big Bill Broonzy wrote this specifically for the white middle-class radical audience he was now performing to. Few black working-class people ever heard it.

They were listening to Otis Rush singing 'Some of this generation are millionaires, it's hard for me to find decent clothes to wear' ('Double Trouble' 1958) or to J. B. Lenoir warning of increasing frustration among the black poor in 'Eisenhower Blues' (1955).

It's true that rising black consciousness was expressed more through soul music than through blues in the 1960s, with James Brown (not Little Richard) singing 'Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud'. However, soul music has become increasingly commercialised and homogenised, and very rarely expresses anything more than banal clichés these days.

Some blues musicians in recent interviews report a new interest among young blacks in blues music, and this despite

very few radio stations playing it anymore. Perhaps this new interest will grow, and blues will once again be injected with a new dynamism, and can again be used to express the feelings of the black American proletariat. This remains to be seen.

Socialists must get away from the idea that only songs with an openly political preaching tone are relevant. Reviewing an LP anthology of blues related to job exploitation and unemployment *Hard Times* (Rounder 4007), Tony Russell in the magazine *Blues Unlimited* states 'The personal tragedy of "Silicosis is Killing Me" is sure to have had a more potent effect than nine out of ten unionist anthems'.

And on a deeper level, Paul Garon tells us '... to insist that it is a vast misconception to think of blues as "protest music" because after all, "Most blues unfortunately don't even deal with the subject" ... is not only to ignore latent content and human desire, but to perpetuate the dangerous ideology that it is only through "realism" ("socialist" or otherwise) that human desires find their most exalted expression'.

'Revolt runs a deeper and more powerful course if it is not recognised as such, so much the worse for the critics'. ('Blues and the Poetic Spirit', *Eddison Bluesbooks*.)

Blues music is the most complete and authentic proletarian poetic movement that the world has so far seen. It's about time socialists became aware of its significance and importance, and see, like Eric Hobsbawm, that 'the blues are unquestionably the finest body of living folk poetry in the modern world' and support the statement that the American surrealists made: 'Surrealism will demonstrate why the blues singers Robert Johnson and Peetie Wheatstraw are greater poets than T S Eliot or Robert Frost or Karl Shapiro or Allen Ginsberg' (Franklin Rosemont).

Nick Heath

You've been pretty slow at letting us know what you think, so that we can print the letters in our First Anniversary issue (the next one). So do get it together soonest. And try not to write at too great length (please), as it makes the pages look so boring. Promise not to make the titles we give the letters too cynical either! (well, not exactly promise . . .)

A review by DAVID WIDGERY



POST- ELECTRONIC LENINISM

The Revolution Beseiged

Vol 3 of *Lenin*

T. Cliff.

Lenin remains a difficult figure to bring into political focus. Austere, plain, down-to-earth, he possessed a rare combination of practical realism and soaring imagination.

The Russian revolution saved the honour of marxism. Yet what has become of the Soviet Union proceeded to lose it again. Official marxism-leninism is now a more conservative cult than the Catholic Church and Lenin's curt, bearded brand image endorses some of the most repressive, boring and un-revolutionary states ever to exist.

There are more 'leninist' parties than inverted commas now, covering every sin from the ascendent bourgeoisie of Malawi to the doctrinaire trots of Michigan. We have to sneak past the mausoleum-guards to meet the elusive, unpretentious genius of 1917, a leader 'straight as rails, simple as bread'.

It would make life a lot easier to dismiss bolshevism en bloc as inherently hierarchical and inevitably dictatorial (as do the libertarian and anarchist comrades). And more soothing to somehow persuade yourself that the various heads of state who flank the nuclear missiles in Red Square every year are socialist revolutionaries-of-a-sort after all (as do most communists, some of social-democrats and a fair few trotskysts).

It requires more imaginative effort to comprehend that the Russian revolution was both overwhelmingly and genuinely a mass social revolution and yet that it began

to lose its authentic socialist character within months of the workers' seizure of power.

Yet it is exactly this agonising and contradictory process which Cliff studies in *The Revolution Beseiged* with commendable honesty and clarity. The skill with which the author co-mingles the heroic and the tragic makes this the most moving volume in what was in danger of becoming a worthy but somewhat tedious biography.

For those of the orthodox right and the libertarian left who see the Bolshevik slogans of self-emancipation and workers control as convenient camouflage for the ambition of a minority party, Lenin is again and again shown in his most radical light, coaxing, exhorting, applauding and congratulating the initiatives of 'the ordinary' in emerging from the wings of history to centre-stage.

'Let us suppose for a moment that the Bolsheviks do gain the upper hand' speculated the Petrograd equivalent of the *Daily Telegraph* 'Who will govern us then; the cooks perhaps, those connoisseurs of cutlets and beefsteaks? Or maybe the firemen? Or perhaps the nursemaids will rush off to meetings of the Council of State between the nappy-washing sessions?'

Lenin had his answer; 'Comrades, working people! Remember you yourselves are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into your hands all affairs of the state... Get on with the job yourselves; begin right at the bottom, do not wait for anyone.'

Socialism was to him nothing less than displaying the abilities, developing the capacities and revealing the talents 'so abundant among the people whom capitalism crushed, suppressed and strangled'. Addressing the Second All-

Russian Congress of Soviets at the moment of the seizure of power, Lenin declared 'We must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses'.

The statements are too frequent and too passionate to discount, the results too spectacular. Despite siege, blockade and invasion, in felt shoes, chewing black bread, banging rusty typewriters and shouting down crackling telephones, the ordinary people fought, organised, educated, entertained, improvised and loved as never before. The country may have been enfeebled by prolonged war, blasted by well provisioned armies of invasion, betrayed and sabotaged by the Cadets, bled dry by the immense, suspicious steppes, but it was their soviet Russia, theirs at last.

It's this democratic control which is the key to real human freedom, not the occasional ballot paper or the wording of the statutes. Cliff states the matter plainly. 'The liberation of the working class can be achieved only through the action of the working class. Hence one can have a revolution with more or less violence, more or less suppression of the civil rights of the bourgeoisie and its hanger-on, with more or less political freedom, but one cannot have a revolution, as the history of Russia conclusively demonstrates without workers democracy—even if restricted and distorted. Socialist advance must be gauged by the workers' freedom, by their power to shape their own destiny...'

As Cliff says elsewhere 'The workers can get many, many things from the top, they can get reforms. The cow can get extra grass, the farmer can give her extra hay. The one thing the farmer will never give is the control over the shed. This has to be taken...'. All the Red hydroelectric dams and the battleships named after The Commune come to nothing if the workers do not control them.

Yet this book also documents, virtually on facing pages, quite how fast 'the old crap revives'. Long before the banning of factions in 1921 or the defeat of the left opposition in 1927, the Bolsheviks took measures which

undercut that workers' democracy which Cliff sees as the essential, indispensable element in socialist revolution.

Already by 1919, 'the Red Army was undeniably as far from Lenin's idea of a worker's militia as chalk from cheese'. In a mere 11 months, the number of secret police grew from 120 to 31,000 and the Extraordinary Commissions (the Cheka) had their own chain of authority, over-riding the Soviets.

The civil war sucked workers out of the factories and pulled industry out of shape. As worker's control and various forms of



centralisation and methods of factory management were debated, Denikin and the invading armies called the tune. 'Industry was turned into a supply organisation for the Red Army and industrial policy became a branch of military strategy.'

The first exuberant wave of workers power was obliterated by the firearms of the invading armies. The Red Army won a kind of victory in the civil war, but at what a price: 'the destruction of the proletariat that had made the revolution, while leaving intact the state apparatus built by it.'

From her cell in Breslau prison Rosa Luxemburg wrote in October 1918: 'Everything that happens in Russia is comprehensible and represents an inevitable chain of causes and effects, the starting point and end term of which are; the failure of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism.'

True but then almost anything-including Stalin--can be justified by 'the force of circumstances'. One notes from Cliff's account a tendency within the Bolshevik party to redefine their political aims and retreat from the commune-state so decisively sketched in *The State and Revolution* which Cliff rightly calls 'the apex of Lenin's writing--his real testament'.

Mysteriously the dictatorship of the working class shifts its location from the Soviets to the Bolshevik party, indeed to the centralised officials of that party. And in reality, party members, bound by voting discipline, could dominate the Soviet lists even before their organised rivals were banned. The state was not merely fused with the party, the soviets were subordinated to the Politburo, the Orgburo and the Secretariat.

After 1920, Kamenev, Zinoviev and most outrageously Trotsky in March 1921 arguing against the workers opposition who took up exactly this point, began to call on

the party's 'right to assert its own dictatorship'.

In that critical debate, Lenin, head in hands and taking copious notes, remained silent. In his final months of semi-coma, he reproached himself, using expressions like 'the fault is mine', 'I am to blame' and, in his last dictated note 'I suppose I have been very remiss with respect to the workers of Russia'. Nigel Harris notes in this period '... Lenin's purely pragmatic tacking between two extremes. He seems to have lost his moorings, to be aware of the problem but to see no social force capable of solving it'.

He attempts to quell the tide without challenging head on the new theory of the dictatorship of the party or re-asserting the themes of 1917. His last speech to Party Congress, in March 1922, has a surreal quality 'The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it. It was like a car that was going not in the direction the driver desired, but in a direction someone else desired; as if it were being driven by a mysterious, lawless hand, God knows whose . . .'

It would seem that the Bolsheviks not only made virtues out of necessities but to some extent fell victim of their very organisational prowess. The very eminence and indispensability of Lenin made his loss so devastating, especially since, in the Cliff account, it is only Lenin's incomparable rapport with the workers which enables him to periodically overcome the conservatism inherent in the illegal and highly professionalised Party.

The all-important role played by the tiny group of exile leaders inherent in the Bolshevik mode of organisation left an enormous gap in experience between them and the rapidly changing party rank and file. 'The proletarian policy of the party is not determined by the character of the membership but by the enormous undivided prestige enjoyed by the small group which might be called the old guard of the old guard of the party' Lenin admitted grimly in 1922.

The very dependence of the underground party on skilled revolutionary functionaries is part of the reason it succumbed so swiftly to the bureaucrats of the old order who, Lenin complained, 'wear a red ribbon in their buttonholes and creep into warm corners'. The technique of selective appointment from above, perfected by Lenin in the early faction fights, now re-appeared in monstrous form, used to debar party Congress delegates from Samara who supported the worker's opposition or to insist on the election of a 'loyal list' of candidates in the Metalworkers' Union, despite the fierce protest of the Bolshevik engineers.

The absolute Bolshevik hostility to any kind of 'utopian' speculation seems to have left Lenin a little dazed and disconcerted when the external changes of the revolution began to hit people's inner consciousness. Yet he seems to regard Kollontai, Mayakowski and dear old Lunacharsky as slightly childish for being concerned, in their different ways with this problem. Certainly in his notorious interview with Clara Zetkin and his polemic with the Proletkult group, he adopts old fart positions on sexual and

cultural questions.

Anyone who thinks it is 'Leninist' to denounce attempts to alter ways of feeling and living as part of the making of socialism and to resolutely postpone such problems till somewhere over the rainbow and After-the-Revolution will be challenged by the limitations Cliff demonstrates in this aspect of Lenin's thinking. None of this is to belittle a man Reich called 'the greatest mass psychologist of all time'.

Rather it is to identify conflicting and unresolved elements in Lenin's politics, two souls to his socialism. We have a responsibility to select the aspects we now need to emphasise rather than attempt to imitate a 'pure' leninism to order, which would be both impossible and irrelevant.

Part of Lenin's political make-up is that of the orthodox materialism of the Second International, whose philosophy is strongly affected by Victorian positivism, whose economics predict inevitable crisis and immiseration and whose politics aim at socialist majorities in existing governing assemblies. It was a misunderstood marxism and with the dialectic deleted in which 'marxist symbolics were preserved' but from which 'the revolutionary soul took flight' as Bukharin put it at Lenin's funeral oration.

Although Lenin's explosive rediscovery of Hegel and Marx and he and Bukharin's radical, new analyses of the unstable nature of modern imperialism were to topple that era of mock-marxism, Lenin was, until 1914, a disciple of Kautsky.

Cliff does not stress enough the extent of the reappraisal which led to the production of *The State and Revolution* and the degree to which its view of the party, the revolutionary state and socialism itself revise the traditional Bolshevik formulae. The research in the famous blue notebook was undertaken to repudiate the 'semi-anarchist ideas' Bukharin had submitted in July 1916 in an essay called 'Towards a Theory of the Imperialist State'. At this time Lenin still held the orthodox view that 'socialists are in favour of using the present state and its institutions in the emancipation of the working class'.



But in reviewing Marx and Engels on The Commune and the sharp exchanges between Pannekoek and Kautsky in 1912, he comes to the view that what is at stake is not a contest with the bourgeoisie over the state but against the state. Not an effort to take office in old chambers but make power in new forms. He sums up with characteristically explosive punctuation. 'One could perhaps express the whole thing in a drastically abbreviated fashion as follows: the replacement of the old ('ready made') state machine and of parliaments by soviets of workers deputies and their mandated delegates. This is the essence of it!!!'

This re-assertion of the Commune-State and the adoption of the Trotsky-Parvus theory of permanent revolution, itself inspired by a re-reading of Marx, make possible the *April Theses*. And at the Finland Station, *State-and-Revolution*



Lenin has to struggle against the legacy of *What-Is-To-Be-Done* Lenin in the form of a conservative party who found his ideas scandalous. This is the Lenin we need to rediscover after a half century when the dialectic was frozen over far deeper by J. V. Stalin et. al. than Herr Kautsky could ever manage.

Yet the problem is that the species of Leninism which entered the vacuum on the European and North American left after the collapse of the mass movements of the 1960s and early 1970s was too often of 1903 not 1917 variety. The leaders of these largely self-appointed 'vanguards' are really 20th century Kautsky's, well-read, confident that they possess all the necessary socialist knowledge if only the damn workers would read their articles.

Post-graduate unemployment has supplied them with a labour force of functionaries and even surrogate workers, all of whom can be depended on for their loyalty to the official view. The party rank and file exists in a guilty limbo which has a very sketchy understanding of working-class experience.

The 'discipline' demanded of members of such groups is the obedience of automatons. Luxemburg precisely pinpointed the ambiguity in Lenin's praise of discipline: 'It is



not making use of the discipline impressed upon him by the capitalist state, with a mere transfer of the baton from the hands of the bourgeoisie to that of the central committee, but only by breaking through and uprooting this slavish spirit of discipline that the proletariat can be prepared for a new discipline: the voluntary discipline of social democracy'.

Rather than educating and being educated by the discussion of real experience, proletarian hostages are grabbed, lectured and exhibited as evidence. Formulas from *What Is To Be Done* and much virile talk about 'building the Party' and 'iron discipline' wrenched out of context and ill-understood. Sexual politics are taboo, obviously since Machine-Leninism can't face the intimacy of their critique of hierarchy.

Standing in the same place for 75 years does lend one a certain authority I suppose but it would have given Lenin, for whom things changed all the time, 50 fits. And of course if the working class spurn the proffered copies of *The Spark* or whatever and go up the pub to talk about Jeremy Thorpe's sex life, this only proves the abysmally low level of consciousness, backwardness and economism, the vanguard suspected them of all along.

The 'trouble with Leninism' is not that it has been fetishised or repeated mechanically or contains destructive or male-dominated tendencies. All these misfortunes can and will befall a theory of organisation within capitalism without rendering it invalid. The real problem is that the flowering of 1917 was so swiftly nipped in the bud that the fruit we have inherited has been largely damaged and diseased.

The blossoming-blighting process which Cliff documents froze over leninism and only mass revolutionary working-class action is able to melt it from its icy limbo. Lenin is therefore trapped in his moment, surrounded by a thicket and awaiting political rescue; 'An old communist conceives an embryo of longing'. One day, his Modern Prince will come. Until he is woken with the proletarian kiss, the problem is not that leninism has failed, but that it has not been tried. And alternatives to leninism are old reactions in new disguises, forms of terrorism, reformism and anarchism which were politically surpassed by marxism a century ago.

This is very sad because the revolutionary essence of the Lenin of *The State and*

Revolution is profoundly emancipatory, heartily contemptuous of people who think in the past tense and deserves a lot better. But as long as leninism remains on this pathetic level, it provides the perfect excuse for people to revert to its mirror image liberal-anarchism (the other big late 1970s political growth industry), give up any organised collective attempt to change the world and sit around and discuss their relationships.

It is even sadder because even if everyone suddenly started buying *The Spark* and suddenly a scale-model replica Bolshevik party were re-incarnated on Clapham Common, as Lenin himself has warned, it would most unlikely to fit our needs. In an important passage in 1918, Lenin suggested 'The whole difficulty of the Russian revolution is that it was much easier for the Russian revolutionary working class to start than it is for the West European classes, but it is much more difficult for us to continue'.

They have ways of making sure it never happens here like Len Murray, 'Crossroads' and the *Morning Star* (as well as the SPG and the Army). But when it does, the problems of sheer need which crushed the Bolsheviks are less pressing and the comparative strength and confidence of the modern working class is immensely more promising. If we need to be much more sophisticated to take power, it won't be so difficult to hold it.

'Leninism' said Norman Mailer in one of his annoyingly insightful moments was built to analyze a world where all the structures were made of steel — now the sinews of Dragon Lady could hide (them under her nail). We don't just need a 1917 rather than 1903 Leninism, we need a post-electronic Leninism whose politics can move with astonishing ease from the details of a strike to the problems of childrearing, which has the centralised striking power to win street battles but the imagination to create inspiring carnivals, which is seeking not Euro-Reforms but a new way of life, love and government.

For those who got a bit bogged down with the rather excessive attention to organisation in the first two volumes (and the political campaigns which accompanied their publication), do read on and see what it was all in aid of. Volume three really does offer an alternative V.I.



Books

Millions stood behind them

Iran—the illusion of power
Robert Graham
Croom Helm £7.95

It would be difficult to find a book quite as different in approach from Fred Halliday's *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* as this and I certainly could not recommend any but those most deeply interested in Iran to go out and buy it. Yet in its own way this is an extremely useful little book.

Graham was the *Financial Times* reporter in Tehran for almost three years—1975-1977—the boom years and the start of the down turn for the Shah's 'great civilisation'. As such he had privileged access to leading figures in the political and business world as well as to many officials of the banking, planning and other departments of the state.

In fact his point of view is a most interesting one—that of a serious capitalist who found the frivolous but vicious entrepreneurs of Iran a disgrace to their trade!

His criticism of SAVAK is enlightening in this respect. For whilst he clearly, on a humanitarian level, dislikes SAVAK, his point of departure is '.... (that) it makes a mockery of the rule of law which the Constitution established. SAVAK's activities are at the expense of all politically minded Iranians and are responsible in large measure for the cynical indifference of the Iranian elite.

'Last but not least, SAVAK's presence reduces the efficiency of the administration through cumbrous duplication and makes officials unwilling to shoulder responsibilities or take initiatives.'

In terms of a general analysis one has little to learn from Mr. Graham but in terms of those dozens of little gems about life

behind the scenes, inside the bureaucracy or in the proverbial corridors of power the book contains much that is useful.

For example the plan to turn Tehran into what Peter Walker, Tory Minister of Trade, described as 'one of the great financial centres of the world' which was launched in the dying months of 1973.

Graham points out that whereas the Iranians had no real idea what this meant—except that it sounded important—the international banking community understood it all too well, for them it meant 'a polite way of

saying that the surplus oil income would be employed by the international banks on the international market with little regard to Iran's own needs for development finance'.

Anyway, despite the intentions of the big banks Tehran failed, mainly because of its backward banking and credit system, to become such a centre and by early 1976 the plan was shelved and after 1977 it was never mentioned again!

Another foreign aided 'development plan' was the proposed military base on the Gulf at Chah Bahar, this required the construction of a large port, drydock, airbase and

a sizable township in one of the most remote parts of Iran. Two companies, Costain of Britain and Brown and Root of the US got the initial contract for it at a quoted cost of 2.5 billion dollars.

When in January 1976 the twelve most senior officers in the Navy were arrested work came to a grinding halt. When SAVAK inspectors investigated the colossal corruption associated with this project they discovered that the base was planned to be so lavish that its central feature was to be fountains with golden dolphins!

When a new plan was drawn up for a more modest base (plastic dolphins?) it was found that escalating construction costs made it about the same as the original military palace. Finally when oil revenues fell back in 1978 the project was, with the Navy's continued opposition, shelved. Graham comments that this was just as well as the new destroyers for which the base was essentially being built had already been cancelled!

So if this is the sort of information about Iran that you need, go down to the library and get them to order you a copy. One thing you will find from the book's conclusion is that Graham reaches similar conclusions on the waste of oil monies to Fred Halliday—saying in answer to his own question of whether Iran has been able to maximise its opportunities from the '73 oil price increases: 'Even discounting normal errors of judgement, the answer can only be no'.

It is therefore highly interesting that agencies like the CIA with all their supposed expertise could not see what one *FT* reporter could. Maybe they spent so much time and energy helping SAVAK repress and that they couldn't see the walls of the prison they were building for themselves. *Terry Pover.*



Not by guns alone

Workers in Arms

I. Duczynska

Monthly Review, £8.75

Consider the following career: born into an old military family; staff officer and general; retired and entered politics; parliamentary deputy and leader of an armed militia; imprisoned and released; elected mayor of the capital and then president of the country.

The standard biography of half-a-dozen reactionary leaders in as many countries? The man was, in fact, a member of a Social-Democratic Party for all his political life and he was imprisoned by fascists. The only country in the world where that could happen was Austria.

General Theodor Koerner was a militant of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party and a leader of its armed defence force the *Schutzbund*. He and the rank-and-file of that paramilitary force are the subjects of this book, written by one of the survivors of its last-ditch stand against the semi-fascist *Heimwehr* in February 1934.

The book is not a good one, and it is grotesquely priced, but anyone with some knowledge of the nature of Austrian Social Democracy could profit by borrowing it from a library. Of all the reformist parties of the Second International, the Austrian party (SPO) was the most left wing.

It contained among its leaders Friedrich Adler, who owed his considerable popularity among the workers to the fact that, apart from being the son of one of the party's founders, he had assassinated the prime minister as a protest against the war.

This 'left' reputation did not prevent the SPO, and Adler, from opposing the efforts to set up a soviet state at the end of the war and settling instead for a very curious form of bourgeois democracy. Among the interesting institutions of the new republic was the arrangement by which the control of the stock of weapons in the national arsenal in Vienna was shared between the military and the shop stewards of the workers.

Together with this, the party developed an armed defence force of about 50,000—much larger than the combined forces of the state. In addition, the

dominant police union was under social democratic control, as was the largest soldiers' union.

There can never have been a situation in which the military problems of power were so decisively settled in favour of the working class. The reason why Austria remained a capitalist state during the 1920s, and the reason why the fascists were able to move to power in the early thirties was very simply because of the political line of the SPO. It was an example of centrism—left wing talk and right wing actions.

The book records the war of attrition the ruling class waged against the strong positions of the workers and how, in the crisis of 1927, the *Schutzbund* devoted its efforts to stopping the workers burning down the Parliament building.

From then on, it was steadily turned into an orthodox military formation—a potent force never used. It gradually lost its weapons under the pressure of the state, and all



attempts at local initiatives were stamped out—until 1934. Driven by constant fascist provocation, local units of the *Schutzbund* fought back.

The party leaders capitulated and the rising was smashed. As Eric Hobsbawm says in his introduction: 'All that it hoped for, and to be fair achieved, was a chance to show that Austrian Social Democrats, unlike German ones, could go down fighting'.

In her assessment of the *Schutzbund* and the role of Koerner, the writer is perhaps too influenced by purely military questions. She argues that his ideas on working-class warfare—to develop a guerilla strategy—would have altered the outcome, and in fact presaged the struggles of today.

Although the purely military arguments are convincing, the real problem still seems to be to have been the politics of the Social Democrats. As a political judgement upon that tragedy I prefer Serge's famous epitaph:

"Austro-Marxism organised and influenced over a million proletarians, it was master of Vienna, where it was evolving a municipal Socialism rich in achievement, it could mobilise, in a few hours, 50,000 *Schutzbundler* on the Ring, uniformed in sports-tunics and (as everyone knew) tolerably well armed, it was led by the most able theoreticians in the working-class world; and yet, two or three times in ten years, through its sobriety, prudence, and bourgeois moderation, it failed its destiny."

"If only . . . If only the commission on the nationalisation of the main industries, established by the Socialist Government, had not been such a farce! If only the Social-Democrats of Austria had had a little of the impassioned energy of the Bolsheviks of Russia. All they ever did was to sip sweet white wine in the operetta-land of the Blue Danube, while the Bolsheviks were tramping in chains along Siberian highways".

One thing is clear—the line between revolutionaries and reformists is not the question of arms. Among the reformists who were in Vienna with the heroes of the *Schutzbund* was Hugh Gaitskell! There was one reason and one reason only why the Austrian working class entered the night of fascism—its political leaders did not know

how to grasp the hour of revolution. Their minds were rooted on the ballot box and not on the self-activity of the working class. *Colin Sparks*.

The past comes to the aid of the party

Marxism and the Party

John Molyneux

Pluto £2.95

In John Reed's book about the Russian Revolution—*Ten Days that Shook the World*—there is a lovely description of a Bolshevik soldier arguing with a Menshevik student. The student is trying to browbeat the soldier with his cleverness. But the soldier stonewalls each intellectual thrust by repeating one simple statement: 'There are two classes in the world—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat'.

Eventually the infuriated student hurls at the soldier the ultimate accusation: 'You're a supporter of Lenin, aren't you?'. 'Yes' replies the soldier, 'I like Lenin. He says what I think. He says . . . there are two classes in the world, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat!'

Well, I like that soldier. Ever since I read about him he's been something of a hero to me. He cuts through a lot of the crap that is often talked about the revolutionary party.

Not for him any dilemmas about spontaneity versus consciousness, vanguard versus mass party, and so on. He was a Bolshevik because 'they say what I think', and (he didn't need to add this because he had a gun in his hand) 'they do what I think should be done.'

Most of us who have joined the SWP in the last few years may think our decision was a little more sophisticated. But, allow for the fact that we are not in the midst of a revolution, and the decision is in nine cases out of ten much the same—and none the worse for that. 'There's a job to be done—fighting capitalism. They say what I think. They do what I think should be done. Stop messing about. Join.'

But of course there are many good socialists about (and I hope some of them are reading this review) for whom the decision is not as simple as that.

For some of them the very word party sends shivers down the spine: shivers like 'authoritarian!', 'elitist!'

For others the idea of a revolutionary party is fine, it's just that the SWP, running round from picket line to picket line, just doesn't make the grade.

And when these arguments are raised it won't be long before authorities of the past are cited. 'Didn't Rosa Luxemburg argue that the mistakes of a mass movement were more revolutionary than the infallibility of any central committee?' 'Didn't Lenin viciously attack 'economism' and argue that politics had to be brought to the working class from outside?'

And it's the same once you're in the party. For, however natural the decision to join may have been, we are still left with the problem of how we should organise ourselves, how should we relate to the rest of the working class.

And here again, on every side in every debate you'll sooner or later find history supposedly raising its voice: 'Lenin was for an iron hard party of professional revolutionaries!' 'Trotsky didn't care how small the party was so long as it had the correct programme!' 'Gramsci thought you couldn't ignore the intellectuals!'

Now it's quite right that these authorities should be brought into the argument. The problems are difficult ones. And we would be foolish to think we can solve them without standing on the shoulders of past experience. But all too often the half quotes from Lenin, Trotsky and friends just make your head spin. 'How on earth do they fit together?'

Well, if you want an answer to that question (and we all do) then read John Molyneux' book *Marxism and the Party*. It's short, which is good, only 160 pages. And in six clearly written chapters (two for Lenin) he sets out the views on the revolutionary party of Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Gramsci.

He doesn't reduce these to a set of timeless tablets of wisdom. He shows each thinker grappling with specific problems, in specific situations. But he teases out of these the general development of the theory, and the strengths and weaknesses of each thinker.

And for good measure he ties

things together with a final chapter which summarises, almost in note form the main principles of the marxist theory of the party and the key points for their application today.

Of course the book isn't the final word on the subject. For myself, I think it overestimates Gramsci's contribution on the subject, and that it presents Rosa Luxemburg as having a rather more coherent theory of the party than in fact she did.

But those are very small

criticisms, compared with the book's strength. And that strength, in a phrase, is that it does make those theorists of the party 'fit together'. It does make sure that the quotes from Lenin and his mates will no longer just make your head spin.

Instead it ensures that the past experience of the revolutionary party will be made *useable* for the all important task of building one in the present. *Pete Goodwin*

Some are more equal . . .

Women in Soviet Society— Equality, Development and social change

Gail Warshofsky Lapidus
University of California Press
1978 £12.25

In *Women in Soviet Society* Gail Lapidus attempts to survey the position of women in Russia from pre-revolutionary times to the present, in order to assess the lessons of the 'Soviet experience' for the contemporary woman's movement.

Like Hilda Scott's *Women and Socialism* (1974), it provides further evidence of the super-exploitation and oppression of women in the state capitalist countries.

But the author is an American social science academic, and not surprisingly, her book is steeped in the unreadable language of bourgeois sociology, and suffers from a matching appalling analysis.

Its thesis will add fuel to the bourgeois feminist argument that marxism doesn't touch the heart of the 'woman problem' and that socialism is irrelevant to women's liberation -- (look what happened in Russia!); therefore, fight the sex war, not the class war.

The book begins with a crude, empiricist account of the theoretical and political treatment of the woman question from pre-1917 Russia to what

Lapidus tellingly calls 'the stalinist synthesis.'

Scattered with numerous scholarly looking allusion to 'marxism', 'Leninist systems', (whatever that means), Kollantai and Trotsky, this section is a typical example of bourgeois distortion and mystification.

Her discussion of the

revolution totally ignores workers' self-activity or the specific historical and material reasons for its defeat.

Bolshevism is portrayed as a piece of autocratic social engineering culminating logically in the stalinist reaction.

So, the subordination of sexual liberation to 'modernisation' and economic exigencies is seen as an inevitable result of radical social change, (ie. her version of socialism).

But ignoring its terrible politics, the book is a very useful documentation of women's oppression in Russia, and Lapidus must have done some hard research into original untranslated sources and recent statistics.

For instance, she traces the mobilisation of women into the labour force, using detailed tables from the 1970, census on earnings, training and skill levels; and you learn such facts

as, while 80.3% per cent of collective vegetable and melon growers are women, there are only 8.3 per cent within 'brigadeers of the field.'

There are tables such as, 'The educational aspirations of secondary school graduates in Novosibirsk' and 'Urban and rural kindergarten provision from 1914 to (projected) 1980' illustrating the chapters on continuing sexual inequality in education and training, and the inadequacies of child care.

The chapter on 'Women and the Family' covers the fluctuations in marriage, divorce and abortion laws and how they relate to the needs of the labour supply, with women being torn in two between home and paid work.

It appears that Russian social scientists have, like here, broken down hours spent on various household tasks by women and men into 'time budgets', and the figures suggest that Russian husbands are extremely patriarchal at home.

Women's double burden is made worse on a practical level by the absence of things like household aids and convenience foods, the long queuing for food, and the need to



resort to abortion as birth control, in the absence of decent contraception.

On an ideological level, they suffer the usual conflict between being 'good' workers and 'good' mothers and wives, which is probably sharpened by the vacillations of official policy on sex roles.

There is raging controversy as to what to do about the alarming drop in the birth rate, which expresses women's response to their intolerable work load, and financial strain.

On the one hand, there is the conservative solution of reviving the ideology of glorified motherhood and privatized family life offering women incentives to stay at home; on the other hand, there is the more radical solution of improving child care and public services and revolutionising sex roles. The latter is hardly on the cards, so it is the first solution which is gaining influence.

The book concludes that women in Russia are very much worse off than here, or America, which concurs with Lapidus's tacit approval of capitalism and total oblivion of any class analysis.

She may be right that the prognosis for women's liberation is better in the west than in Russia; but this would not be, as she claims, because of the ideas

of the 'Western feminist movement' but because bourgeois democracy offers more scope for the day to day struggle for women's liberation and socialism than state capitalist forms of control.

Still, it's a useful reference book. Get your library to fork out £12.50 and buy it. *Anna Pollert.*

Living through the legacy of imperialism

Finding a voice: Asian Women in Britain

Amrit Wilson
Virago £2.50

"For a long time I never realised how badly paid and overworked I was, but what made me feel bad was the rudeness and lack of respect with which I and other Asian women were treated by the supervisors. Now I have begun to understand, bad pay, rotten conditions and the insufferable contempt shown to us, it is a part of the same picture."

It is a picture vividly drawn by Amrit Wilson in her new book. It starts with the heritage of British colonialism in the Indian sub-continent, where the erosion of village life ensured a reserve supply of labour, for export to the cities or to the 'mother country', Britain.

It is traced through the separation of husband and wife, as the men became migrant workers and found employment overseas. And the lines are more clearly drawn as wives and children sought to join their men, hastening their arrival very often, in order to pre-empt the restrictive immigration legislation of the 1960s.

It is the picture of racism built into social attitudes and work-day practice by the legacy of British imperialism; the racism confirmed and reinforced by the British state through laws designed to cut back the immigration of non-whites, whilst allowing free entry to white citizens of EEC countries.

Life for Asian women, once here, is defined by this racism. The lowest paid and most exploited of workers, they are frequently employed in jobs which are unorganised and difficult to organise.

That there are women who can face these problems, live through them and come out fighting, we all know from the example of Mrs Desai and her sisters at Grunwick.

That the British trade union leadership is reluctant to respond to these problems, we have learned through the same dispute. That there is support and a determination to change this situation was proven by the



Michael Armitage/Muller

turn-out on the picket-line, although as Amrit Wilson says "In the end it wasn't enough because they hadn't the courage to defy the handful of men who control the trade union bureaucracy."

She makes no claims for the militancy or resistance of Asian women. But she does suggest something of the importance of the strike at Grunwick - echoed in many small disputes, many of them concerning recognition issues, up and down the country.

As Asian women workers become familiar with the industrial scene, and as they begin to discover their rights, so they are engaging in struggles which, in the past, were not expected to occur let alone to be won.

The inhibitions restricting the organisation of Asian women derive not only from the failures within our labour movement to respond to these problems. They also stem from the conflicts and contradictions within the Asian family situation, where the women's role is being redefined in accordance with the demands and pressures brought to bear on British society.

Removed from the support and love which could be given by relatives and neighbours in a rural background in her home country, only to find herself isolated and utterly alone in England, Manisha, a Bengali woman described the horror of her life:

"My head aches all the time. I have a burning fever - feel me sister, feel me. Inside me sometimes is such anger, anger with my babies, with my husband, with the whole of my life . . ."

The pain of such loneliness, the fear of the future and the momentary happiness of an evening spent with her husband, whose life may be dominated by work outside the home - such aspects of the existence of Asian women cry out from the pages of this book.

Amrit Wilson has talked to many women, in different communities, and she lets them tell their own story, simply, directly and movingly. The restrictions and restraints imposed by 'Izzat' or family pride bear heavily on women, and seem very often to increase rather than to decrease with the move to Britain.

In a small village in Pakistan, where family links may be strong, constraints on the

appearance and social contacts of the women might be few. But in a large town in England, where there are no natural limits on the contacts which they have, customs might become stricter. It is not only a question of the clothes which a woman may wear. It also concerns the freedom of a woman to work or have friends outside of her home, without close supervision from her husband or male members of the family.

The system of arranged marriages does seem to have been modified, allowing a woman more freedom in her choice of a husband. Many families would not force a daughter to marry against her will, and she will often be allowed time to get to know her prospective husband, before the final arrangements are made.

But it remains nonetheless a very limited freedom, to reject perhaps one or two men who may be presented to her, rather than a freedom to choose for herself.

The conduct of a girl before marriage will reflect as much on

the family honour as the behaviour of a wife after the event, and many of the girls that Amrit Wilson talked to seemed happy with the situation, recognising perhaps that the alternatives to an arranged marriage threatened isolation from their family, community and culture.

Fundamental to this book is the experience of racism in Britain, the legal harassment of Asians coming into the country and the illegal harassment, tolerated by the law, of the National Front.

And it is within this framework that the traditions of the patriarchal family structure work out their pattern on our Asian sisters. But Asian women are finding a voice and as they begin to fight back, so the prospects for change may emerge.

"There can be a happier future because they have such spirit and because their anger is growing . . . These are the early, early days in a conscious struggle".

Jan Druker

Antidote

Writing

Worker Writers and Community Publishers £1

A Bookmarx Club Choice
One of the most persistent myths about writing is that only the few, so-called 'gifted' or 'inspired' can ever create anything worthwhile. This idea is pumped out at every level of the education system, from the junior schools ('Golden Anthology of Great Writers') to university courses which depict literature as a succession of timeless 'masterpieces'.

This version of writing has probably aborted more developing authors than any other cause, and it even has a 'left' version, with Brecht, Mayakovsky and Serge as the heroes.

Anyone who has ever put pen to paper to write something other than a shopping list should welcome the development of circles of worker writers. These groups are now firmly established across the country and many are now publishing through local publishing co-operatives. Working people come together to read and discuss their work in a fairly informal, friendly

atmosphere.

Writing, the first national compilation, contains dozens of pieces in prose and poetry. Much of the writing is autobiographical, articulating hopes and fears about the past and present. There are real contrasts in style, aims and opinions, but underlying it all is a commitment to change.

This collection represents the first steps of working class writers, women, men and kids coming to understand their lives, by talking and writing about them. The result is fascinating since there is a realism and sincerity lacking in so many 'modern Masters'.

Of course there are some pieces that are soaked in nostalgia, or trapped in borrowed political jargon, but these are a minority, and the book is a real antidote to the casual cynicism of most middle class writers. An excellent Bookmarx Club selection.

Paul

Cunningham.

And...

Merlin Press are importing copies of Oskar Anweiler's *The Soviets* for distribution in Britain at £4.50. Pluto have recently published *Trouble With The Law: The Release Bust Book* (£2.50). Pluto are also publishing the final volume of Cliff's biography of *Lenin* soon after Easter. Is someone pulling my leg, or is the rumour true that Pluto have asked Ernest Mandel to write *Trotsky's Marxism?*

Allison and Busby have just published Stephen Bodington's *Science and Social Action* (£6.95). *A Woman*, a novel by Sibilla Alcramo, has been re-issued by Virago at £2.95. A new collection of poems by Yevgeny Yevtushenko *The Face Behind the Face* has been published by the Marion Boyars at £2.25. *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, £12.50) is a new collection of essays in seventeenth century history in honour of Christopher Hill. *Alastair Hatcher*

Slums of Hope? Shanty Towns of the third world

Peter Lloyd.

Penguin £2.50

Cities of Peasants

Bryan Roberts

Edward Arnold £2.95

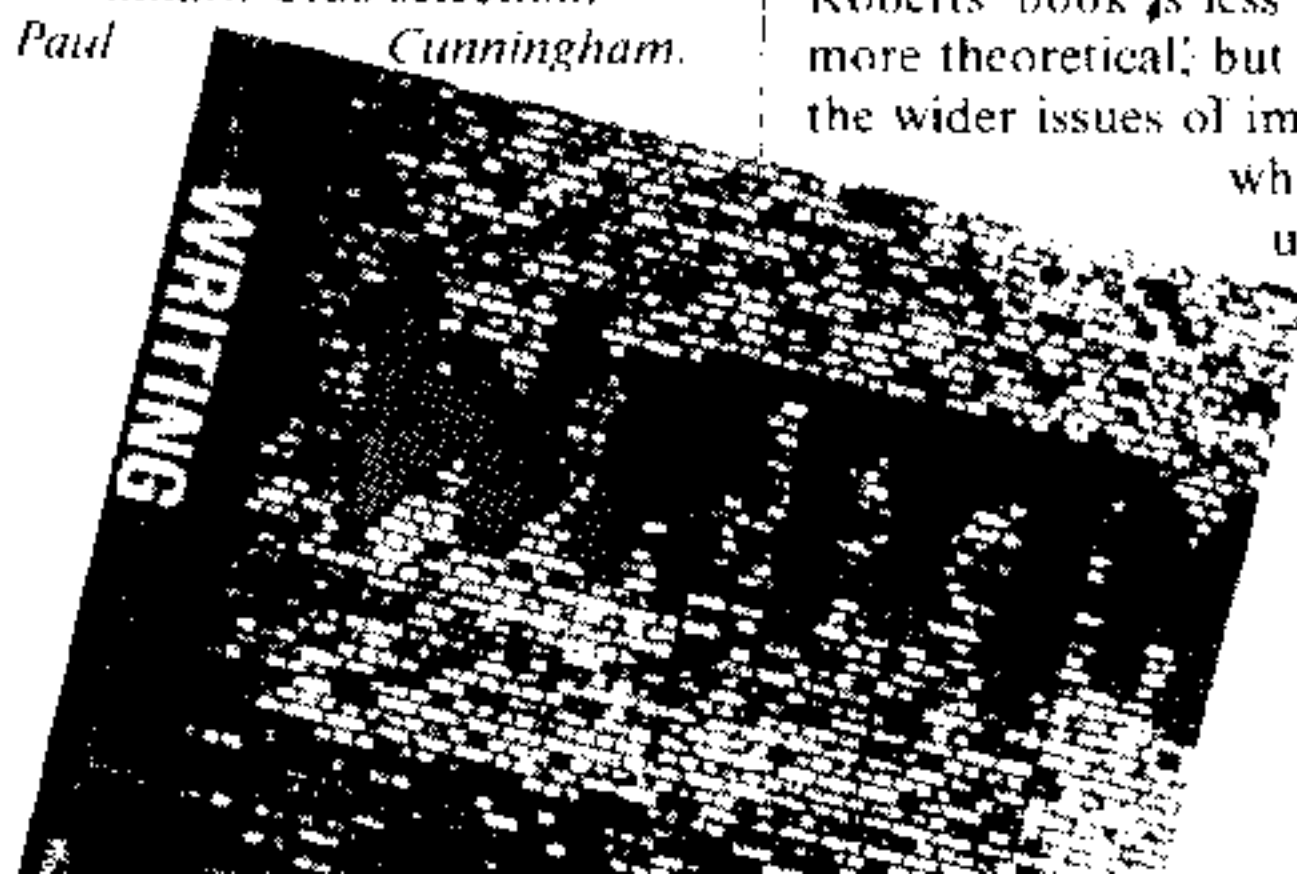
The urban explosion in the third world, the shocking conditions in shanty towns and slums, and the often violently repressive measures taken by governments are little understood

'problem' of underdevelopment. On the one hand they are portrayed as a powder-keg, threatening to explode into both the consciences and the ordered existences of the rich; on the other as the hope of the revolution, driven to action through their miserable existence.

Peter Lloyd provides a useful introduction to the issues but paints too rosy a picture. Bryan Roberts' book is less vivid, more theoretical, but discusses the wider issues of imperialism

which Lloyd underplays.

Olivia Harris



Pluto Press


Pluto's Spring titles include an ambitious critical appraisal of statistics in our society by 22 of Britain's foremost radical statisticians; a book on the theory and development of socialist education; a reassessment of 150 years of medical 'experts' advice to women; a description of Southern Africa from 'the other side' and a collection of documents by Soviet worker dissidents smuggled to the West....

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
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DO WAGES CAUSE INFLATION?

Chris Harman acts as guide through the jungle of economic facts and arguments about whether wages cause inflation. **THEY DON'T!**

In the current arguments about wages policy, government apologists return again and again to a single theme: rising wages are responsible for rising prices.

There are a number of simple counter-arguments used quite correctly by militants: 1) If rising wages are the cause of the levels of inflation we have experienced in recent years, why was it that living standards could rise in the 1950s year in, year out, without inflation getting out of control?

2) Far from wages surging ahead of

inflation, in the period since 1973 prices have kept well ahead of wages for most of the time. Only for about eight months in 1974-5 out of a total period of six years have wage costs to industry, as measured by 'wages and salaries per unit of output for the whole economy', been ahead of prices. By spring of last year, while prices were 50 per cent above their 1975 level, wages costs had only risen by 30 per cent (figures from *Economic Trends*).

(See Graph 1).

Real take home pay was still lower last year than it was in 1972.

The year of the highest inflation in living memory 1975 was a year in which real net income for a married couple with two children fell by £2.90 (at Oct 1978 prices).

Real weekly net income at October 1978 prices: for those with average pay

	single person	married couple with two children
September 1970	£62.20	£68.90
Sept 1972	£65.90	£74.50
Sept 1977	£59.10	£68.10
Sept 1978	£64.40	£73.80

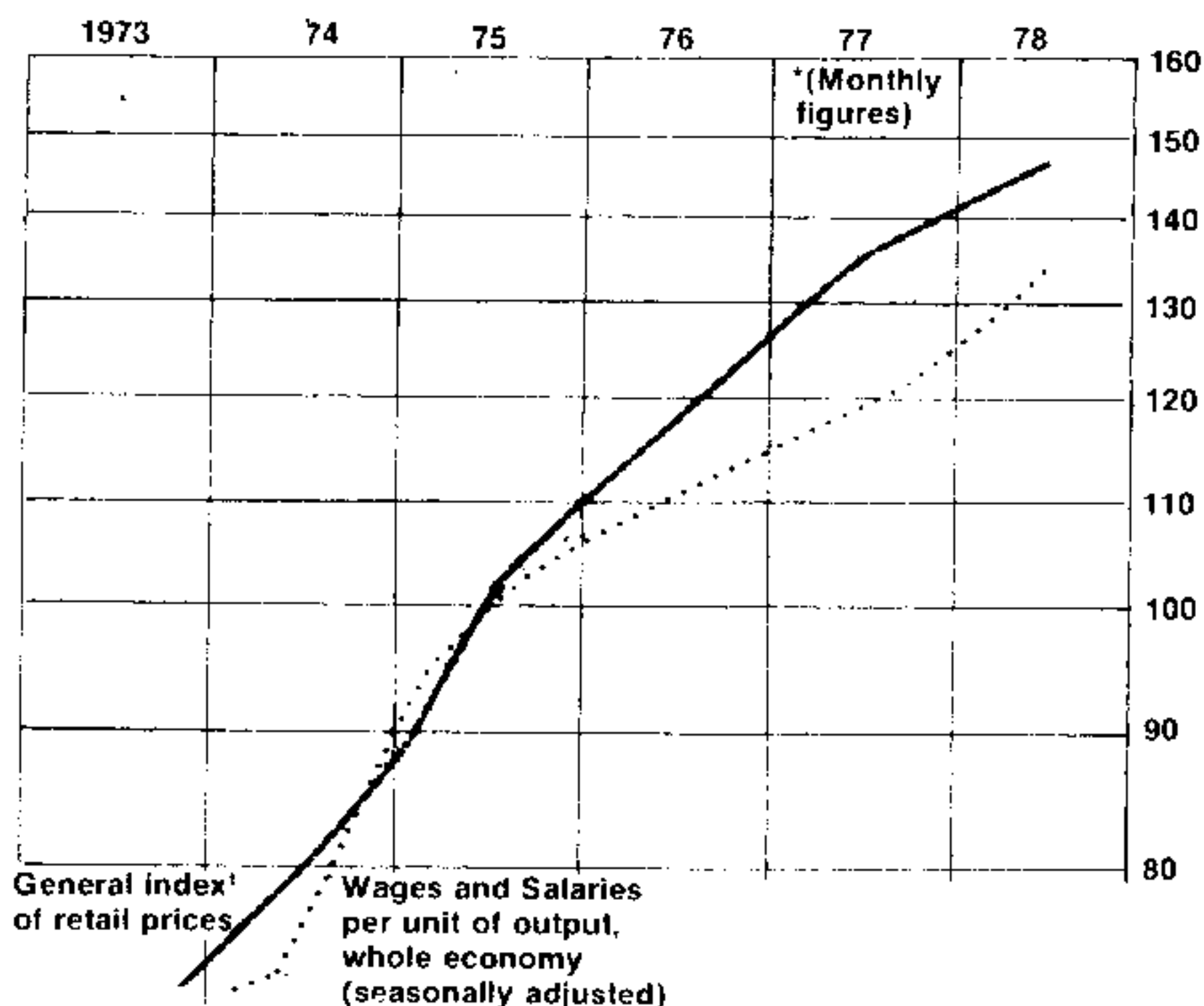
3) Prices are continually rising for reasons that clearly have nothing to do with wages. Shortly before Christmas, the government raised the minimum lending rate, inevitably forcing up the cost to councils of borrowing money and therefore putting pressure on rents and rates.

That was nothing to do with 'wage push'.

Again, the succession of food price rises agreed between the EEC governments have not gone to increase the pay of farm workers (which has lagged behind the cost of living like other workers' wages) but to increase the incomes of their employers. The last few months have seen a world-wide upsurge in commodity prices and a rise in the price of oil—both of which will increase raw material costs and therefore prices regardless of what happens to wages.

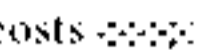

The following tables shows the extent to which non-wage factors have pushed up prices over the years:

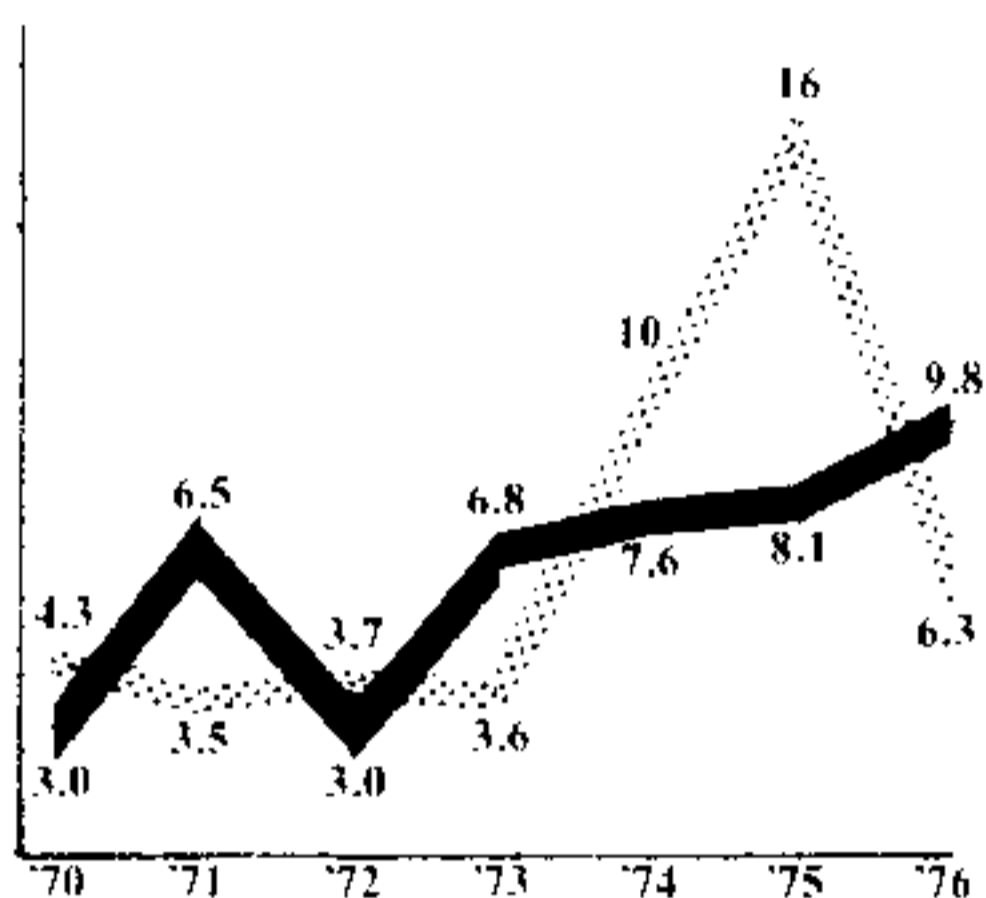
Graph 1



USE INFLATION?

Graph 2

share of price rises due to labour costs 
share due to non-wage factors 



[Financial Times Dec '76]

The 'declining share of profits'

However, the simple arguments against the idea that wages cause inflation are apparently refuted by a different set of figures which show the share of profits in the national income.

It is claimed that the share of profits has been falling for the last 20 years; that the decline is caused by a growth of the share of the national income going to workers; that the result has been a decline in the rate of profit, until there is no longer any incentive for capitalists to invest; and that this explains a characteristic feature of the crisis, the combination of stagnation and inflation.

According to such a view, inflation is due to the fact that workers have been winning the battle between labour and capital over the distribution of the national cake.

There is a right-wing version of this explanation put forward by apologists for the system: they conclude that if only the 'power of the unions' could be broken and the 'share of capital' restored, the system would pull out of the crisis.

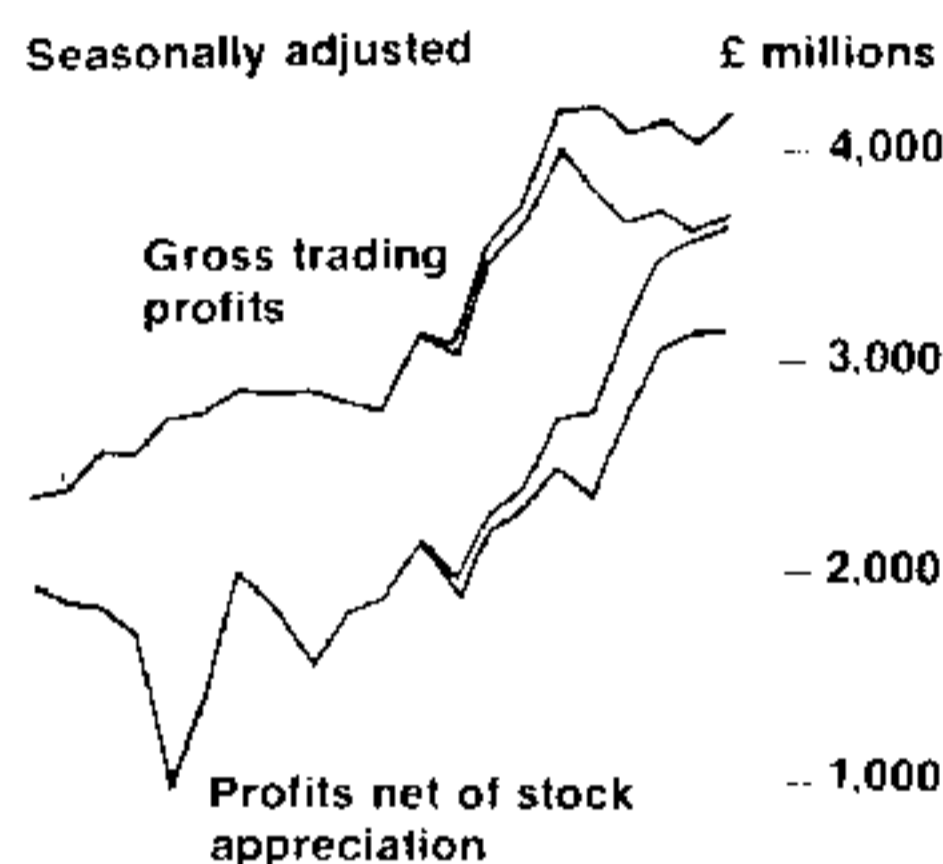
But some socialists accept the same analysis for example the Oxford economists Glyn and Sutcliffe in their book *British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze*. Using the same figures as the right, they say that rather than try to make the system work by accepting a smaller share, workers should 'fight to overthrow the system.

However, even the 'left wing' version has implications which serve to weaken workers' struggles. If it were correct, it would seem that when Callaghan and co say that 'sacrifice' will pull the system out of crisis, they are right. And for most workers, 'sacrifice' seems a more 'realistic' option than socialist revolution.

The facts of declining profitability

There is no doubt at all that the rate of profit in British industry has been falling. All the different ways of measuring profitability, display roughly the same trend. (All figures are from the Bank of England *Quarterly*, 1976 and 1978)

Industrial and commercial companies' profits



1974 1976 1978

(Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin*, September 1978)

The pretax rate of return at historic costs

This is the measure of profits that was generally used until the mid-1970s. It shows a decline from an average figure of over 16 per cent in the early 1960s to about 13 per cent in the late 1960s. However, it indicates a recovery of profits in the years 1972 - 4.

The pretax rate of profit after excluding stock appreciation

The recovery of historic-cost company profits in the mid-1970s was very much due to the fact that inflation rapidly increased the value of the stocks of goods and raw materials in capitalists' possession. But it has been argued (see for instance, Glyn and Sutcliffe) that this increase was not real profit, since it had to be used to replace components and raw materials at higher prices. In the last few years accountants have tried to devise methods of profit-calculation that excludes this factor of 'stock appreciation'.

From the point of view of capital, that is logical since what it is concerned with is the level of profit left over at the

end of the year for accumulation or consumption by the capitalist class. From the workers' point of view, however, increased expenditure on stocks is a charge on the value they produce that then passes into the control of the capitalist class. For them, historic-cost calculations give a better picture of how the product of their labour is divided between labour and capital.

Since we are concerned with the effects of declining profitability on the capitalist system, that system's measure of profits is the most useful one here. After deducting stock appreciation, the rate of profit declined through the early 1970s as well as through the 1960s -- from around 13 per cent in the mid-1960s to nine per cent in 1975, before rising to 12 per cent during the first year of the social-contract wage controls, 1976.

The pre-tax 'real rate of return'

The final measure of pre-tax profits excludes, as well as stock appreciation, the rising cost to capitalists of putting aside funds to replace capital equipment as inflation raises its price.

The difficulty with this measure is that companies have every incentive to exaggerate the cost of replacing equipment, since they get tax exemptions of such expenditure and since it is very difficult to tell from the outside whether what occurs is simple replacement or the introduction of larger and more modern equipment.

Nevertheless, the figures do throw some light on profitability, indicating a dramatic decline from 12 per cent in 1961 to nine per cent in 1971 to four per cent in 1975, then rising with the social contract in 1976 to 4.7 per cent.

The after-tax 'real' rate of return

After tax the picture for profitability is rather different in the early 1960s, since there was a shift in taxation from companies to wage and salary earners. The post-tax rate of return fluctuates around 7-9 per cent in the early 1960s. But thereafter it follows the pre-tax rate of return... By the end of the decade the post-tax return had reached about 3½ per cent (Andrew Glyn in *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists* February 1975). Thereafter it fell below zero in 1974, but has risen again to about four per cent since.

The share of labour and capital in the national income

The analysis shared by most apologists for the system as well as Glyn and Sutcliffe offers a very simple explanation for the decline in profitability.

They give figures alleging that the share of labour in the national income has been rising, and claim that this has caused a fall in the share of profits and therefore in the rate of profit. Certainly, at first sight, the share of capital seems to have fallen.

The Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin*, for instance, shows the share of 'historic profits' as falling from 16-18 per cent in the 1940s and 1950s to 15-16 per cent in the 1960s to 12-13 per cent in the mid 1970s. And 'real' profits are shown as falling from 14-15 per cent of the national income right down to 4-6 per cent.

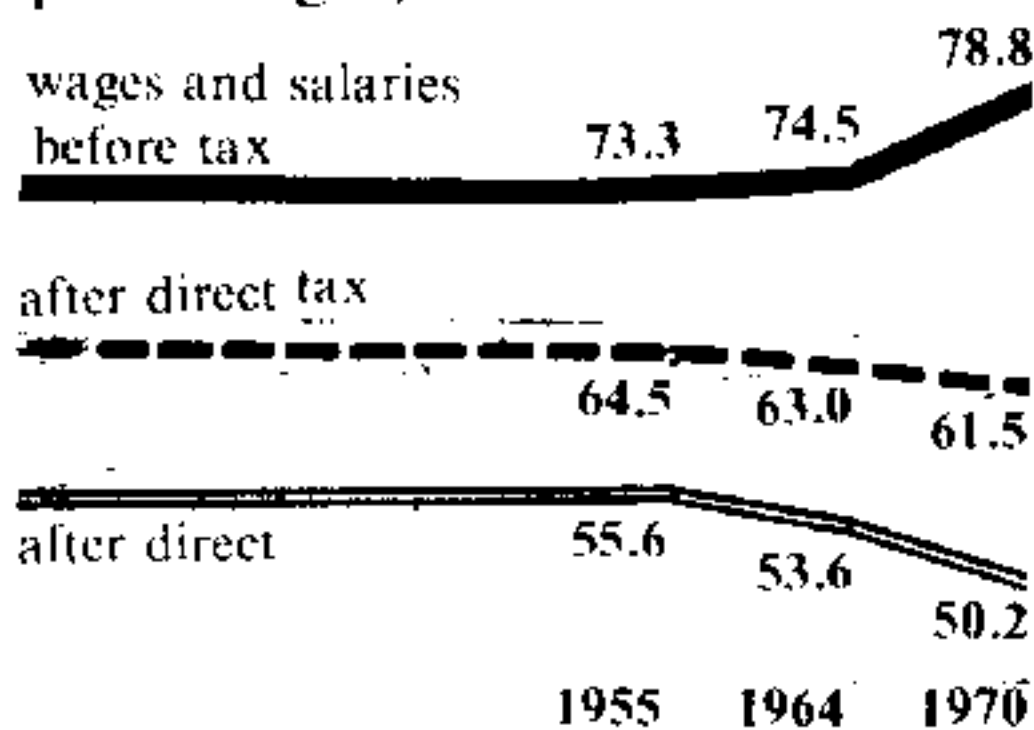
The Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin* itself is quite cautious about what these figures signify. It says that 'the decline in the share of profits . . . may reflect . . . a growth of union bargaining power'. There was no such caution in Glyn and Sutcliffe's book. For them the 'decline in the share of profits' could only result from a rise in the share of labour.

In their book they attempted to show this with figures giving the proportion of 'wages and salaries' in the national income and in company turnover.

These figures were always open to question, since although some salaries are a form of remuneration of labour, others (eg payments to management) are a disguised distribution of profit. In the latter case, salaries can rise without the 'share of labour' increasing at all.

But there is a second, more devastating objection to the figures. They take no account of the fact that the tax system has changed over the last 25 years, so that taxation on wages salaries has risen dramatically, while taxation on profits has fallen to virtually zero.

The proportion of the national income, after tax, going to wages and salaries actually fell in the 1950s and 1960s (all figures in percentages).

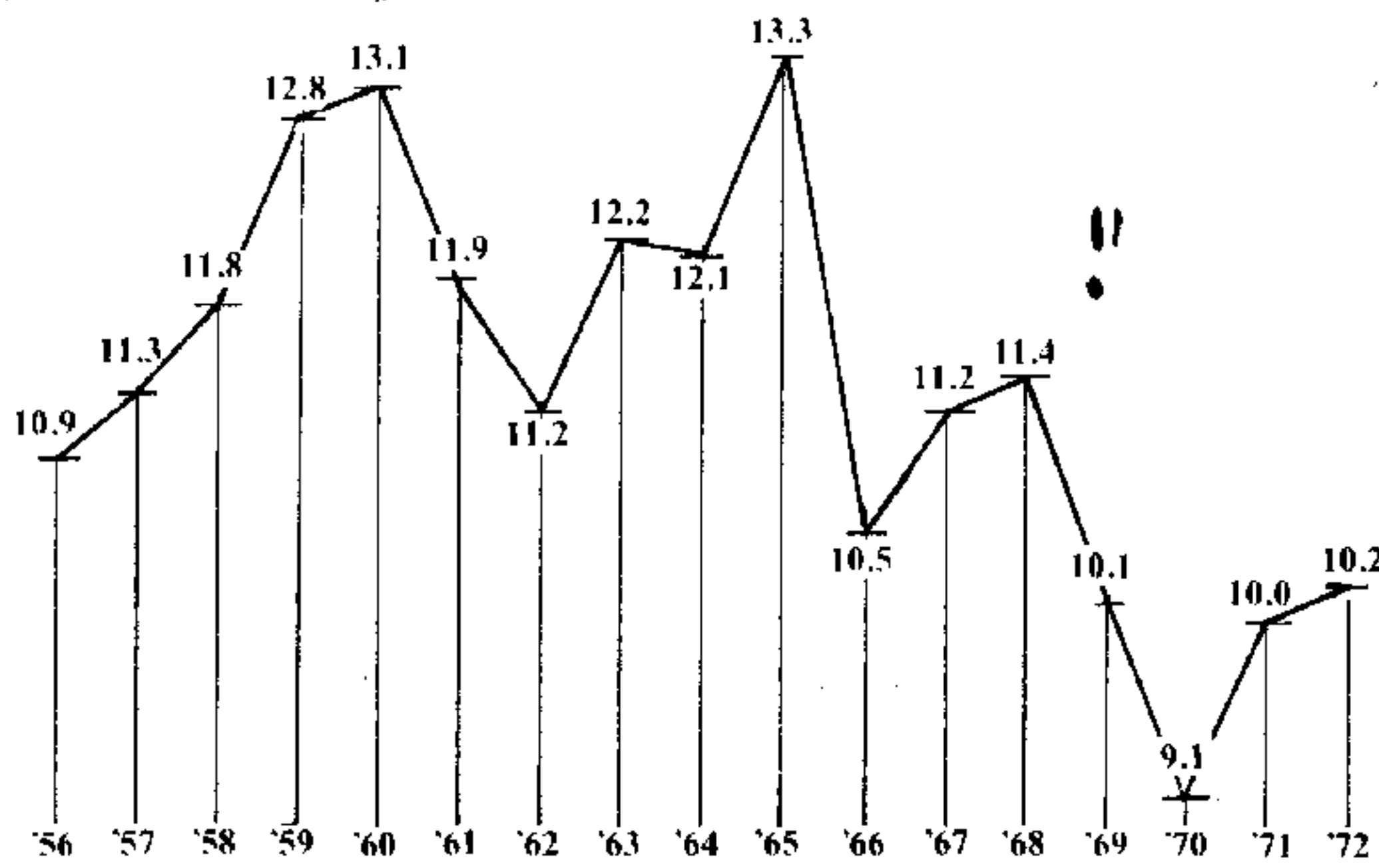


Glyn had the honesty to admit this in an article he wrote in 1975 (unfortunately, the article had much less publicity than the earlier book). Nevertheless, he tried to maintain part of his original explanation, by claiming that the share of profit in the national income has also fallen. After tax it remained steady until about 1964. 'Thereafter the fall in the pre-tax share was

no longer compensated for by cuts in taxation . . . So the five year average of the post-tax share falls from more than 20 per cent in 1966 to less than 15 per cent in 1970'.

But this was a period in which not only was taxation on companies falling, but there was also an increase in the funds handed out to companies by government. When that change is taken into consideration, the share of capital in the national income remains fairly steady between 1956 and 1972, rising from about 11 to about 12 per cent in the early 1960s and then falling back to about 10 per cent at the beginning of the 1970s.

All Companies' UK income, less stock appreciation capital consumption and taxes on income and capital, plus investment grants—as share of national income



[G. J. Burgess and A. J. Webb, *Lloyd's Bank Review* 1974]

Government expenditure, the 'social wage' and the share of labour

The figures we have just given do not quite end the argument. For, there remains the question of where the money taken from workers and from capital for taxes goes. There is a widespread myth that they are returned to the poorer section of the population as a 'social wage', that redistributes income from capital to labour.

A whole ideology has developed about government spending 'squeezing out' profitable, 'productive' industry. Even the socialist Glyn suggested in 1975 (in the article quoted earlier) that once that portion of government spending going to workers was taken into account, the share of labour in the national income had been rising fast enough to provoke a crisis for British capitalism.

He began, quite correctly, by insisting that a large portion of public expenditure did not go to workers at all, but was spent exclusively in the interests of capital: defence and law and order were designed to protect capitalist property (against workers and against foreign capitalists); most of expenditure on roads was designed to allow quicker movement of goods traffic; 'industry and trade', 'agriculture' and interest on the national debt all represented payments from the government to capital.

However, Glyn then went on to make a

calculation that exaggerated the proportion of government spending going to workers. He suggested that the workers' share amounted to '92.5 per cent of current expenditure on housing, health, education and other social services; half expenditure on fire services; a quarter of expenditure on roads; plus current grants to persons (net of tax) and consumption of social service means of production'.

Using these proportions, he finds that 'far from there being a fall in the share of the net social product going to labour, there has been a rise, from 69.3 per cent in 1955 to 73.7

per cent in 1972'.

But the proportions are open to two sorts of powerful objections. First, they overstate the proportion of services such as social security, the NHS, housing and education going to workers. 'Current grants to persons' include grants to unemployed and retired members of the petty bourgeoisie. Family allowances go to them and to the bourgeoisie as much as to workers.

A number of studies indicate that these classes get a greater proportion of services per head from the Health Service than do workers (according to *Social Trends* the top ten per cent of households got an average of £287 worth of service a year from the NHS in 1976, while the average household got only £225 - indeed, the top ten per cent even did better on welfare foods, getting £19 worth a year, compared with the average of £16!).

And when it comes to one of the fastest areas of spending growth in the 1950s and 1960s, education, you find that the bulk of this growth was in sectors of education where the number of students from the working class was 50 per cent or less!

Between 1951 and 1969 expenditure on primary education (where the majority of children are working-class) grew by only £294 million - no faster than the growth in the national income. By contrast, spending on higher education, where the majority of beneficiaries come from non-working-class background, rose by £569m.

The predominantly working class

primary school child cost the state £91 a year in 1968-9; the predominantly working-class 11-16 year old £171 a year; by contrast the nearly half 'professional and managerial' 16-18 year old cost £303 a year, and the predominantly non-working-class higher education student £1200 a year. On these figures, much less than 92.5 per cent of educational expenditure can have been said to have benefitted working-class children.

If we take these objections into account and use different calculations to Glyn's (assuming that workers get 90 per cent of the benefits of social security payments, 75 per

WAGES

cent of NHS services, 90 per cent of housing expenditure and a share of educational expenditure falling from 60 per cent in the early 1950s to 50 per cent in the late 1960s), we get figures that indicate that the workers' share of the total national product could not have risen by more than about two per cent in 18 years.

And even this calculation probably exaggerates the workers' share. For, it is possible to argue that educational expenditure is not in any real sense something that adds to the workers' consumption, in the same way that family allowances or a free health service does. Workers are compelled by law to send their children to school, for the very simple reason that capitalism needs a future labour force with certain basic skills and certain patterns of discipline.

Even though most workers like the idea of their children getting a 'decent education' it cannot be regarded as part of their family consumption or of their 'social wage'. Expenditure on education is expenditure shaped to suit the needs of international capitalist competition, not the desires of workers. If it is excluded from calculations on the 'social wage', you find that the workers' share of the social product falls by about two per cent between the early 1950s and the end of the 1960s, rather than rising.

Why did public expenditure rise?

If any squeeze in the share of profits in the national product cannot be explained in terms of a greater share going to labour, what does explain it?

At least part of the explanation lies in the way in which in the 1960s and 1970s the needs of capital have demanded greater government expenditure.

Although there was a decline in the level of arms spending (from about 22 per cent of government spending in the early 1950s to about 15 per cent by the late sixties) there was a rise in the share of roads, law and order, education, aid to industry and the servicing of the national debt. Increasing international competition demanded a greater attention to the needs of capital by the state, which meant a growing tax burden

that capital tried to put on the shoulders of labour.

While British capitalism was expanding during the 1950s and early 1960s, it could afford increased government expenditure. It was the economic crisis of the 1970s that made this burden too great. The share of public expenditure in the national product actually fell after the Korean war; it then rose slowly until 1966-7, when it shot upwards as the then Labour government imposed a credit squeeze that cut the rate of growth and boosted unemployment by 50 per cent; after a slight decline it rose very slowly until it shot up again with the economic crisis of 1974-6, until the public expenditure cuts reduced the level.

This growing crisis also explains both the increased need for the state to service capital, and the greater burden that it represents. It also explains much of the rise in so-called 'social wage' element of public spending. The fastest single growth item has been social security payments—reflecting *not* any great growth in the value to the

DON'T

individual recipient, but the growing number of workers made unemployed by the crisis, as well as the near doubling of the number of old-age pensioners over the last 25 years.

If government expenditure became a burden for the system in the mid-1970s, this was not in itself the cause of the crisis. Still less was a 'massive social wage' the cause. Rather government expenditure seemed too great for the system to bear and the 'social wage' seemed excessive because a more basic crisis increased the demands on government expenditure while cutting back the total national product.

None of that, of course, prevented the Labour government from responding to the crisis by cutting back precisely on those elements in public expenditure that did, in a real sense, benefit workers. Neither wages nor the social wage caused the crisis of profitability; but both could be cut in a desperate attempt to overcome it.

The cause of the falling rate of profit

There is an explanation of the fall in the rate of profit which does *not* depend upon the assumption of a growing share of the national product going to workers. This is the classic marxist view that the **accumulation of capital itself** leads to a fall in the rate of profit, even if total profit increases.

This is because, Marx claimed, accumulation would tend to mean that investment got ever more capital-intensive, with the total investment in means of production growing more quickly than the labour employed (in Marx's terminology, 'the organic composition of capital' rises). Since, according to the marxist analysis, it is labour which is the origin of value and surplus value, that means that surplus-value grows less quickly

than investment. The ratio of surplus-value to total investment is the rate of profit, and this will fall.

It has been fashionable among academic marxists and near marxists to be disparaging about this part of Marx's theory in recent years. A leading 'socialist' opponent of the labour theory of value, Ian Steedman, wrote in the *New Statesman* recently that virtually no reputable marxists now take the theory seriously. And he is partly right: whole schools of 'marxist' economists dismiss the trend to a falling rate of profit, or see it as only a trend interacting with equally powerful counter-trends. On that analysis, if the rate of profit falls, it can only be because of a rising share of wages.

Steedman has gone as far as to claim that it is impossible for new capital investment to lead to a fall in the rate of profit. He alleges that an increase in the capital-labour ratio must lead to a rise in the rate of profit. And even thinkers who are closer to Marx's own thought, like Sue Himmelweit, and John Harrison produced alleged proofs of this same thing.

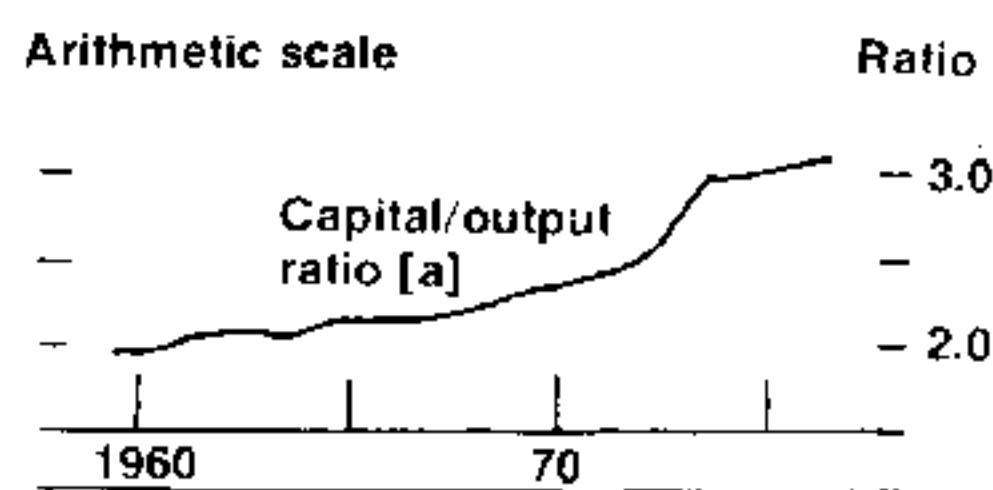
Yet since then empirical evidence has emerged which suggest that there is a connection between a rising ratio of capital to labour and the falling rate of profit.

One of the things the Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin* looked at was the capital-output ratio (how much investment it takes to produce a particular quantity of goods). It showed that it 'grew fairly steadily between the early 1960s and the 1970s (from about 2 to about 2½). In the 1970s it has grown further to about 3' (see Graph 3) --

Graph 3

The Capital-Output Ratio

Its rise is indicative of a rise in what Marx called 'the organic composition of capital'

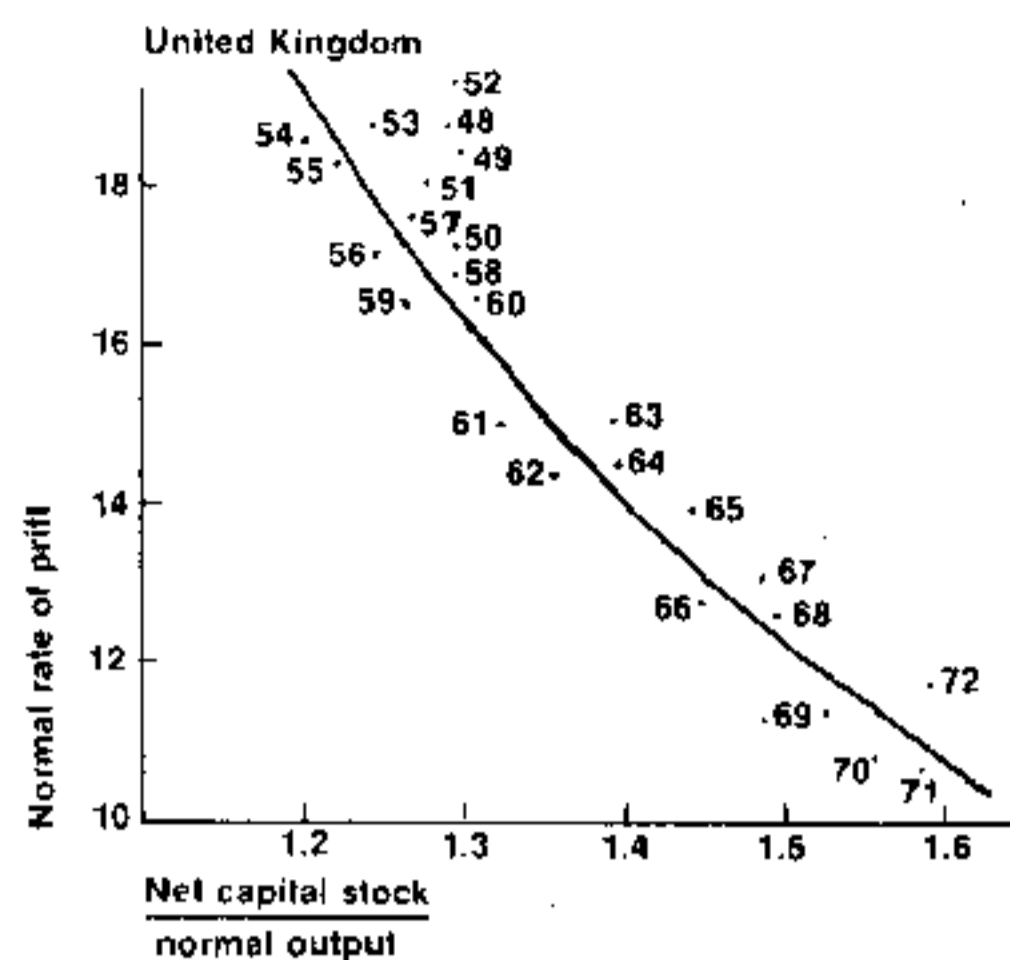


although here, they note, the crisis itself, by increasing the level of unused manufacturing capacity will exaggerate the real figures. It suggested that 'these changes in the capital output ratio meant that the downward trend in the real rate of return on capital from 1960 to 1973, and the more dramatic fall since, have been much more marked than the decline of real profits in company value added' (a978, p517).

The economist Colin Clark showed in an article in *Lloyds Bank Review* in 1975 the way in which each rise in the capital-output ratio has been accompanied by a fall in the rate of profit (see Graph 2). Clark also suggests that a similar process has been at work in Australia, and in the US from the mid-1960s.

Samuel Brittain of the *Financial Times*, another bourgeois economist, has noted the same trend with bewilderment. 'There has been an underlying long term decline in the amount of output per unit of capital in

How the rate of profit falls as the Capital-output ratio rises



(From C. Clarke in Lloyd's Bank Review October '74)

manufacturing... This is a fairly general experience in the industrial countries... One can construct a fairly plausible story to explain this 'for any one country; but not for the industrial world as a whole'. [*Financial Times*, 3 March 1977]. For an explanation Britain would have to drop adherence to the theories of Milton Friedman and turn to Karl Marx.

The capital-output ratio will normally show the same trend as the marxist category of the organic composition of capital (i.e. unless there is a dramatic increase in the rate of exploitation of workers - which no one claims for the last 25 years - $c/v+s$ will show the same trend as c/v). The rate of profit is falling as the organic composition of capital rises, because of the dynamic of the accumulation process itself. Bourgeois empiricism seems to come to conclusions that bear out Marx, even though academics who purport to 'refine' Marx insist such conclusions are 'theoretically impossible'.

It is worth adding that one of those on the left to first see the 'rising share of labour' as the cause of the crisis, Glyn, does admit (in his 1975 article) that because the capital-output ratio 'for the company sector as a whole has been rising since the fifties... the rate of profit fell faster than the share of profit'.

Towards a theory of inflation

In fact, the evidence of the rising capital-output ratio leads to an explanation of the unending trend to inflation quite different from that of the myth of a rising 'workers share'. The causes of inflation can be seen as lying in the inner structure of an economic system that has outlived its time, and not in the 'wage push' of workers.

The very success of capitalism in accumulating gives rise to the fall in the capital-output ratio. This leads to a tendency for the rate of profit to fall, even if the share of capital in the national product rises.

How does capital react when this happens? Classically, there were two different responses, depending upon whether the system was booming, or whether it was entering into recession.

In a boom, capitalists felt confident that their goods would sell, even if they increased their prices. So when profit was threatened by rising costs, they raised prices to try to protect themselves. Once certain goods had increased in price, other capitalists raised their prices so as to maintain their profits after paying for those goods. Workers too pushed for higher wages so as to protect their living standards. An inflationary spiral developed, very much like that we see today.

Except, that the inflationary spiral came to an end once the boom came to an end.

Once the recession set in, capitalists had to respond to the pressure on their profits in a different way. Contracting markets meant they could not sell goods at existing prices let alone at prices that were raised in an effort to protect profits. They had to slash prices, and then enforce even greater wage cuts on their workers if profits were not to disappear.

As the crisis drove whole firms out of business, prices tumbled still further. Their goods and equipment could be bought up at rock bottom prices by other firms, so enabling their profits to recover despite the low general level of prices. And rising unemployment reduced the ability of workers to resist wage-cuts.

So the system passed from an inflationary period, as profit rates were first threatened during the boom, to a period of falling prices (or, in current government parlance a 'counter-inflationary' period) as the crisis fully hit the system.

It only needs to be added, that the crisis itself created the preconditions for a new boom with reduced inflationary pressures at first. The extremely low prices at which equipment from bankrupt firms could be obtained meant that the cost of new investment fell, and with it the capital-labour ratio. To use marxist terminology: the crisis led to a destruction of capital values, to a devaluation of capital, and lowered the organic composition of capital in value terms.

However, as capitalism has grown old, there has been a seizing up of the mechanisms which previously meant a fall in prices during a crisis, and a lowering of the organic composition of capital.

The aging of capitalism has been accompanied by a growing domination of each national market by a small number of firms. Mergers and takeovers have increased the size of individual firms until in Britain in 1970 the top 100 firms controlled 40 per cent of the total market, and in the US in 1976 the top 200 companies controlled 58.8 per cent of the market.

Once the market is dominated by a relatively small number of large firms, they are capable of arranging things among themselves so that their response to a crisis is not to cut prices, but to carve up the market between each other, to all continue in operation, but at reduced capacity, and to raise prices so as to pay for the increased overheads this brings about.

Even the former head of the Price Commission, Lord Cockfield, has been able to comment that 'We suffer in this country from market domination, price leadership, parallel pricing, the lack of

effective competition, unwillingness to compete on price, and a cost-plus mentality' (quoted in *Financial Times*, 6 February 1979).

In such a situation prices are raised to protect profit rates in the slump as well as in the boom.

The American radical economist Sherman has analysed how the changeover from 'slump = falling prices' to 'slump = rising prices' took place. He points out that 'in almost all recessions and depressions up to the recession of 1948, prices fell... In the recession of 1948, prices in the competitive (ie non-monopoly - CH) industries fell by 7.8 per cent. But the prices of monopoly industries fell by only 1.9 per cent...

'Since that time the competitive (ie non-monopoly) prices has fallen in each recession, but the monopoly prices have risen in each recession'. Hence the prices in the US industries in which fewer than eight firms controlled more than 50 per cent of the market rose by 1.9 per cent in the 1953 recession, by 0.5 per cent in the 1958 recession and by 5.9 per cent in the 1969 recession' (*Review of Radical Political Economy*, summer 1976).

The consequence is that once inflation starts in the system, it is very difficult to bring it to an end.

This was shown clearly in the US in the early 1970s. The inflation created by the second world war and by the Korean war had soon disappeared from the system. Not so the inflation caused by spending on the Vietnam War: 'Unemployment continued to decline in 1969 and consumer prices rose.

CAUSE

... When demand finally fell and unemployment rose in the recession of 1970, the inflation rate hardly budged.' (Cl. Perry, *Brooking Papers on Economic Activity*, 1978 No 2). It required government intervention to achieve what the old mechanisms could no longer achieve and even they could only work for a brief period.

'In the summer of 1971, the Nixon administration imposed wage and price controls that lasted, in a modified form, until April 1974. These controls slowed the inflation rate for most wages and prices. But by the time the controls expired, higher prices for food and fuel... and for industrial raw materials... had created double digit rates of overall inflation...'

The story was repeated in the most recent recession. The 'recession was double the size of the average post-war recession... By the end of the recession inflation had slowed sharply from its 1974 peak, but further improvement was slight once recovery began... The rate of inflation has continued at a historically high rate, and now shows signs of creeping still further up'. (ibid)

The growth in the size of firms has

destroyed the mechanism the system used to have for flushing out inflation. Inflation is not caused by 'wage-push', but is one of the characteristic features of aging capitalism.

The domination of the national economy by a few very large firms also has another consequence for the system. No-one in the capitalist class is prepared seriously to countenance any of the major firms going bankrupt: the effect on the rest of the economy would be just too devastating. So there is an end to the old mechanism for reducing the cost of investment, by some firms collapsing and other more efficient firms buying up their stocks and equipment on the cheap. Instead, the government invariably steps in to bail firms out.

The result is that there is no significant cheapening of investment in the slump; the ratio of capital to labour does not fall; there is no counter-tendency to slow down the pressure on profit rates; once a new boom begins to set in, the firms feel a greater need than ever to raise prices so as to counteract this pressure.

The inability of the system to drive to the wall the largest firms also explains something else about modern inflation. The currently fashionable school of right-wing 'monetarist' economists are partially correct when they say that there could be no inflation if governments did not allow the amount of money in the economy to grow. What they don't explain, however, is why the money supply always does grow, even if former monetarists get control of the switches on the machines that print banknotes.

Yet the reason is simple enough: to stop the expansion of the money supply is to deny to firms the possibility of inflating their prices so as to counter pressures on profitability. But that is to threaten huge chunks of the national economy with bankruptcy. When it comes to it, the heads of the giant firms have enough political influence to stop that happening.

group of capitalists raise their prices, other groups of capitalists who use their products as in-puts will tend to raise their prices as well. And workers (unless held down by wages policy) will try to protect their living standard by forcing higher wages.

These rises in turn cut into the profits of the first group of capitalists, until they are back where they started. Their drive for profitability gives the spiral its first push, but it soon comes round and hits them as well as everyone else, driving them to further push up their prices again in the interests of profitability.

The drive for profitability is not the only thing that can give the inflationary spiral a shove. Relatively accidental things like wars and harvest failures can play a part. So can the attempt of workers to recuperate through wage claims what they have lost in years of wage controls. But none of these things would, in themselves, cause sustained inflationary trends were it not for the in-built features of the aging capitalist system: the growing ratio of capital to labour, and the ability of the giant firms to protect themselves from competitive pressures during a recession.

This argument can be put another way: If workers simply accepted that their wages should not rise with prices, then the inflationary spiral **would** slow down for a bit (although all the workers would be worse off - as they have been over the last four years in this country). But the rising capital-output ratio would soon again threaten the rate of profit, and again cause firms to raise prices; workers would then be at risk from yet another bout of inflation.

Inflation is the modern method by which capital seeks to satisfy its insatiable demand for new draughts of surplus value, so as to maintain the profitability of its ever growing quantities of old surplus value accumulated.

Secondly, the argument that it is the crisis of profitability that causes inflation does

not the profits to be realised by selling them.

They are frightened of the wider consequences of inflation - endless wages struggles, demoralisation of their supporters within the middle classes, continually fluctuating exchange rates, bitter international competition.

To that extent the capitalist class are sincere when they claim that inflation is the greatest danger that besets them. But their sense of sincerity is heightened by the knowledge of the general ideological campaigns against 'inflation' serve to isolate not themselves when they raise their prices, but their workers when they push for compensatory wage increases.

And, of course, they are always careful to build into 'wage and prices controls' exemption clauses designed to protect profits and investment. The very design of such policies is such as to allow price rises to protect levels of 'real profit', but to forbid wage rises which seek to protect levels of real living standards. The result of this in Britain can be seen from graph 3.

Finally, we can now integrate into the account some of the other factors we have mentioned in passing. The ability of firms to raise their prices in an effort to compensate for pressures on profitability does not, as we have shown, end those pressures, which re-emerge with the next turn of the inflationary spiral. Hence, they become ever more dependent on another source of funds from the government.

But the rise in government expenditure itself then threatens to cut into their profitability - especially during a crisis, when government expenditure is in any case rising because of the need to stop the reserve army of labour either starving or rioting. The protection of profitability demands increased government spending of a certain sort, combined with a shift in taxation from companies to wages.

But at a certain point workers react against this shift by further heightening their wage demands. It then becomes politically, as well as economically, important for the ruling class to give the impression that 'government spending' (understood as that limited portion of government spending that benefits workers) is to blame for the crisis and for inflation.

All this, like the argument on wages and inflation, diverts attention from the real origins of inflation: inflation is the specific response of aging capitalism to the crisis of profitability created by the system itself, just as the demand for straight wage cuts was the response of the system in its 'classic' phase. As such, it will not be ended until the system is destroyed.

INFLATION

A few final points

First, the fact that the inflationary pressures originate in attempts to protect profit rates does not mean that they end there. Once one

not mean that capitalists are being completely dishonest when they say they want 'anti-inflationary' policies - providing you understand that as a policy which will stop the growth of the costs of producing goods,

WAGES DON'T CAUSE INFLATION

'The difficulties often experienced by those depending on lower incomes could not be solved by changing the present distribution of income' *Confederation of British Industry*

In 1974 Parliament set up a Royal Commission to look into the distribution of income and wealth in this country. Since then the Commission has churned out thousands of pages of tables, charts, analysis and comment in umpteen HMSO volumes. As you might expect, there is for socialists some useful information buried in this pile of careful and polite prose, and with a little effort you can dig out any number of gems which show the astonishing degree of inequality we still put up with.

But the facts and figures aren't the only interesting things in these reports. In addition to its own deliberations, the Commission publishes the 'evidence' submitted to it by various organisations, individuals, and in some of their offerings Britain's bosses reveals as much about themselves as the statistics reveal about their wealth.

Anyone looking at the submissions of the CBI and the National Federation of Building Trades Employers has to be struck by two things. The first is the passion they display for arguments showing how all current measures of wealth and income overestimate their share of the cake.

They are quite desperate to convince everyone that however the figures have been presented to date, they the employers have been shown as richer than they really are and we the employees have appeared as poorer than we really are: so desperate that out of 73 paragraphs of their published evidence to the commission's first report, 46 plead monotonously for statistical changes to 'put this right'.

These range from predictable appeals for pension rights and all state benefits (including the cost of education) to be included in assessment of workers' wealth and income, down to nasty, petty moans about miners' free coal, handouts by charities and even tips.

The second point you notice is how they can only keep up this academic 'our society is more equal than you think' argument for so long before something else takes over, something nearer to their hearts than statistical niceties: their need to defend and preserve that inequality itself.

The hint: '...it may be that some countries which have a consistently higher growth rate also have a wider distribution of incomes'.

But by the last few paragraphs they pick up real momentum and issue a stern warning: '... fairness should not be confused with equality. The dangers of further narrowing the differentials in income or of redistributing personal wealth should be taken into account'. The quote at the top of the page is from another of their warnings to the commission about the dire consequences of their money falling into anyone else's hands.

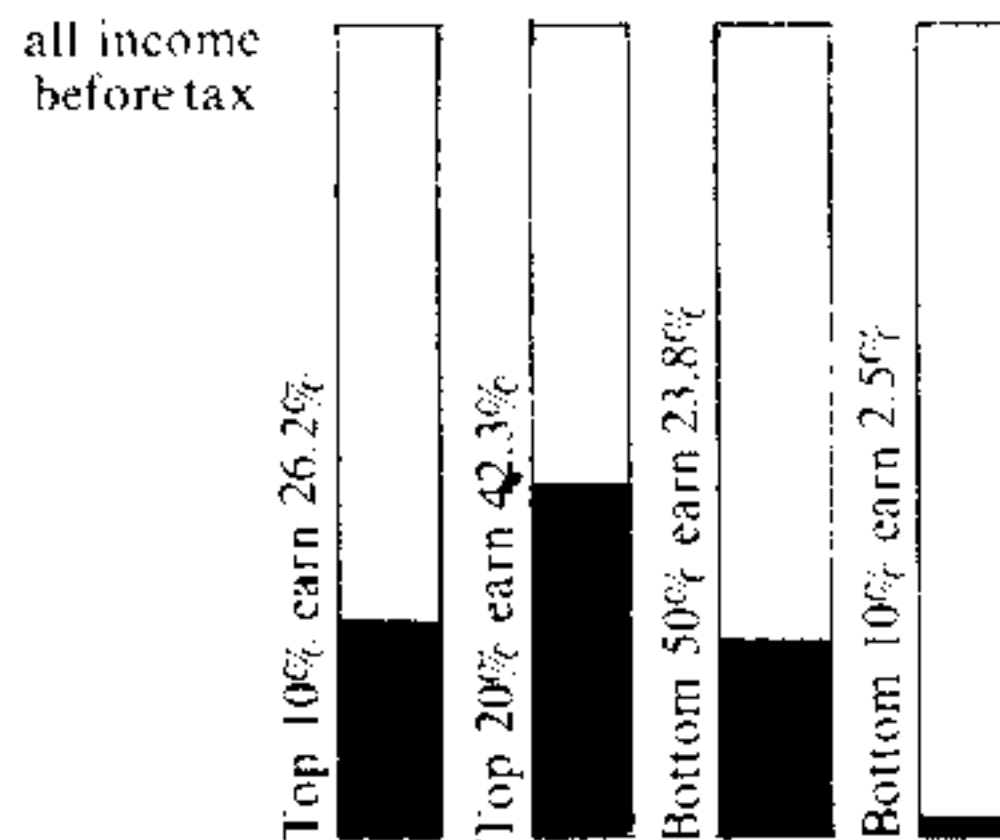
So what is it that they want to keep quiet as well as keep intact? What do the different figures reveal about the inequalities of British capitalism? The answer is they show a level of exploitation and sheer greed that

B is for BOSS

even the most liberal doses of statistical mystification could not hide.

This year's *Social Trends* carries a table showing that the pre-tax incomes of the highest paid ten percent account for over quarter of all income. You can see from the table below that the rest of it isn't shared out equally either: half the population have to live on under a quarter of all total income. Tax doesn't make much difference to this.

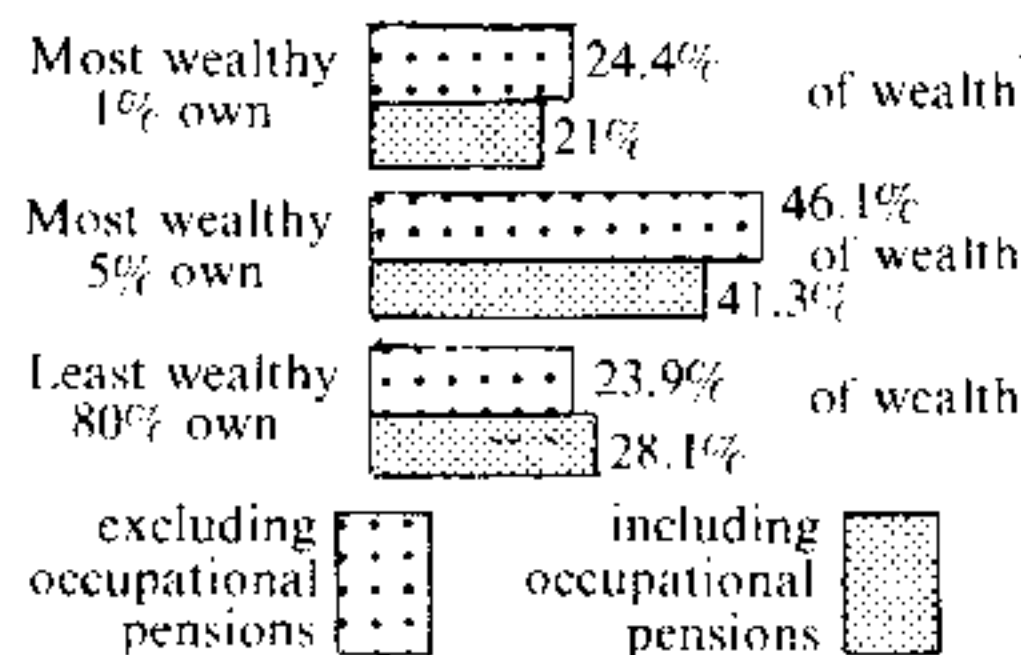
Distribution of Income in 1975/6.



Source: HMSO Social Trends 1979

But inequality of income is peanuts when compared to inequality of wealth itself. When it comes to savings, houses, land, shares and so on, Inland Revenue statistics show that nearly half of all personal wealth is owned by the richest five per cent of people. Even when workers' occupational pension rights are included in the calculation this lot still own over forty percent of all wealth. Worse still, half of this is in the hands of the richest one percent.

Personal Wealth Distribution 1975 (Adults over 18)



Source: Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income & Wealth, Report No. 5, Table 41.

But if the high inequality of incomes is exceeded by this inequality of wealth, wait for the truly staggering inequality of power. In a book called *Class in a Capitalist Society*, Westergaard and Resler analyse Inland Revenue figures and show that all individually held shares and debentures in companies with quoted stock in 1970 were

owned by 6.6% of the population, and that nearly 90% were held by a tiny 1.5%.

It is over facts like these that the bosses get into such a state about technicalities of measurement, as if the addition and subtraction of a few percent here and there can blind us to the reality of the rich minority feeding off the work of the majority.

You have to give them a few points for presentation, however. They kept a lot of face by letting the most hysterical arguments of all come not from an employers' organisation as such, but from one of the right-wing 'independent' research bodies, the Institute for Economic Affairs.

In their paper to the Commission they even included a table showing increases in the ownership of cars, televisions, washing machines and refrigerators since 1952 as evidence of the 'radical transformation' of the structure of wealth. So take comfort, if you're not among the one percent of people who own nearly all company shares—you've probably got a fridge instead!

When the Commission questioned one of the impartial authors of this report (a man who used to work in the Conservative Research Department and who has held a number of directorships) he stated that '... the IEA believed that economic talents, which included drive, and ability to take responsibility, were at least as unequally distributed over the population as were artistic and sporting talents.

'They believed that the pre-tax distribution of incomes should fully reflect this diversity'. What he failed to include in this analysis was any mention of the most useful talent these economic gold-medalists are endowed with—the talent to derive income from inherited wealth. Even the Commission estimated that a quarter of all wealth was made up from inheritance and gifts.

Separately these statistics give a sickening account of production and distribution in this country. Considered together they paint a picture of a sickening group of people: the tiny minority with the industrial wealth the same people who own most of everything else and have the highest incomes.

They are the capitalist class, the people we were told had either perished with the advent of the joint stock company or lost all their money to the merciless grasp of the exchequer. They're still here and they're still living off us.

It's worth letting Marx and Engels have the last word here. Listen to what they said to the bosses on this very subject, in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society private property is already done away with for nine tenths of the population: its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.

"In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend."
Colin Brown