

Monthly Analysis
and Discussion

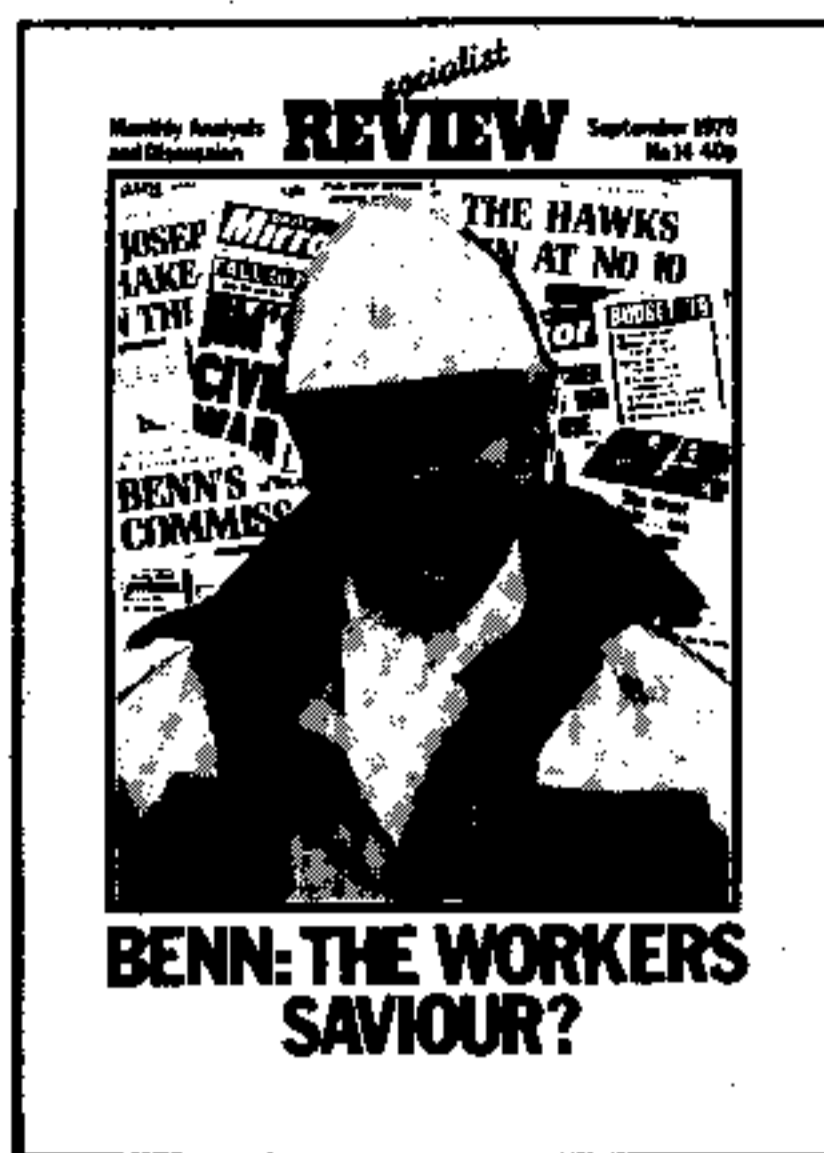
socialist
REVIEW

September 1979
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BENN: THE WORKERS SAVIOUR?

The Crisis and The Response
of the Labour Left



The theme of this issue is the Thatcher government's offensive against our organisations and living standards, and the response from the labour movement:

Alex Callinicos analyses the nature of the Tory offensive. Roger Cox outlines the task of socialist militants on the shopfloor: re-building rank-and-file organisation.

Stuart Holland MP puts the case for the left wing of the Labour Party. Jon Bearman puts the new Labour left around Tony Benn, Holland and others in their historical and political context, while Steve Jefferys completes the analysis of the decline of the main force to the left of Labour, the Communist Party, which he began in our last issue.

One of the main reforms under attack is the 1967 Abortion Act. Mary Deaton describes the anti-abortion campaign mounted by the new right in the US. The debate on women's liberation and socialism begun in our last issue continues with Lindsey German's review of *Beyond the Fragments* by Sheila Rowbotham. In our next issue, Ailx Holt gives her views on Alexandra Kollontai's relevance to the modern women's movement.

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News & analysis

The legal offensive

The lines of conflict between the Tories and the official trade union movement on the law are now being clearly drawn.

The TUC is to continue talking with Prior and Co.—for 'propaganda' reasons, to demonstrate how reasonable it is. But Tory changes are to be opposed, because they will cause 'industrial difficulties'.

Two can play at this game. The proposals for legal changes on picketing and union immunity from prosecution have been deliberately pitched at an extreme level.

Taken literally, as the TUC and lots of lawyers have been

demonstrating that the old law which has been knocking around for a bit will do very nicely with a few 'interpretations' and 'developments'.

A carefully developed and far-reaching attack has in fact been taking place for some time now—gathering pace since last winter's strikes—and is having a potentially much more serious effect than any changes to the law.

For far from resisting injunctions, massive fines—'costs'—and the erosion of trade union rights, the leadership in every union so far attacked has sat mesmerised before the Majesty of the Law.

QUOTE:

'It is important that nothing should be done to impair the ability of employers to re-organise their workforce and their terms and conditions of work so as to improve efficiency.'

Lord Denning, 1977

pointing out, they'd make any strike action open to an employer's legal comeback. This is not what the Tories, and certainly not what the ruling class, are after.

The Engineering Employers' Federation—an accurate barometer if ever there was one—recently wrote to Prior urging much more limited changes to the law—which would confine the attack to picketing and unofficial militants but leave the closed shop and union immunity from prosecution roughly as they are.

The stage is set for a major Tory 'concession' which could seriously embarrass the TUC.

But while the TUC has been working itself into a froth about changes to the law, the bosses and the judges have been

Denning's Rules, OK?

This is producing an extremely serious crisis, above all for the print unions. The NGA has so far forked out £84,000 to the courts for its attempts to black the anti-union T. Bailey Forman (*Nottingham Evening Post*) outfit.

The NUJ is likely to face a bill of over £100,000 by the end of the year as a result of legal attacks from scabs among its own membership and from the employers.

Finance is so bad that the union is in difficulties over providing legal aid for members arrested on picket lines.

How has this happened?

The answer goes back to the summer of 1977 when in the hysterical atmosphere caused by the Grunwick picketing, senior judges—above all Lord Denning—set out to change the balance of forces by applying new rules to what was and was not lawful industrial action.

A key-note was struck by Denning when he stopped SOGAT supporting a strike by journalists on the *Mirror*.

SOGAT members on the Express refused to handle extra copies printed to grab the *Mirror's* readership.

Denning said SOGAT wasn't involved in the dispute, and the *Express* was 'only acting in the way of normal commerce'.

To stop SOGAT Denning claimed the blacking was not 'in furtherance' of the NUJ's strike, just a 'consequence' of it.

It was treated as irrelevant that SOGAT had an agreement with the *Express* not to handle more than a certain number of papers.

Nothing much more happened—except harassment of the Grunwick strikers—till October last year, when Denning decided that the National Union of Seamen's blacking of a ship was outside the law because they were only trying to enforce International Transport Federation pay rates and not acting in support of the ship's crew.

This was followed very rapidly by an even more far-fetched decision. The NUJ went into dispute with the Newspaper Society (provincial newspaper employers) and instructed the Press Association journalists to strike in support. Only half came out, so Fleet Street journalists blacked the PA.

Denning and his cronies (Lord Justices Lawton and Brandon) said the blacking of PA was not in 'furtherance' of the NS strike: to do so it would have to have 'some practical effect in bringing pressure to bear on the other side to the dispute'. The PA is part-owned by the NS, but the judges didn't think this important.

Less than a month later the full majesty of the law descended on Reg Fall, a T&G member picketing United Biscuits during the lorry drivers' dispute.

His picketing was held illegal on the grounds that he wasn't acting directly in support of the drivers' strike, that picketing United Biscuits wouldn't bring pressure on the Road Haulage Association, that he didn't have a genuine intention to 'further' the dispute and (a new one this) he was disobeying the T&G code of practice on picketing issued by Moss Evans after frantic talks with Callaghan.

Another six weeks went by and Denning popped up again, this time to suggest that NUPE and the GMWU might be guilty of conspiracy during the council workers' dispute for preventing Haringey Council from keeping its schools open.



Barron Denning of Whitchurch.

Just another 24 days passed—they work fast, these judges, considering they're so old—the NGA and SLADE were hauled into the courts by a host of companies—Associated Newspapers, Westminster Press, Trust House Forte, Boots . . .—because they'd blacked advertisers who'd gone on placing adverts with the *Nottingham Evening Post*.

'Outrageous' said Denning: interference with commercial contracts, contracts of employment and—and new one this—interference with the freedom of the press (advertisers?) which is a 'fundamental principle implicit in our law'.

The other two judges were a little more modest—they said it wasn't the moment to decide so important a question!

Finally and most bizarre of all came Denning's decision that the *whole* of last winter's journalists' strike had been illegal because there wasn't a secret ballot. NUJ rules say there must be a ballot (with a two-thirds majority) if there is to be a 'withdrawal of labour affecting a majority of the members.'

Denning took this to mean that because the NUJs strike affected the whole union—blacking non-unionists and scabs etc—then there should have been a national ballot of *all* members (with a two-thirds

majority) before the 9,000 provincial members came out!

Readers who have followed Lord Denning this far may not have noticed that it's curious that action which was not apparently 'in furtherance of a trade dispute'—the blacking of the Press Association last December—now seems to have become a 'withdrawal of employment affecting a majority' of members of the NUJ.

They may also have noticed that the noble Lord's decision means that every time NUJ members are called out on strike, it needs a two-thirds majority in a national ballot—because every time the union sends out an official instruction not to supply copy to scab publications.

A climate of fear

After this slightly breathless rush through the labyrinths of prejudice, the most important thing we need to note is the effect on the bureaucracy and sections of the rank-and-file leadership.

The NGA is now resisting calling out its membership on a one-day solidarity strike in support of Nottingham, for fear of the 'law'. SOGAT London Central branch was recently persuaded to call off its blacking of the *Stratford Express*, for fear of the 'law'.

The TUC Printing Industries

Committee is said to be scared of organising mass pickets of Nottingham because of the possibility of conspiracy charges. The NUJ is unable to pay its members fines from central funds because of a court decision against it. The NUJ has stopped instructing its members not to deal with organisations supplying copy to papers in dispute ...

There is a climate of fear combined with cowardice permeating previously strong sections of the trade union movement that must be swept away if our organisations are not to be paralysed. The first signs of this happening have been Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council's defiance of injunctions against picketing.

The need is for this type of defiance to be organised and strengthened to the level where the NGA, NUJ, SLADE, UCATT or whoever puts two fingers up to Denning and his mates. At the moment the employers are having a field day. *Dave Beecham*

ONE LAW FOR THE RICH

Almost as if to provide an object lesson in the impartiality of the law, Lord Denning has recently delivered another important judgement.

This time he has sprung to the defence of the Romminster financial group and what the *Economist* calls their 'famous schemes for tax minimisation'.

The search of Rosminster's Mayfair offices and of some private houses by the Board of Inland Revenue was, according to Denning, illegal because the warrant authorising the searches did not specify what the taxmen were looking for.

Denning invoked the famous 18th century case of John Wilkes, the radical journalist whose papers were seized by agents of George III. The seizure was declared illegal because it was carried out under a general warrant.

At least Denning has been honest enough to tell us what the 'freedom' Thatcher and Co are concerned to defend is all about. In the 18th century it meant freedom for the radical press to attack the government. Today 'freedom' means the right of rich people to evade taxes.

Wages:

The battles ahead

For the first time in years there has been no summer 'truce' on wages. The engineers' dispute alone would have seen to that, but this year's pay battles have been marked by workers' determination not to settle for anything less than they have to—especially since the budget.

There has not been a massive wave of wage militancy yet. Apart from Chrysler and GEC—where management has firmly dug in its toes—the significant signs have been votes against accepting wage offers rather than votes in favour of all-out strike action.

Over and over again—the power workers, ICI, Pilkingtons etc—section after section has declared itself dissatisfied with what employers have to offer, without being willing to face a showdown.

The showdowns that have taken place—at Chrysler, GEC, ITV in particular—have largely been of management's choosing. At ITV for example, the technicians went on strike in response to the employers' clear intention of locking them out.

Whatever the reasons for this mood—militancy up to a certain limit—the result has been to put a sharp brake on pay settlements. Right across the board—in weak as well as strong places—wage increases have been delayed two, three or even up to six months.

The long negotiations over the engineering agreement have also meant people holding back at plant level. This effectively

means that the pay 'round', so loved by the newspapers and employers alike, no longer exists.

The idea of a pay 'year' is also disappearing—as it did before the massive wages offensive in autumn 1974.

Interim

Meanwhile quite large groups of workers have been coming back for a second bite at the cherry before their 12 months deals are up. This has happened at Kodak and Shell.

And in a very interesting move several of the oil companies—BP, Petrofina and Mobil—have pre-empted pay claims by tanker drivers with increases before the old agreements run out. Mobil has managed to break away completely from the normal January settlement dates.

British Oxygen has had similar hopes of moving away from the 'dangerous' autumn wage bargaining period and of trying to prevent BOC stewards being the spearhead of any pay offensive. It doesn't look as though the company is going to get away with it.

Nor does it look as though the road haulage bosses' efforts to shift their settlements into the new year is going to have that much effect. The Birmingham drivers from the container base (the 5/35 branch of the T&G) still have their deal running from 1 September, and nothing the RHA can do will stop them setting the pace.

Red October?

If there is going to be a massive breakout from the unofficial wage controls which the employers are trying to apply, it looks as though October could be the month.

There's likely to be a huge build-up of wage-claims both nationally and at factory level,

with inflation pushing towards the 17 per cent level.

Of course, the second week in October is when tax rebates come through, which the Tories hope will take some of feeling out of the claims.

Details of the most significant pressure points and of some other places where there could be trouble are contained in the two boxes.

A lot clearly depends on the

outcome of the engineering dispute and for that matter a number of other outstanding claims—government dock and munitions workers for example—as well as strength of feeling in defence of jobs.

If resistance falters in the yards on the Tyne, Clyde and Mersey a lot of people are going to start looking over their shoulders.

Reg Hall.

Wages—The Big Battalions

September

Rolls-Royce, Crewe
BOC
Vauxhall
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries
Birmingham Containerbase drivers
Glass Container industry
wire industry
ICL
Leyland Vehicles, Chorley
Reed Paper

October

Atomic Energy Authority
British Nuclear Fuels
Metal Box
BBC
Rolls-Royce, Derby
Michelin
IMI, Birmingham
Tate & Lyle

Wages—Places to Watch

September

British Sugar
Caterpillar, Glasgow
Littlewoods, Mail Order
Honeywell, Glasgow
Mather & Platt, Manchester
Beechams
Grimsby/Immingham Docks
Sunderland Forge & Engineering
RHM Foods
Climax Conveyancer, Warrington
Reyrolle (NEI)
ITT, Bolton
Gainsborough Cornard
Alcan, Skelmersdale
British Aluminium, Lanes.

October

Alcan, Newport
Dowty Group,
Gloucester/Cheltenham
United Glass, Scottish plants
Electrolux, Luton
Hawker Siddeley, Broughton
Thorn Colour Tubes
Plessey, Beeston
GEC, Lincoln
Crane Fruehauf
Eaton Group
Leyland Paints

and also—Breweries, Hull and Sheffield engineers.

Engineers:

Definitely Maybe

It all depends on where you are. On one hand look at the mass meetings in Leeds or Bradford which have voted unanimously for all out strike action. Or Coventry and Manchester where engineers have come out 100 per cent solid.

On the other hand, what about London—hardly a picket in sight, let alone a mass

meeting to call for anything. Or Leyland, where opposition to the two-day strike call has been evident.

Confusion is evident. Not only on the left, but in the ranks of the AUEW bureaucracy and the Engineering Employers' Federation.

One sure fact is that northern areas—the West Midlands, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Scotland—have been much better than London and the South East.

Once again the London broad left—in office since before the second world war—has been shown up as bankrupt.

And the worst thing is that this apathetic mood has spread among the rank and file: the worst example being a petition in support of normal working by women piece-workers at Trico.

In the Manchester area the picture has been completely different. Firms have been breaking ranks, firms outside the EEF have been hit by the strikes and are looking for ways to settle, stewards meetings have been the best attended for years.

So far (prior to the two-day strikes) the employers have pursued quite a cautious line.



Nationally they were surprised by the backing for the one-day stoppages; so far there have been only isolated attempts at lock outs.

The EEF has been waiting quite openly for frustration with the temporary stoppages to set in, and they are pretty convinced that the two-day strike call will split the rank and file.

Two-day strikes are as good a way as possible to cause disunity and disarray: some people, in continuous process plants, will probably be locked out.

Others will go from Friday night to Wednesday morning

without any information or involvement in the dispute, unless they turn up for picketing. In the weaker areas—such as in London or British Leyland—there is a lot of pressure to work normally.

Meanwhile the AUEW leadership is looking increasingly hard for some sort of compromise. The EEF has as good as offered new talks on a slightly improved offer, if the CSEU is more 'realistic'.

The AUEW right wing's problem is that they only have a short time during which they can sell this sort of shabby deal.

Bill George

There have been votes for all-out strikes in Leeds and Bradford. A narrow vote against a total stoppage in Hull, a clear majority in favour of a total stoppage in Birmingham (the vote was not taken). The strikes have been near 100 per cent solid.

Meanwhile in London on the third Monday stoppage, a quick bike ride round the Park Royal area showed a number of factories closed—whether on holiday or on strike no one seemed to know—a complete absence of pickets, and Park Royal Vehicles, an old CP haven, working normally.

Staff in Willesden's Lucas Aerospace factory also appeared to be working—but it was probably only an alternative plan

Redundancy in Steel

Outrage at the announced decisions to close Shotton and Corby steelworks should not obscure the fact that these are simply the latest incidents in a massive reorganisation of the British steel industry.

According to the *Financial Times*:

'Nearly 26,000 jobs have been reduced from the British Steel Corporation's chain of iron, steel and construction works in the past two and a half years—regarded as the most drastic restructuring programme so far achieved by a member of the European Coal and Steel Community'.

Total employment in the BSC has fallen from a peak level of nearly 230,000 in 1974 to between 182,000 and 183,000 today. Nearly 100 plants and offices have been closed since January 1977.

All this, note, took place under a Labour government. The new measures announced by the Tories are simply a continuation of the restructuring programme initiated under Wilson and Callaghan. The aim is to cut another 16,000 jobs in the next 12 months.

Even this may not be enough. BSC's target is to produce 15-16 million liquid tonnes a year by 1980-81 with a workforce of 160,000 to 170,000.

By world standards these

figures involve quite low productivity levels. The French government plans to cut its steel workforce from 130,000 to 110,000 while continuing to produce over 20 million liquid tonnes a year.

Hence the persistent rumours reported by the *FT* 'that in a last, desperate bid to get back into profitability, the British Steel Board might suggest to the government the the closure of one of the half-dozen major steel-making centres' such as Llanwern or Scunthorpe.

So in the end the closures which steel-workers have grudgingly accepted because of appeals to the national interest by union leaders like Bill Sirs (plus sizable redundancy payments) will prove to be a prelude to yet more savage attacks.

Even then, the *FT* suggests, closing down Llanwern, for example, 'would make British industry even more dependent on imported sheet steel. And imports already account for about half the British market'.

What better illustration of capitalism's crazy logic could there be? In order to make an industry competitive, we have first to destroy it. Such is the law of the market preached to us by our Tory rulers.

Alex Callinicos

Public Sector:

Clegg Sews-Up Sell-Out

The first awards made by the Clegg Commission to the public sector workers suggest that it is carrying out its work exactly as it was asked to do by the Labour Government that set it up.

The comparability studies it has done have produced results that give little to the low paid, particularly the 600,000 part-timers, almost all women, who work for the local authorities, and the awards to the higher grades not only restore differentials but make them wider than ever before.

What Clegg has not done, he was not asked to do. The terms of the references to Clegg did not say that the commission should resolve the problem of low pay. The fact that the union leaders who recommended settlement of last winter's disputes have fought shy of criticising Clegg shows that they have always been aware of the meaning of the terms they accepted.

Almost the left press has denounced Clegg for not giving higher awards. We could join the denunciations but his would mean that we, too, would be missing the point. The trouble is that the Clegg awards have been criticised out of context.

Looking back you might remember how the nine per cent plus £1, plus the promise of comparability exercises was sold. The Labour government was in disarray with so many public sector workers on strike and the public sector union leaders were looking for a way out.

David Basnett, general secretary of the GMWU, and a close friend of Jim Callaghan was the key instigator of the idea that a comparability promise might get his members back to work and save, or postpone the crisis for, the Labour government.

At a press conference called by the GMWU on the same day that the first report of the Clegg Commission was published, Basnett and Charlie Donnet, the GMWU's national officer for the public sector dispute, said that Clegg proved that they were right to accept the comparability references as the 'selling part' of the settlements

last winter.

In fact Charlie Donnet was more than honest about why the Clegg solution was so important for solving the disputes. He said, 'last winter we were up to our necks in it and looking for something to save the national interest'.

Bureaucratic quarrels

One of the many tragedies that occurred in the rush to settle the public sector strikes was the way in which the union leaders involved forced divisions among the members.

When the NUPE members and the NUPE executive attended to go it alone, leaders of the other unions involved, GMWU, TGWU, and CoHSE, not only put very hard pressure on NUPE to settle, but were in a position to outvote NUPE on the negotiating councils, despite NUPE's numerical strength among those involved in the dispute.

What was so cynical about the bureaucratic manoeuvrings was that the NUPE members are amongst the lowest grades, and therefore the lowest paid, the very groups that have done so badly out of the Clegg awards, and currently the ones most threatened by the Tory job cuts.

The Tory government's reaction has been to say, in much the same way as it has said to the civil servants, that part of the increases in earnings will have to be financed through job-less, within the context of overall, more astringent, budgets.

All this means that when the local authority and NHS ancillary workers come to put their claims this November and December they can have little trust in their union leaders. The muted response to Clegg by Basnett and Fisher is accompanied by complete silence on how to fight this winter for even the achievement this time of what so many struck for last time.

The lesson that the responsibility for Clegg's tiny increases lies on the shoulders of the key union negotiators may be a hard one to swallow, but it may stop a lot of good members going up a blind alley again.

Jon Watson

Blue Murder

'Having handled all the stupid and vicious slanders on the Special Patrol Group superbly, Sir David McNee goes and spoils it by ordering an "investigation" into the role of the SPG...'

'Why, at a time when the lunatic left are bandying words about murderers and thugs, does the commissioner make the slightest concession to the clamour?' (*Police*, monthly magazine of the Police Federation, July 1979).

Why indeed? A bigger mystery, however, is what has happened to the investigation into the death of Blair Peach. He was killed over four months ago, and there is still not a word. The police clearly hope that if they wait long enough people will forget. They won't.

Meanwhile, the competition between London and Merseyside police forces for the police brutality award continues. On the night of 1 August Sarn Singh Grewal died in Southall police station. According to the police he choked on his own vomit.

When his family doctor was finally allowed to see the body, he saw bruises on the limbs and a severe bruise on the head. Now the inquest has been adjourned for police forensic tests.

The *New Statesman* recently looked into the events surrounding the death of Jimmy Kelly in Huyton police station in June. A post-mortem revealed that Kelly's jaw was fractured in two places, a vertebra was crushed and the upper part of his body was covered in bruises.

Kelly died of heart failure brought on by serious injuries, shock and drunkenness.

The *NS's* investigations uncovered evidence that Kelly's death was preceded by a week of police violence at the station.

Systematic beatings with truncheons, boots and knotted

towels and repeated use of cigarette burns left cell inmates with broken bones and other injuries requiring hospital treatment.

We know the SPG are completely out of control—now the rest of the force are following suit.

SPECIAL PATROL GROUPS IN THE UK

Force	Name of Group	Date established	Size*
England			
Avon & Somerset	Task Force	1973	55
City of London	Special Operations Group	1977	16
Derbyshire	Special Operations Unit	1970	11 (1976)
Essex	Force Support Unit	1973	32 (1974)
Gloucestershire	Task Force	—	—
Greater Manchester	Tactical Aid Group	1976	70 (1977)
Hertfordshire	Tactical Patrol Group	1965	28
Humberside	Support Group	1978	47
Lancashire	Police Support Unit	1978	—
Merseyside	Task Force	1974 - 76	68 (1975)
	Operational Support Division	1976	—
Metropolitan Police	Special Patrol Group	1965	204
Norfolk	Police Support Unit	—	—
Northumbria	Special Patrol Group	1974	46 (1977)
North Yorkshire	Task Force	1974	—
Nottinghamshire	Special Operations Unit	—	34 (1976)
Staffordshire	Force Support Unit	1976	23
Thames Valley	Support Group	1969	41
West Midlands	Special Patrol Group	1970	85
West Yorkshire	Task Forces	1974	—
Wales			
Gwent	Support Group	1972	20
South Wales	Special Patrol Group	1975	54
Scotland			
Central Scotland	Support Group	—	—
Strathclyde	Support Units	1973	145 (1975)
N. Ireland			
Royal Ulster Constabulary	Special Patrol Group	1970	368

* 1978 figures except where stated

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Iran

The last two weeks have seen the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the petty bourgeois masses who back him launch a massive assault on

their real or potential opponents.

The two major targets have been the Kurdish minority in the west of Iran and the liberal and left-wing opposition in the central, properly Persian, part of Iran around Tehran.

The trouble in Tehran came to a head when the Islamic Guards—the Komitehs—

closed down the liberal paper *Ayendegan* on 7 August.

Although the 'Ministry for National Guidance' had already imposed severe press curbs, including heavy punishment for insulting religious leaders, this new attack on a paper which had carried much reporting of the rigging tactics employed by the pro-Khomeini Islamic Republican Party in the election to the 'Council of Experts' on 3 August was seen by both sides as a sign of a big increase in repression against the left.

On 12 August, 100,000 people ranging from liberals to the militants of the left-wing guerrilla groups marched for press freedom. They were attacked by Islamic extremists and more than 160 people were injured. The following day the Tehran headquarters of the Fedayeen guerrilla group were sacked by a reactionary mob.

The Islamic left-wing guerrilla group, the

Mojahadeen-e-Khalq, were better prepared and defended their headquarters with armoured cars and anti-aircraft weapons. Since then, pressure has mounted in Tehran and all left-wing publications are now officially closed down, although some still appear in underground form.

The attack on the Kurds is a much more desperate adventure since it involves a direct attack upon a traditionally militant, well-organised and well-armed national group.

The Iranian army is still in a state of confusion and the seriousness of the Ayatollah Khomeini's threat to the Kurds was emphasized when he called upon all armed Islamic militants to rush to Kurdistan to fight the Kurds.

In doing so, he called the main Kurdish party, the Kurdish Democratic Party, 'devilish'; since this is the same term as is used to describe the Shah and all his works, the

Fred Haliday, recently returned from Iran, wrote in the *New Statesman* of 'the growth of irregular military units, recruiting young unemployed men to carry out vigilante tasks'—groups such as the Regiment of Youth, the Blackshirts, the Army of Guards, as well as the official Revolutionary Guards and the Komiteh Militia.

'Ill-trained and divided as these units may be, and in incapable of facing seriously armed foes like the Kurds, they are nonetheless a formidable force of urban repression and can be sure of further expansion in a time of high unemployment. In late July up to 60,000 of such irregulars paraded through the streets of Tehran ...

'Equally sinister is the rise of a new secret police organisation called SAVAME—SAVAK with one word altered ("Country" changed to "Nation"). According to one man who recently came out of Evin jail, the imprisoned members of the former Counter-Espionage section of SAVAK were summoned to the central office there some weeks ago and asked to start working again, for SAVAME. Some of the indictments against left-wingers now in jail are based on old SAVAK files'.

broadcast amounted to a call for a savage attack on the Kurds.

If the situation in Kurdistan continues to get worse, there is every prospect of large-scale massacres of the Kurdish people.

The reasons for this sudden lurch into military confrontation with the opposition are simple. The national minorities in Iran are angry that the draft constitution promises them nothing in the way of self-government or national rights and the demand not simply for autonomous administration but for national self-determination has recently been growing.

In some areas—among the Kurds and the Turkomans—peasants have begun seizing land from the landowners. In addition, Kurdistan at least has been an area of relatively liberalism in religious matters since the overthrow of the Shah, with alcohol openly on sale and women having a far more prominent place in political life.

Thus Khomeini and his followers had every incentive to smash the best organised opposition before the tentative links between the various national minorities and the left grew to anything substantial. Also, to break the power of the best-organised group would act as a warning to any other minority which might want to try anything.

The left wing are victims of another aspect of Khomeini's problems: the economic situation. The vast mass of the poor who brought down the Shah and catapulted Khomeini from exile to power wanted far more out of their revolution than a return to the law of Islam.

They wanted food, jobs, decent housing and a better life. This they have not yet got. Inflation is running at around 50 per cent and unemployment is estimated at between 30 and 50 per cent. Discontent amongst the working class and the urban poor is slowly rising despite the hold of religious ideas.

Khomeini spelt out his view of this on 7 August:

'With great sorrow, in these days after the revolution, when all strata of society must join hands to rebuild the damages done by the Satanic government, and make up for the losses by supporting the government of the Islamic Republic, it is seen and heard that strike after strike, sit-in after sit-in,

demonstration after demonstration, and lies-spreading after lies-spreading are being resorted to in attempts to weaken the government by any deceit and any kind of rumour-mongering ...

'I should remind our much respected brothers and sisters that in the same way that during the revolution sit-ins and strikes against Satan were pleasing to Almighty God, at the present time when the government is Islamic and national ... sit-ins, strikes and rumour-mongering and baseless tumult which causes a weakness in the government and the strengthening of the enemies of Islam and the nation, causes anger to God.'

The fear in the mind of the new rulers of Iran is clear; unless they act now, the masses who brought down the Shah might start to listen to the left and repeat their performance, this time against Khomeini.

The timing of the attack was determined by the fact that in the 3 August elections the Islamic leaders had managed, partly through popular enthusiasm but also through coercion and ballot-rigging, to show that they commanded considerable support.

Despite a boycott by the main forces of the opposition, the results of the election still clearly indicated that the religious leaders do retain substantial popular support.

Whether the reactionary offensive can succeed depends upon the social forces at play. The real social base of Khomeini and his co-thinkers is in what is called the 'Bazaar'—that is the mass of old style petty-bourgeois merchants and manufacturers who are very numerous in Iran.

They want to use the new state to increase their wealth and power. In fact, this group contains people who are very rich already and see the revolution as a tool to turn themselves into fully-fledged big capitalists.

At the same time, the clergy have considerable organising powers and control the network of Komitehs which are the only effective armed wing of the state in Iran. Immediately after the overthrow of the Shah, these contained many radical elements, but they have now been purged very extensively.

In terms of social composition they contain many different layers but their main base is amongst unemployed

youth. For these people, the pay of 100 pounds a month is a welcome alternative to the misery of unemployment.

The militias are organised by the Mullahs and other loyal supporters of Khomeini and are only issued with weapons for specific tasks. Thus, despite the chaos and confusion of the official state, and the frequent dis-organisation of the local Komitehs, the reactionaries have substantial social, economic and military power at their command.

On the side of the opposition, the picture is more complicated. Although the national minorities make up about 50 per cent of Iran's total population, they have very wide differences between them. As we have seen, the Kurds are the best organised and most militant, but others are less perpared.

The Turkomans have already, in April, fought the central government and managed to win some concessions but the largest group, the Turkish speaking people of Azerbaijan, which is a relatively industrialised area, have so far only engaged in a few protests, being largely under the influence of the 'liberal' Ayatollah Shariat-Madari.

The Arab minority in Khuzestan, the main oil-producing area, have been in revolt since May, but the mass movement there seems to have been savagely crushed with more than 5,000 people

reported to have been imprisoned. Since then, actions seem to have been confined to guerrilla attacks on the oil installations.

Although this is a major threat to the regime, since the oil workers' strike was one of the decisive factors which brought down the Shah and any interruption in the oil money would be a serious blow to Khomeini too, the majority of the oil workers are Persians and do not yet identify with their Arab brothers and sisters.

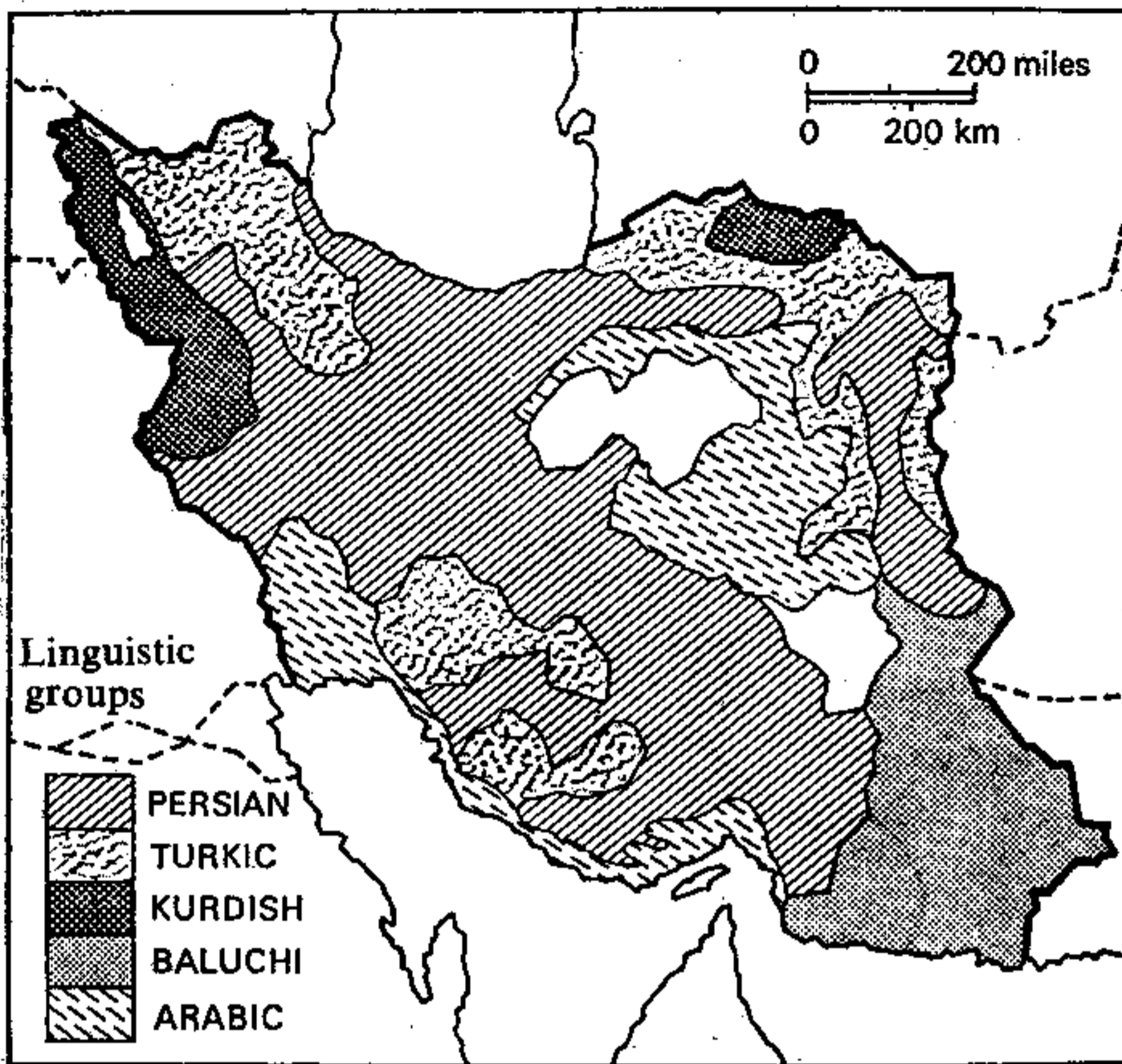
The working class and the left present a still more difficult patchwork. Although the working class in Iran is large, and played the central role in the overthrow of the Shah, a very high proportion work in very small units of production and many are still under the influence of religion.

While there has been a massive growth of self-organisation, both in factory committees and in trade unions, Islamic groups, backed by the Komitehs, have managed to drive out or intimidate many of the leftists in the factories. Despite this, there is still very strong organisation and militancy.

In one textile factory, workers have refused to work nights. A manager of a chemical factory recently reported that he can't stand going to work as he has to face a long string of demands every time he walks into his office.

Most factories are working





under capacity since so much time is taken up by workers' meetings, but the management are still forced to pay out full wages. Thus despite its political weakness, the working class remains strong and confident.

Unfortunately, the left has not been able to build any real organised base in the factories. Before the overthrow of the Shah, the pro-Moscow Tudeh party was the only group with any real working-class membership.

The struggle to overthrow the Shah brought thousands of workers into sympathy with all of the left groups, but none of these has yet managed to develop to the point where they can turn supporters into active fighters.

In a very interesting move the US government has offered five million dollars worth of spare parts and ammunition to the Iranian armed forces to help them crush the Kurds.

A state department spokesman explained that it was in the interests of the stability of Iran and of the middle east as a whole that 'the authority and effectiveness of the Bazargan government be strengthened'. Washington is now throwing its weight publicly behind Khomeini.

What, then, are the prospects? It does not look as though there is likely to be any quick outcome either way. There is no single force at

present which is strong enough to take control of the whole of Iran.

It looks as though Khomeini is wary of a fight to the finish with the Kurds and is trying to reach some sort of deal through splitting the opposition and bribing the collaborators with oil money.

For their part, the Kurds are very well armed and could probably put up a stiff fight against the shaky Iranian army and the urban mobs of the Komitehs. But they are unlikely to go for an all-out war either.

The Iranian Air Force, allegedly still supported by American technical experts, is still supported by American technical experts, is still in good shape and total air superiority would lead to very heavy losses both military and civilian. As one Kurdish leader said recently: 'We can resist the Iranian Army but not the Air Force'.

The working class represents a very different set of problems. There is no doubt that the growing economic crisis and the level of working-class organisation will lead to major conflicts.

But there is no guarantee that these will automatically lead to either victory or an increase in political consciousness.

A great deal of what happens will depend on whether any revolutionary group is strong enough and politically prepared enough to survive the current wave of repression and to go on

to begin to build some serious working class support.

If that were to happen, then we could begin to hope for a socialist outcome from the present crisis. Without it, the likely outcome is one type or another of repressive regime.

However, neither of those two things are going to happen overnight. For the foreseeable future the situation in Iran will be marked by sharp changes of position and increasing tensions. The next period will be a grim one.

Colin Sparks

Iraq

In June this year the National Union of Students voted to withdraw recognition from the National Union of Iraqi Students. The decision, taken after extensive deliberations, came as the culmination to a series of events in which Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party students, who dominate the union, took to settling their dispute with the Iraqi Communist Party on the streets and campuses around Britain.

In two incidents in Swansea and Manchester, Ba'athists beat-up communists severely. The upshot has been, not surprisingly, considerable disquiet and friction between the NUS and

Arab student unions, with the Iraqis in particular, determined to reverse the decision in the coming year.

Rather than examine the background to these events, or defend the decision of the NUS, it might be useful to take a look at today's Iraqi state and current Ba'athist regime.

Iraq's Ba'athists have held on to power uninterrupted since 1968, although they have been the dominant political force since when they first held power in 1963. They claim to be the rightful inheritors of a 'revolution' which, in 1958, overthrew the Hashemite monarchy and landowning rentier class and established a republic.

Today, already three years into the first economic plan, the Ba'athists are avowedly building socialism. Oil revenues from Iraq's flush reserves (said to be upwards of 95 bn barrels) have been put to good use eradicating illiteracy and constructing a significant degree of industry.

Heroic Iraqi workers are pictured cutting irrigation channels at Diyala, or spanning bridges across the Euphrates, transforming a wilderness into an advanced country.

As dynamic, wealthy rulers, with a mission to accomplish, the Ba'athists have bestowed their favour generously. They paid the election expenses for the former gaullist prime minister, Jaques Chirac, and

have acted as benefactors to groups on the British left.

They cast themselves in the role of the arch defenders of the Palestinians, their most steadfast supporters and determined advocates. Above all else, the Ba'athists like to consider themselves 'progressive'—and they have spent a sizable sum making the image fit.

These outward appearances projected by the Ba'athists are misleading. They hide a substantial record of heinous butchery, a systematic attempt since 1963 to deracinate all opposition to their power.

Countless Kurds, Communists and militant workers have, over the years, come under their hammer. Recently too, 3,000 leading Shi'ites, followers of the Ayatollah Montazeri who (a close friend of Khomeini's) were arrested as Iraq's rulers scrambled to prevent a spill-over from Iran.

Of all the groups that have resisted Ba'athist rule in Iraq, the Kurds have been the most resilient and enduring. From 1961 until the present day they have waged a sporadic and intermittent war against Iraqi repression for their own self-determination.

In 1966 the Bazzaz government of the time concluded a brief truce with the Kurds, and an amnesty was declared (though this did not extend to the Communist Party). But it was short-lived since when the Ba'athists seized power in 1968 hostilities were resumed.

Eventually, after Saddam Hussain, the effective Iraqi leader, reached a deal with the Shah, in 1974, that closed the Kurdish supply routes, the Iraqi army managed to overpower the Kurds and impose a settlement.

Even so, ending the costly exercise meant concessions had to be made: in particular a Kurdish autonomy law and a National Front with the Communist Party and the Kurdish National Party—a group with no real support among the Kurds.

None of these concessions ever reduced or threatened Ba'athist power and, in time, they even proved useful, serving to diffuse the conflict. Both have now been jettisoned. The autonomy law was always phoney.

It did not include traditional Kurdish areas and was drawn round places where oil was located. Parts of it were never implemented and the govern-

ment retained a veto.

According to Azziz Mohammed, the present General Secretary of the Iraqi CP, the only alternative to such a front for communists was systematic annihilation. Yet systematic annihilation is what has been occurring anyway. Last year, for example, 21 communists were executed, hundreds more lie in prison. It is this conflict that has been imported.

Since 1975, the Ba'athist regime has been physically dismantling the Kurdish community. It is a process of actually changing the character of the population. Kurds are being deported and replaced by Arab tribes such as the Jiboor, al-Hadid, al-Taiyawi and Shir-qat.

A scorched-earth policy is being operated and hundreds of Kurdish villages have been levelled. The similarities with the Zionist occupation of Palestine are striking. Whereas between 1948 and the present, some 385 Palestinian villages were destroyed, just between 15 June and 23 July last year, the Iraqi regime razed 495 Kurdish villages.

In their place modern, concrete, arab-style settlements have been erected, like those at Selaivani, Sheikhan, Mariba, Atrosh, Zinawa, Ba'idhra, al-'Asi and Batofa. Kirkuk, Kanaqin and Sinjar have already been disinfected of Kurds and similar treatment is presently being prepared for Siakan, Dinarta, Garda-Sin and Jojar (in the Aqra area) and Bela (in the Barzan area).

The Kurds that have been evicted from their homes and villages have been deposited in what is called 'cluster-villages'—a euphemism for a form of concentration camp on the Rhodesian army model. Last year, some 28,000 Kurdish families were deported to such camps.

At the beginning of this year, on the regime's own admission, a further 22,000 families, from the province of Sulaimaniya alone, were evicted and deported. Taking the two years as a whole, something like 300,000 Kurds have been displaced.

At the present the Ba'athist regime is faced with a growing array of opposition. Besides the Kurds there is the mutilated but still active CP, galvanised Shi'ite fanatics, a developing proletariat and disaffected elements within the Ba'ath Party

itself. Just recently it was rocked by an attempted coup.

In response to this challenge more repressive laws have been introduced. It is now a capital offence to seek to persuade a Ba'ath Party member to change his allegiances. Six divisions have been mobilised against the Kurds. On 20 July, there was a clash on the Iranian border, 250 Ba'ath Party members have been executed, and there have been successive purges. In the current situation different groups within the Ba'ath Party are fiercely competing for the leadership.

One of the most common myths deployed by the Ba'athists is that the overthrow of the Monarchy and landowners in 1958 was a revolution. Under closer examination this is totally spurious. It was a military coup amidst an upsurge of nationalism.

The impetus came from the land question. 58 per cent of the population lived on the land. In 1957, 3.8m were landless. Even by middle-east standards, the peasantry were particularly poverty-stricken. As for the working class, in 1957 only 90,291 workers were employed in industrial production, in 22,460 enterprises. Of these, 45 per cent were one-man businesses, and 93 per cent of them employed less than five workers. The leadership behind the upsurge came from the growing urban middle class, not the workers.

The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, founded under the leadership of Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Bin Bitar in Syria in 1954, very much represents this middle-class. In 1956, it joined a National United Front with a liberal-bourgeois grouping, the National Democratic Party, and the Communist Party.

In February 1963, Ba'athist army officers ousted General Kassem (who had been the ruler since 1958). Their rule lasted only nine months then, but in those nine months they intensified the wave of repression against the Kurds and CP.

Ever since the Ba'athists seized power again in 1968 it has been the same faction of the Party that has held power. They are a ruthless group, rife with nepotism, drawn from a narrow social base around Tikrit, Haditha, Rawa, Ana, Falluja. They promote their cousins, uncles and friends to posts in the bureaucracy and army.

Saddam Hussain, now Presi-

dent was cousin to the recently departed President Bakr. His brother, Barzan, was promoted head of Intelligence in July, and his first cousin, General Adnan Talfah, is minister of defence. Saadoun Chaker, the interior minister, comes from Tikrit. And Latif Nassif Jassem, the minister of culture, also comes from this area.

Iraq is not a socialist country but has, under their leadership, become an overwhelmingly state capitalist country.

The tobacco industry is nationalised; date processing (though not growing) is nationalised; large tracts of land have been nationalised; and most importantly, since 1972, oil has been nationalised.

The sudden collapse of the Shah has had many repercussions for Iraq. For the Ba'athists, there is an increasing destabilising effect. For international capital, Iraq is a promising alternative market to Iran, for their penetration.

But most importantly, for the left, is the dedicated struggle of the Kurds. The crushing of the Kurds will be the pre-condition for the routing and defeat of the Left throughout both Iraq and Iran. *Jon Bearman*

The Caribbean

Jamaica. 8 January. Rocked by a virtual general strike for three days, with rioting that leaves six dead and half a million dollars' damage.

Michael Manley's social-democratic Peoples National Party government oversaw a 40 per cent increase in the cost of living in 1978. The right-wing opposition Jamaica Labour Party had hoped a 25 per cent increase in the cost of petrol would cause Manley to fall and called a demonstration.

Starting as a middle-class protest it ended in a near revolt by the most oppressed sections of the Jamaican working class. The bauxite workers and many others struck in support of the demonstration even though their union is affiliated to Manley's party.

The communist Workers Party of Jamaica attacks the strikes because it is in electoral alliance with the Government. The right wing which had

initiated the 'civil disobedience' realises it has burned its fingers.

The CIA and the Jamaica Labour Party are forced to retreat. The crisis is temporarily averted. With a huge inflation rate, 25 per cent unemployment, stringent IMF conditions on recent loans, Jamaica is bankrupt.

Grenada. 13 March. A thousand miles to the south-east. Eric Gairy, a former labour leader who has run the island like a Mafia godfather is finally thrown out. His Chilean-trained army surrenders within 24 hours to the revolutionary forces of the New Jewel (Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation) Movement.

7000 armed youths (Grenada's total population is only 100,000) take control of the island. The downfall of one of the most corrupt despots in the Eastern Caribbean at the hand of the armed people sends shockwaves throughout the region.

St. Lucia. Nearby. The prime minister and his party immediately lose a general election. Their support for the ousted Gairy was not appreciated by the electorate! The workers of the island's huge oil shipment terminal have since been on strike, as have teachers and civil servants on the neighbouring island of St. Vincent.

Dominica. 29 May. At the other end of the Windward

Islands. 18,000 workers down tools and take to the streets in support of the civil servants pay claim and against anti-union and press censorship laws. A quarter of the island's population are on the streets that day to be met by gunfire from the army.

Within a month prime minister Patrick John has to flee the country to be replaced by a motley bunch of ex-ministers and opposition politicians. (Patrick John had been the author of the notorious 'Dread Act' which authorised the shooting down of Rastas in their homes by police).

Guyana. August. Near general strike. For the first time since 1963 the mainly Asian sugar workers are united with the mainly African bauxite workers. (Remember that racial divisions are crucial to the survival of nearly all the regimes in the Caribbean, especially Guyana and Trinidad).

Since 1963 Forbes Burnham's Peoples National Congress has ruled Guyana. Brought to power by rigged elections, with the backing of Britain and the USA, they have ruled with more rigged elections, rigged referenda, terrorist gangs, Chinese, Russian and Cuban backing, a tame trade-union hierarchy and a dose of Marxist rhetoric.

Today, like Jamaica, Guyana is on the verge of bankruptcy. August saw the most serious challenge to 15 years of PNC

rule.

A new stage in the struggle of the black working class in the Caribbean is unfolding.

In Guyana this found expression in the rising fortunes of the Working People's Alliance, one of the many organisations in the region that has been given the label 'new left'. Its politics are not untypical. It calls for a 'Revolutionary Socialist Guyana', but proposes as an immediate objective an alliance with the stalinist Peoples Progressive Party for a 'government of national reconstruction and unity'.

Guyana also hosts the more radical Working Peoples Vanguard Party which, on the one hand completely rejects the parliamentary road, but on the other struggles for 'socialism' on the Chinese model.

In countries like Grenada, where a clearcut victory for the 'new left' (in the form of the New Jewel Movement) has occurred we see the contradictions more clearly. The new government applied for membership of the Second International and signed treaties with the Cubans.

New prime minister Maurice Bishop disclaims any specific ideology. As he put it in 1974: 'If, for example, you say that you are a socialist, the obvious question is what sort of socialist? Democratic Socialist? Labour Party Socialist? I mean that it has come to mean virtually nothing'. In other

words, Bishop is arguing that with unemployment at nearly 65 per cent, Grenada can't afford an ideology.

But Bishop also expressed the need for workers' and peasants' assemblies with elected representatives to run the country. It must be doubted whether either Cuba or Manley's Jamaica is going to be too happy about that.

The 'new-left' organisations were formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Guyanese Working Peoples Vanguard Party in 1969, Grenadan New Jewel Movement in 1972, Movement for a New Dominica in 1971, and the Workers Party of Jamaica in 1974.

They were born in the wake of a massive black power revolt which started in Jamaica in 1968 and rumbled through to the general strike in Dominica in 1973.

That revolt was an expression of disenchantment with the meagre fruits of independence which had left the Caribbean countries still economically dependent and in general with a light skinned ruling class.

Today's renewed upsurge takes place against the background of a world crisis sharper than ever. As the Caribbean becomes increasingly ungovernable, so the need for the revolutionary left to have the clarity of ideas to direct the working-class revolt becomes more crucial than ever.

Kim Gordon

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a major British political issue again, thanks to Thatcher's initiative at the Commonwealth conference.

The move was prompted largely by the fear that British recognition of the Muzorewa-Smith regime would further damage lucrative economic links with Nigeria, today Britain's chief trading partner in Africa.

Similar idealistic motives will lie behind the political stances adopted by Tory MPs in the coming months.

The table opposite, taken from Counter-Information Services' latest report, shows the economic interests in Zimbabwe of Tory MPs who opposed the renewal of sanctions against the Rhodesian regime last November.

Tory MPs with directorships in firms operating in Zimbabwe

MPs who voted to lift sanctions

MP	Company
Frederic Bennett	Commercial Union
Julian Amery	Vaal Reefs Exploration & Mining Western Deep Levels Grindlays Bank
Geoffrey Dodsworth	Benton & Blowles
Michael Morris	Commercial Union Samuel Osborn Limited

MPs who abstained on sanctions

MP	Company
Daniel Awdry	Rediffusion
BET Omnibus Services	Subsidiary of BET which
David Crouch	Buston-Marsteller
Edward DeCann	Lonrho
Russell Fairgrieve	William Baird
John MacGregor	Hill Samuel & Co.
Anthony Royle	Brooke-Bond Liebig Sedgewick Forbes Wildinson Match Rio-Tinto-Zinc
John Stanley	

Interests

Property and insurance interests in Zimbabwe
Subsidiaries of Anglo-American

Multiple banking subsidiaries
Handles Fisons, which has interests in Zimbabwe

Holds Rhodesian subsidiary via Samuel Osborn South Africa

Subsidiary in Zimbabwe

has interests in Zimbabwe
Handles Wildinson Match which has a subsidiary in Zimbabwe

Large, Divers and contentious operations in Zimbabwe

Asbestos mining subsidiary
Multiple interests

All these companies have subsidiaries in Zimbabwe

Major mining and industrial interests in Zimbabwe

The Long March in Latin America (Part 2)



Nicaragua is not a particularly important country. In one sense, it is just one more banana republic, carved out of Central America by the United Fruit Company at the beginning of the century. Since 1937, it had been ruled by a family—the Somozas—whose name came to mean brutality, violence and corruption.

Between 1927 and 1934, guerrillas led by a young engineer — Sandino — maintained a war in the countryside against the Somozas and the interests that protected and defended them—above all United Fruit.

Though he was betrayed and assassinated in 1934, it is his name that is written across the walls of Nicaragua's capital Managua.

And it is the victory of Sandinismo in a small and unimportant country that will start the pendulum swinging again in Latin America.

Governments and guerrillas

The victory of the Cuban Revolution on January 1st, 1959 led to a decade of guerrillas. Inspired by the Cuban example, as it was rewritten by Régis Debray, young revolutionaries all over Latin America moved into the countryside.

One after another, the guerrillas failed—in Peru in 1965, in Bolivia in 1967 (where Che Guevara died), in Mexico, in Guatemala and so on. Some, of course were most successful; the Tupamaros of Uruguay, for instance became almost legendary in their organisation and heroism.

The problem was that it was a false lesson that had been learned from Cuba. Twenty years of stalinism had paralysed the development of socialism in

Latin America.

Arguing that an underdeveloped continent needed to pass through the capitalist stage before it could consider the transition to socialism, the Latin American Communist Parties compromised with the rising middle class leaderships and delivered the young labour movement on a plate to one opportunist politician after another.

Popular fronts and 'democratic alliances' tied the labour movement to economic demands, while populist politicians proclaiming 'national blocs' or 'progressive alliances' became the political voice of workers and peasants.

By the early 1960s a new generation had grown up in a period when peasants movements and the struggles of workers in mines and cities demanded a new politics. Socialism had been devalued and emptied of meaning by the compromises and deals of the Communist Parties.

But the guerrilla strategy seemed to offer a new revolutionary purity, a guarantee against corruption. The revolutionary could act alone; and the European intellectuals who had given up on the working class of the industrialised world and pronounced them bourgeois, seized on this new hero figure.

Yet what had overthrown Batista in Cuba at the end of 1958 was not just the heroism of the 80 guerrillas of the *Granma*, but a mass movement which supported and supplied the guerrilla movement, and which had undermined the political basis of the Cuban dictatorship through strikes and consistent opposition.

No one disputes the heroism

and selflessness of the guerrillas; they were wrong. The will of the but they were wrong. The will of the revolutionary is no substitute for the actions of the masses.

The Tupamaros could offer no political alternative in Uruguay; the fighters of the Argentine still fought for the return of Peron, even though the Argentine working class had shown its immense strength and its power to build new, autonomous working class organisations in the struggles of Cordoba and Tucuman in 1968 and 1969.

Chile and the Popular Front

Throughout the 1960s, the United States—faced with the guerrillas and a rising popular struggle—put forward its own solution—Christian Democracy. Suddenly Latin America was teeming with academics concerned to 'help Latin America progress'.

The pressure was both political (fear of a more far-reaching, revolutionary solution) and economic. Latin America had always supplied cheap raw materials for imperialist industry, cheap labour in the form of an exploited peasantry and a bitterly repressed urban labour force. But Western capitalism also wanted new markets.

So its solutions offered a slow, gradual introduction of capitalism—but a dependent capitalism. The new industries would be dependent on Western technology, assembling cars or washing machines under licence from the multinationals.

Agriculture would be put on a new footing; in Chile for example, the plan was to nationalise the land and resell to the peasants. The big landowners, properly compensated of course, would then invest in industry, while government control of credit and distribution would make a more efficient capitalist agriculture.

Politically, the plan would create a new reformism, a promise of slow but guaranteed change that would expand the middle class, absorb the radicals, and extend the benefits of the consumer society to a slightly larger percentage of the population.

But this was a continent that had experienced four centuries of a deepening backwardness. Its raw materials filled the coffers of the West, fed the American imperialist power; the vast majority of its people lived under repressive and-

brutal regimes, on the edge of—or below—the subsistence level.

Its struggles for trade union rights or political expression were systematically smashed with external aid; and its States were dominated by tiny minorities who were rewarded with wealth and power, in return for maintaining that situation.

The reformist solution took the lid off a seething pot and released the tensions and conflicts of decades. The promises of Land Reform—vague though they were—spurred waves of land occupations by the peasantry in Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico.

Promises of workers charters and trade union rights opened the door to workers struggles in Mexico, Argentina and Chile. The whole process became increasingly radical—a radicalism that reached its highest expression in Allende's Chile between 1970 and 1973.

Because it did not face the central problem—Latin America's unequal relationship with the developed world, its continuing dependence on the new reformism only served to expose the lie of gradual reform.

There could be no reform without a struggle against imperialism, and there could be no transformation unless the promise of a new, 'reformed' capitalism were thrown out and a revolutionary alternative put in its place, a new model of production and politics.

Ironically, Allende's project for Popular Unity took the reformist project to its logical extreme—and exposed its limitations in the bloodiest possible way—in the military coup of September 11th, 1973.

Millions of words have been written about Chile—because it was there that reformism came face to face with its own contradictions. The political leadership believed in a peaceful, gradual road. But neither the ruling groups nor the working class movement believed in the illusion. In October 1972, the mass movement prepared for the inevitable power struggle—not in parliament, but in the factories, the fields and the streets.

Reformism proclaims the need for solutions, but it can offer none, because it fails to see that there is a fundamental conflict of interest at the heart of the demand for change. There can be no compromise between

opposites—between capitalism (still less the dependent kind) and socialism.

But Allende was frightened by the very power of the workers' movement that he had unleashed—and he used his political influence to hold it back.

Under the slogan 'No Civil War', the Popular Unity coalition delivered tens of thousands of workers and revolutionaries to the torturers and the concentration camps.

But it was not a personal failure, it was the end of a political project, a programme for reform without workers power that foundered and died there in 1973 (as it had in Uruguay in 1971 and in Bolivia in the same year).

The years of the Iron Heel

Imperialism learned the lesson more quickly than the Latin American reformist left (which was busy turning the Chile of Popular Unity into an object of almost religious devotion).

The Latin American ruling classes and the United States abandoned reform and turned instead to the alternative project; the Brazilian model, military rule, repression, the destruction of the labour movement.

Here too there were both political and economic reasons. In the confident expanding economy of the 1960s reformism could offer a growing market, expanding consumption in the 'underdeveloped world' without endangering its inequality.

But by the 1970s, the world recession had put the emphasis on cheap production and conquering the markets of the west. The economic philosophers of the new age were called the Chicago Boys. Their formula was very simple.

Latin America's job was to provide cheap labour and raw materials. To do this would mean huge unemployment levels, the destruction of trade unions, and forcing down the general standard of living. This could not be done under 'normal' conditions, but only in a siege economy under military rule.

The success of the model had been proved in Brazil. In 1964 the military took power there, banning all opposition, destroying the trade unions and making torture an instrument central to the terrorist state. For torture is not used to gain information but to create a permanent fear.

Throughout the Southern Cone countries of Latin America—Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay—the military ruled through their terrorist state by the beginning of 1974. The exception was Argentina. In 1973, the workers movement—not the guerrillas—had destroyed the military regime that had been in power there since 1966.

Peron returned to a waiting crowd of around 2 million. But the contradictions of Peronism were expressed as Peron left his plane at Ezeiza airport and left and right wing peronists shot one another.

The hope was that Peron would contain the workers movement, and control it; but his old magic had gone, the world situation changed. In the end he, like Allende, was faced with clear alternatives; repression and military power, or workers power, whose seeds were sown in the great strikes of Cordoba, Villa Encarnacion and Rosario.

In 1976 the military returned to power under Videla, strengthened and ready with their alternative model. The World Cup served to remind the rest of the world what savagery that model demanded; the endless pictures of torture victims, the hidden camps where militants and socialists die a lingering death, the right wing terrorist squads with their headquarters in the police barracks of Buenos Aires, or Montevideo, or Santiago.

There did appear to be another possibility. In Peru, in 1968 a rising of nationalist officers offered a 'third way'—neither capitalism nor socialism but popular power.

Under Velasco the old landowners were expropriated, the peasants, workers and slum-dwellers organised, and new industry created. It pulled Peru out of backwardness, but simply put it into a new dependency.

The middle way was a dead end; Velasco was replaced by the right wing General Morales Bermudez who, in the name of the 'third way' turned the army against the people, introduced new measures of austerity and accepted new loans from the IMF with all their attached conditions—depress the cost of living, accept shortages, unemployment, savage cuts in public spending.

And now ...?

For Latin America, there were important lessons to be learned from all this. The

reformism of the 1960s—a gradual expansion of the market under the cautious supervision of the Christian Democrat parties—had failed—it had failed because of the world recession and because it had exposed conflicts and contradictions only socialism could resolve. And the same was true of even its most radical—Chilean—version.

The task now was not to 'restore Popular Unity' (as the Communist Parties of the world still demand) nor to substitute the will of the few for the action of the many, however heroic that action. 1979 has been the year when the struggle can begin again; and Nicaragua can, in some ways, be a catalyst.

Somoza was toppled by a mass movement of the Nicaraguan people; the political direction of Sandinismo, a loose coalition of many forces, has yet to be decided—and the issues that face Nicaragua will be those that faced Chile six years ago, a new version of dependent capitalism or socialism, workers power. But it is a small country and much will depend on changes in the rest of Latin America.

In Bolivia, a massive national general strike has stopped the attempt to stop Hernan Siles Suazo, the left's presidential candidate, from taking power. The elections themselves were the result of mass action and a series of general strikes, pressed forward by the miners union, over the last 12 months. But the issue is not resolved yet, as the decision was only suspended.

It is mass action that will tip the balance there. But with its long tradition of determined political trade union organisation, Siles will be pushed beyond his own wavering left reformism.

In Chile itself, the trade union organisation is beginning to be rebuilt. 10,000 marched in Santiago on May Day, and strikes and protests followed the arrest of some of the marchers. But it has to be said that Pinochet is not in danger of defeat; the new Chile exists, and it has rebuilt the economy on the Chicago model.

The public voice of political protest is still Christian Democracy, however; ex-President Frei, the political influence behind the 1973 coup, is now attempting to regain his hold.

In Argentina, the torturers are still in power, but they are more exposed, slightly less

secure, and the labour movement for all the repression is still active.

Even the monolithic Mexican regime has been shaken by demonstrations and occupations which have let everyone see that the jails of this model developing State are full of political prisoners.

In Peru, despite the failure of the three day general strike earlier this year, the revolutionary left had gained over 20 per cent of the popular vote to the Constituent Assembly.

The presidential elections that are scheduled for early next year will probably bring a huge proportion of the popular vote behind the Presidential candidate of the far left.

So the atmosphere is changing. Nicaragua has shaken the military calm; the generals of Argentina and Uruguay quickly withdrew all support from Somoza, and the new social democratic regimes of Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama were quick to support the Sandinistas.

There is a mass movement and there have been victories for the workers movement from Bolivia to the Caribbean (Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia). But the fundamental problem remains to be solved. There is a desperate need for a new politics, a politics capable of combining the struggle against the terrorist State (and for human rights) with strategy for workers power.

Even the Pope has seen that the reformist dream has faded; he went to Latin America to tip the balance against the Catholic left.

The period ahead should be one of self-criticism and a rebuilding of the left. The ikons of popular fronts and failed reformisms must be left behind and the lessons learned from Argentina, from Bolivia and from the Chilean October of 1972.

Latin America's role in a world capitalist system can only be subordinate, supplying the labour and raw materials in exchange for consumer goods and a growth of the middle class.

The only alternative is a continental seizure of the wealth and the resources of Latin America. The history of struggle is there—it is for the Left now to lead those struggles towards the battle for power.

Mike Gonzalez

After an election campaign of surpassing dullness, Britain has woken up to the fact that there is a tough right-wing Tory government in Whitehall. It took the Thatcher government very little time to force through measures which will have a severe effect on jobs and living standards.

The increase in VAT to 15 per cent is biting into real wages. Cuts in public spending agreed by the cabinet, amounting to about £6 billion in 1980-1, represent a new phase in the grim history of the run-down of the welfare state. Labour's cuts affected capital-investment programmes chiefly. The Tory measures are designed to reduce the size of the work-force in the public sector.

The reductions in regional aid to industry will also push more people onto the dole-queues. Public sector assets are to be sold on a large scale on the stock market. Legislation attacking the closed shop and the right to picket will be placed before Parliament.

These measures, along with others in the pipe-line, represent an ambitious attempt to reshape British capitalism. Since socialists over the next few years are going to be busy resisting this attempt it is important to understand its nature.

Nor more Keynes

Ideologically, the Tory strategy amounts to the conscious rejection of the consensus which has underlain British political life ever since the wartime coalition government of 1940-45. The economic and social policies adopted then—in particular the acceptance that it is the task of the government to maintain full employment and the decision (embodied in the 1943 Beveridge report) to build a comprehensive welfare state—were accepted by Labour and Tory governments alike until the early 1970s.

The patron saint of the era was the economist J.M. Keynes. For Keynes claimed to show that it was possible to avoid the mass unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s *within the framework of capitalism*. Government spending, by increasing the effective demand for goods and services, could revive a depressed economy and achieve full employment without any serious inroads into capitalist social relations.

And for 25 years Keynes' remedies seemed to work. Governments throughout the western capitalist world intervened actively to keep their economies on a 'full employment path', apparently with a large measure of success.

Never mind that other factors were in reality responsible for the post-war boom—notably the massive arms expenditure which had already lifted the German economy out of slump in the 1930s and which continued east and west after 1945.

The point was that Keynes seemed to be right. Right-wing social democrats like Anthony Crosland argued that, thanks to Keynes, capitalist crises had gone for good and that significant reforms could be won without challenging the structure of bourgeois power.

No longer. The past decade has seen the world economy resume the pattern of boom and slump which we were supposed to have



THE TORY OFFENSIVE

Alex Callinicos

left behind us. There will be about 20 million unemployed in the main western industrial countries next year. 'No return to the thirties?' The thirties are nearing fast.

And Keynes solutions no longer seem applicable. In the slumps of the pre-war era, prices, output and employment all fell together. Today this is no longer true. The 1970s have seen a classical crisis of over-production *combined* with rising prices.

In these circumstances, governments are afraid to increase public spending in order to revive the economy lest this accelerates inflation.

A good example is the notorious 'Barber boom' of 1972-3, when Heath's chancellor of the exchequer pumped money into the economy after unemployment had gone above the million mark for the first time since the war, only to see industrial investment rise hardly at all, while prices went through the roof.

Similar policies adopted by other governments, notably the Nixon administration in the US, helped guarantee a world-wide recession even before the massive oil-price increases of 1973-4.

Back to the market

Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of the Conservative Party largely in reaction to the failures of the Heath government, especially in the economic field. The lesson of the Barber boom, the Tory right wing

argued, was that Keynes had to be scrapped. In its place was set another economic theory, 'monetarism'.

Monetarism, whose main exponent is the right-wing American economist Milton Friedman, is basically a very simple theory. It starts from the idea, derived from classical economists like David Hume and Adam Smith, that, left to itself, every economy will settle at a certain 'natural' equilibrium level.

This equilibrium will be achieved purely through the forces of supply and demand on the market. There is, for example, a 'natural unemployment rate' at which the supply and demand for labour balance each other out.

Any attempt by the government to make the economy grow faster than the forces of supply and demand will permit can only lead to distortions. Say, in order to keep unemployment at a level lower than the 'natural unemployment rate', the government increases public spending rapidly. In the short term output and employment will rise.

However, the real economy will not be able to sustain such a level of economic growth over any longer period. The result will be too much money chasing too few goods. Something will have to give—the price level. Prices rise.

Thus, according to the monetarists, attempts by governments to act in defiance of the 'natural' economic forces at work lead

to inflation. This is what has happened in the post-war era; Keynes, far from being a saviour, was the source of all evil since he encouraged governments to manage their economies instead of leaving things to the market.

The remedy offered by the monetarists is a simple one. Cut the money supply—the total amount of money in the economy. The result, in the short term, will be a recession. This is, however, the only way in which the economy can be purged of inflation. Once this objective has been achieved, steady economic growth can be resumed, providing the growth in the money supply does not outstrip the 'natural' rate at which the economy can grow.

The corollary of this economic analysis is an attack on the role of the state in post-war capitalism. State intervention in the economy must be left to do the work. Excessive public spending is the main source of inflation.

The welfare services which claim a large share of this spending should therefore be cut back (monetarists do not, however, seem to object to spending on defence and law and order). As far as possible the goods and services an individual receives should depend on the money he or she possesses, not his or her needs.

Can it work?

It is clear that the core economic team of the government—Howe, Joseph, Nott, Biffen, Lawson—as well as Thatcher herself are firmly committed to a monetarist economic strategy. The measures they have announced within barely three months of coming into office show that they are concerned to make a decisive break with the past. So we have a government faced with the prospect of a world recession in 1980 which is firmly committed to drastic cuts in public spending that year. Keynes is well and truly dead.

Will they stick to their guns? The ghost of the Heath government haunts Thatcher. Heath, too, came to power firmly pledged to restoring the market to its proper place. Within a year he had rescued Rolls Royce from bankruptcy, within two years he had backed down at UCS and was reflatting the economy in a thoroughly Keynesian manner. Will it be any different this time?

British industry is in a highly vulnerable state. The recovery in profits which began in 1975 after Labour's wage controls were introduced has halted. Profits in the first quarter were nearly 23 per cent lower than the previous quarter, while the CBI expects the real rate of return (excluding North Sea Oil) to be three per cent this year (compared to an average of 10 per cent in the 1960s).

Government policies have contributed to this situation. A minimum lending rate of 14 per cent makes borrowing by companies very expensive. One of the two main reasons for high interest rates (the other being the aim of limiting the increase in the money supply) is the policy, inherited from Labour, of keeping sterling high.

In part the rise in the pound (up against the other main trading currencies by 9½ per cent by late July, although it has fallen back a little since then) reflects Britain's position



as an oil producer at a time of rising energy prices. But keeping the pound high fits in closely with the rest of the Tories' policies.

A rise in sterling relative to other currencies means that British exports, valued in other currencies, become more expensive, while imports become cheaper since the same number of pounds will now buy more foreign goods. Severe pressure is then placed upon British exporting companies to cut costs, increase productivity, resist 'excessive' wage-claims and thus improve their competitive position. Otherwise, they will lose markets to their foreign rivals. At the same time cheaper imports help to keep British prices from rising too fast, thus encouraging workers to 'moderate' their wage demands.

A high pound thus functions as an indirect form of wage controls. The government instead of intervening directly to keep wages down, leaves it to the market to enforce its discipline upon firms and their employees. Firms which do not adapt are forced out of business. Workers who make 'excessive' wage-demands find themselves on the dole-queue.

The trouble is that it is not clear whether the medicine will work. In many cases the patient is too weak. A number of industries are now suffering severely under the impact of the rising pound and the falling dollar, (which makes American exports more competitive) notably chemicals, textiles, car components, consumer goods and engineering. With forecasters predicting British and world-wide recession for next year and high interest rates and low profits causing a severe company liquidity crisis the outlook for British industry is bleak.

The larger and stronger firms will probably react by transferring capital abroad. The decline of the dollar has made investment in the US both cheap and necessary for European firms. Last year British multi-nationals were second only to the West Germans in new investment projects in the US. The Tories' relaxation of exchange controls will make the export of capital all the easier.

Lame Ducks

The weaker firms, however, will in some cases find themselves close to bankruptcy. It

is here that the Tory resolve is likely to be tested most severely.

According to the *Economist* (and there have been similar reports in other papers) 'the more hardline ministers are talking almost openly about the likelihood of a major bankruptcy, and claiming that they are prepared to accept the political consequences'.

We shall see. The trouble with monetarism is that at its core is a utopia—the ideal society of a private market economy in which no firm is large enough to dominate any industry and in which the state stays out of industry. Today, however, 100 manufacturing firms account for about half Britain's net manufacturing output. These big firms dominate individual branches of production, have multinational tentacles across the globe and are closely interwoven with the state.

An individual bankruptcy can, therefore, have consequences right across the national economy. Lame ducks come big these days, as the Carter administration is now learning. Chrysler, the 10th largest firm in the US, employing 250,000 workers, with a further 150,000 jobs depending on it, has been saved from bankruptcy by loan guarantees worth 500-750 million dollars from the federal government.

As the *Guardian* Washington correspondent put it, 'the plain fact is, and one that the financial market grasped extraordinarily quickly, that Chrysler could not simply be allowed to go bankrupt ... The financial system and the economy as a whole were not in a position to cope with a collapse on the Chrysler scale'.

It is these features of capitalism today—the size of individual capitals and their integration with the national state—which explain why prices continue to rise even during recessions. In the past, an economic crisis would give rise to a wave of bankruptcies which would eliminate the more inefficient firms and push up unemployment. The slack thus created would be sufficient to bring down prices.

Today the fate of national capitalist states is so bound up with that of individual firms that they stand or fall together. Governments no longer dare to allow inefficient capitals go bankrupt if this will seriously weaken the national economy. The capitalist system is constipated. It no longer possesses the mechanisms necessary to purge itself of inflation and thereby create the conditions for renewed expansion.

The Tory challenge

These realities of modern capitalism apply to the Tories as much as they do to any national government. Will Thatcher and co behave any differently to Carter when confronted with *their* Chrysler?

We should not, however, underestimate the significance of the Tories' monetarist ideology. By arguing that individual freedom and economic prosperity today require a sharp reduction in the activities of the state they have been able to force right-wing social democracy, which always accepted the equation of socialism with the state and has been thrown into crisis by the collapse of Keynesianism, to make con-

cessions to monetarism. The last Labour government progressively adopted monetarist policies—cash limits, spending cuts, a strong pound, effectively preparing the way for Thatcher.

Monetarism will not create the free-market society of Thatcher's dreams. But it may facilitate a reorganisation of British capital designed to ensure that sections at least of British industry can survive in the harsh economic climate of the 1980s.

Industries which are too far behind in the competitive race, like merchant ship-building and sections of the steel industry,

will be run down. Resources will be concentrated in those high-technology areas into which western capital is rapidly switching. So the NED is not being closed down, merely stream-lined, devoting the bulk of its attention to high-risk but strategically important sectors like micro-electronics. Regional subsidies to industry have been cut drastically, but the government still has the power to make selective grants.

This will not be a happy future for most of us. Much higher levels of unemployment (if not, perhaps, 4-5 million predicted by some

forecasters). Areas of the country effectively written off and abandoned by industry. The 'social wage' cut drastically.

A larger, better-paid and equipped police force to enforce order upon the victims of this rationalisation (the chief constable of Liverpool has predicted that parts of this city will be under effective martial law within ten years). Britain will be a grim place to live in if the Tories succeed—much closer to the Britain of *Stanley Baldwin* and *Ramsay Macdonald* than anything those of us born in the last 40 years have known. Our job is to prevent this happening.

Rebuilding the Leadership

Roger Cox



A phrase often bandied about on the left is 'crisis of leadership'. It's got the great advantage that if things don't go too well, you can always blame someone else. But there really is such a crisis at the moment. Not that many militants expect much of a lead from the TUC against the cuts, unemployment, anti-union laws etc—they don't. The crisis is that no alternative exists.

In the old days of piecework, shop negotiations and economic prosperity a factory leadership emerged which had been tried and tested over years of small battles. When the Tories came to power in 1970, there had not only been an important political victory by trade unionists against Labour's attempts to control the rank and file, there was also a definite layer of experienced shopfloor leadership, confident and aggressive enough to take on the employers.

The contrast now is very great. Not only have we had the 'concordat' accepted without a murmur by the TUC—left and right—but that layer of militants has been demoralised by years of incomes policy, 'don't rock the boat', kiddology and taking the easy way out.

Shop stewards are in many cases much more powerful than they were even a few years ago; at the same time they have frequently lost touch with their members, lost their own confidence and as a result surround themselves with myths about how strong the trade union movement is while being afraid to do anything because they might get turned over by the members.

It is this crisis of leadership which we have to deal with, not spend our time running around denouncing leaders who are scared witless by a threat of new laws, the employers' use of current law against them and the volatility of the rank and file.

This is not going to be an easy job—nor is it going to be achieved by massive great gestures, by appeals to 'make the unions fight' etc., by substituting ourselves for the

shopfloor leadership that has to be rebuilt. A heavy priority has to be put on small things, on arguments with handfuls of militants in different areas and industries.

Trade unionism—the basic things that are right and wrong—has to be re-emphasised. It is actually a question of right and wrong—most workers know what is bad, what represents the easy out, the road to ruin.

The arguments have to be put in detail over a period of time. Since the Rank and File Conference in June we have taken steps towards getting regular meetings going in the Park Royal area, in north west London. Nothing too big—certainly not a 'rank and file committee'—but a meeting of a few stewards from places that went to the conference, together with any other stewards and militants from local factories who are interested. So far we haven't had meetings because of the holidays, but we reckon getting individuals from at least four workplaces in the autumn.

Stop the Rot

If we are going to start the job of building up the rank and file leadership's confidence and self-reliance, there are several points that will have to be hammered home again and again.

The first is that the fear of being beaten has to be overcome. Being turned over can be the best thing that happens to a steward, because by sticking to his principles—to what ought to be done—he's giving a lead to the two or three, five or six blokes who can make all the difference in the future.

A further aspect is democracy. Not just the question of holding mass meetings to ratify the joint shop stewards' decisions, but of allowing the membership to argue out the issues in sectional meetings before getting to the stage of a big mass meeting, which in any largish place can't possibly be really democratic.

Apart from this, sectional meetings offer the best possible assurance that the factory

leadership will take their members with them, because all the natural worries about going on strike, or whatever, can be answered in detail ... and the weakest sections can be spotlighted and dealt with in advance.

Thirdly there is the principle of accountability and of remaining with the rank and file. It is all too easy to get into the position of wanting to hold on to the steward's/convenor's/rep's job come what may—this is the short road to ducking the issues, to avoiding the difficult decisions. The end result is convenors like Derek Robinson at Longbridge—or far more common—stewards who are actually afraid of their own rank and file, who don't dare call for even the most elementary forms of action or solidarity. Basic habits of the past are lost.

Official Moves

However good our arguments though, it's obviously going to take events to shake people out of the dreadful apathy we've got used to—particularly in the engineering industry, which is still the key to the British economy and the ruling class's prosperity. The first real conflict—the national stoppages called by the Confed—has been official, and very widely supported basically because of a massive loyalty to the AUEW as a union plus the beginnings of anti-Toryism right across the country.

Official disputes could easily become the main feature of the conflict between the Tories and the unions, specially over pay. It's in these conditions that the rebuilding of small rank and file links, which have all but disappeared in much of the private sector, gets very important.

Those people that clearly see what needs to be done to win in disputes can win a small but real audience. But winning that audience depends a lot on the detailed arguments, work with contacts and selling Socialist Worker over the next few months.

HARNASSING & TRANSFORMING CAPITAL

Interview with

Q. *You along with other MPs and activists on the left of the Labour Party have become identified with the argument that socialists in Britain need to develop and fight for an alternative economic strategy. Could you outline the essential features of such a strategy?*

Holland: It has to be concerned with transforming the structure of power in contemporary capitalism. In essentials this means changing not only the basis of the economy itself but also radically changing the whole relation between political and economic power. In other words, although a major extension of public enterprise has been and is an integral part of the Labour Party's programme many of us are well aware that public ownership is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for changing the power relations in the economy and society.

Similarly, it's important not only to reverse the prevailing relations between the apparatus of the civil service and establishment hegemony on the one hand and government on the other through major reform of the civil service but also to admit the extent to which within the Labour Party itself we lack effective democratic procedures and accountability. We need to reverse the present oligarchy by which a fraction of the Party in government is in effect able to deny or reverse key features of Party policy.

Some of the main elements of the more radical economic programme are very much known. They were founded on an analysis that while Keynesian intervention in the immediate post-war period may have been more effective than some of the ultra-left such as Mandel were ready to admit its policies depended on a particular structure of capital and only were adequate to cope with one main feature of capitalist crisis.

In particular it depended on relatively small-scale national capital prevailing in the economy since, as Keynes himself pointed out in his concluding notes to the *General Theory* on the kind of economic philosophy to which he thought his own analysis might lead, his intervention concerned essentially the demand side of the economy and the *level* of demands rather than its distribution.

Keynes assumed that, provided the state intervened decisively to manage demand, then, in his words, the mechanisms of perfect and imperfect competition for their part would ensure an adequate response. This implied reliance on a competitive price mechanism as did the main Keynesian

mechanism of international trade—exchange-rate changes.

This kind of prevailing orthodoxy has been transformed by the trend to monopoly and multinational power whereby in practice the supply side of the economy is no longer merely 'imperfect' but now highly monopolistic with continued competition in many markets but far from all markets and certainly a suspension of price-competition in major markets in the economy.

Also the fact that now a very few firms, literally a few dozen companies, dominate more than half of employment, output, pricing investment, assets and trade and that these companies, certainly

The Tory victory has created a ferment of debate within the Labour Party. What are the lessons of the last Labour government? Will the next one be any different? How do we fight the Tories? Is the Labour Party undemocratic?

One set of answers to these questions is provided by a new left-wing current within the Labour Party whose standard-bearer is Anthony Wedgewood Benn. Many of the main ideas of this current were presented by Stuart Holland in a book, 'The Socialist Challenge' (Quartet £2.75), which has been widely read since its first appearance in 1975.

Stuart Holland is now Labour MP for Vauxhall South. He talked to Alex Callinicos and Jon Bearman about the strategy for socialism in Britain.

among the top 100 hundred in the UK, are all effectively multinational, most of them on a major scale, has transformed the basis of Keynesian international trade theory.

Whereas previously it was believed since Ricardo, on the principle of comparative advantage, that high wage-costs in a more developed country could be offset by lower unit costs due to greater efficiency and therefore it would have an export advantage over less developed countries with low labour costs and while it had always been assumed that international trade was predominantly between different companies and different countries, we now have a situation where the foreign direct investment of British business abroad is already more than double the total UK export trade.

The multinationals can employ if they so choose the most modern technology with least-cost labour in third world countries or intermediate countries in South-East Asia and Latin America where they also have the advantage, in their terms, of repressive regimes. And they increasingly become their own competitor abroad.

This undermines devaluation in the sense that, for example, General Motors UK has very little interest in following through a major devaluation of sterling vis-a-vis the Deutschmark (which was of the order of two-thirds from 1970 to 1976) because it is its own competitor in the sense of producing through Opel in Germany etc etc. So it simply tends either not to export to any greater extent by producing directly abroad or to pocket the export receipts.

In these respects it is quite interesting that one of the major issues in the Labour Party in the late 1960s—at least at the level of the gurus dominant at the time—was whether or not we devalued by the appropriate amount or at the right date.

Whereas in the early 1970s we argued against that orthodoxy and, with the support of the National Executive of the Party, that such models of international trade had been effectively undermined and that, on the broad range of macroeconomic policy, where a few companies now dominate economic activity, it was increasingly necessary to extend the traditional socialist policy of public or common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and to direct intervention and planning into this monopolistic, multinational heartland of the economy.

Some of the mechanisms which we recommended, including a very sizable extension of public ownership and planning controls over big business in the form of planning agreements, were acceptable in one sense to a considerable section of the Party, in as much as some social democrats since Durbin, Jay, Gaitskell and Crosland in the 1950s had admitted the case of what they called 'competitive public enterprise'. But in their view this intervention should be marginal rather than central to economic policy and should be merely an instrument for reinforcing conventional models of price-competition rather than the main vehicle for transforming the balance of economic power.

Also while some former ministers in the early 1970s were initially attracted to the idea of planning agreements in the sense that they anticipated in them a better defined liaison between big business and the state and greater ease for themselves as ministers in coping with big business, they were strongly opposed to the involvement of committees of shop stewards from the companies themselves, which was an integral part of the planning of agreements formula.

y with Stuart Holland

In other words, in two key aspects, the extension of public ownership into profit-making large-size business and the use of planning agreements as a vehicle for industrial democracy, there was major opposition to the policy. This was rapidly illustrated. Within 48 hours of the publication of the initial opposition Green Paper on the National Enterprise Board, Harold Wilson attempted to launch a personal veto of the proposal to take a controlling public shareholding in 20-25 of the top major companies. But at the same stage he found himself taking on both clause 4 and clause 5 of the Party constitution since as Party leader he had no power simply to veto a proposal giving from the NEC to the Conference. And, of course, the element of new dimensions of public ownership had a considerable appeal to sections of the Party at the time.

But within government, by making those two measures voluntary rather than obligatory, Wilson transformed them from potentially incisive instruments for challenging the prevailing structures of economic power and for harnessing that power more directly to the ends of the Labour Party and the labour movement into passive responses, and ineffectual means of either camouflaging failure, as in the government's relations with Chrysler which resulted in a so-called planning agreement, or underwriting loss-making activities, as in most of the interventions of the NEB.

Q. I'd like to take up some points relating to those ideas. First, in The Socialist Challenge you tend to talk about the British national economy in abstraction from the context of international capitalist crisis within which we find ourselves. It at least appears that all the major capitalist economies are confronted with a common set of problems—declining profitability, built-in inflationary tendencies, monetary instability, and so on. And so the sort of problems that socialist have to grapple with aren't simply to do with, the extent to which say, the British economy is in the grip of the multinationals but the degree to which what we're confronted with is an international crisis. How would the sort of proposals you discuss in your book, which concentrate on improving Britain's economic position as one component of an ailing world economy, deal with these problems?

The *Socialist Challenge* was very much concerned with both the British economy and specific mechanisms for the extension of public ownership, economic planning, industrial democracy for the socialisation of power. The fact is that the book was written essentially as a polemic and linked to the specific proposals in Party policy, partly because I contributed to the shaping of the policy, but also to illustrate



the kind of rationale surrounding them and the kind of potentially feasible change associated with them. It became rather extended polemic, relating mainly to the Labour Party and labour movement in the UK, although I did draw some parallels with the left in France and Italy, and some contrasts with state capitalism abroad, where although there'd been intervention by state holding companies, there'd been no attempt change the social relations of production, ie to extend workers' control and industrial democracy.

In terms of my own views on the crisis and whether it can be in any sense be resolved I have in fact edited a book called *Beyond Capitalist Planning* where several contributors whose views I mainly share, from France, Italy, Germany and the UK. We have a relatively common perspective on the nature of the crisis as the end of a phase of reconstruction after the war and sustained growth based on the applying technological progress in the forms of new products and industries, including pharmaceuticals, electronics, computers, etc.

We argue, in a manner not dissimilar to Mandel's *The Second Shump*, that this growth cannot be recovered simply by trying to resuscitate post-war orthodoxies. The chapter by Karl Georg Zinn on Germany is particularly instructive not least because it shows the collapse of overall rates of growth in investment (gross fixed domestic capital formation) from nine per cent a year in the early 1950's to six per cent a year in the early 1960's and 0.2 per cent in 1970-74, which shows very clearly that there was a crisis

of capital accumulation before the OPEC oil price increases, in what is supposed to be one of the strongest and most successful economies in the capitalist world.

Also, in the judgement of most of these authors, there is no evidence available at present of a round of innovations creating new products, new industries, new employment, new demand sufficient to resolve this crisis for the system.

And I would argue in particular that unless the left can succeed in establishing support for transforming the myths of recoverable capitalist growth into a new model or modes of development based on the socialisation of demand, supply, and control in the economy, then there is little chance of our avoiding either beggar-my-neighbour protectionism, which would be a defeat for liberal capitalism on its own terms, or anyway massive beggar-my-neighbour deflation which governments are at present imposing on the world economic system, which has led in the short—and medium-term to a combination of massive unemployment and rampant inflation.

Now there are various elements in the kinds of economic strategy at a national and international level which might be feasible to transform this crisis. Very differently from Mandel, whose *Second Shump* is excellent in its general economic analysis but ends in, to my mind, a derisory two and a half pages of political recommendations for action which amount to spontaneous mobilisation of

the working class, demands for direct action, and workers' control etc, the contributors to *Beyond Capitalist Planning* and others in the Labour Party think it is very important to specify elements of a feasible strategy for transforming the crisis.

Q. *Are you talking about specific changes for transforming the crisis within the context of individual national economies?*

No. It seems to me that only some economies could recover on a global scale by import-substitution, protection, etc, that many of the less developed, or undeveloping, economies of the world would have very little chance of doing this at the present moment, even by maoist-type policies of back to the land and specific rejection of capitalism. I think it's important to realise the very great potential for joint international action, avoiding at least the worst aspects of slump, despite the fact that with different political systems on a world scale the area of common interests is naturally more limited than on a national scale.

Q. *This seems to imply that you see the introduction of some form of import controls as less relevant to dealing with the crisis than some sections of the Labour left think.*

That's a fair comment. I've never been persuaded that import controls in themselves are a progressive measure or a measure likely to increase social control over the economy. In practice they have been applied at least as vigorously by governments of the right or far right, including some countries in Latin America, and Britain in the 1930s, as they have countries of the left.

The main point that I argued in *The Socialist Challenge* was that we cannot effectively cope with specific forms of economic crisis in isolation. You can't resolve simply the trade problem irrespective of pricing and investment, job-creation and the distribution of demand. Since we're now in a situation where literally a few dozen companies dominate the economy part of the concept of planning agreements was that the government should take powers based on new public enterprise to ensure effective change in the performance of these extremely large firms.

To give an illustration of this on the export side, despite there being literally hundreds of thousands of manufacturing firms in the UK economy, and some million and a half small firms overall, there are only 10,000 regular exporting manufacturing companies in this country. 220 firms account for about two thirds of our visible export trade, some 75 firms for half and about 30 firms for two fifths.

It's quite clear that if you could harness this tremendous concentration of power in the export sector, you would be able to

make a very sizeable contribution to changing the overall visible trade performance, especially if you challenged the degree of multinationalisation of the economy, that's to say you either disinvested in some of the markets abroad or certainly restrained the rate of growth of foreign investment relative to export trade.

This, however, doesn't necessarily cope with specific sectors that are in economic crisis. If we'd had even an active state-capitalist policy for a company like British Leyland, if we'd been as active with them as Volkswagen under substantial public ownership were in a total modernisation programme which turned that company round in five to ten years or Renault, in France, which has become one of the most powerful motor vehicle producers in the world, then it might have been that we could have stemmed the import penetration in motor vehicles, which has now become so dramatic, or at least have been in the process of stemming it now, half-way through the ten-year programme for modernisation.

But certainly in areas such as motorcycles, typewriters, where one's talking of Triumph Meriden, Litton Imperial Typewriters and a range of electrical and electronic production, and so on and so forth, there are specific sectors where it seems to me there is a very strong case for selective import controls aimed at the most developed capitalist countries, which are themselves over export-dependent, not least Japan, and where we have no obligation whatever to support their social and economic system at the cost of the disappearance of major sectors of our own industry.

However, it is increasingly becoming apparent that there has been no readiness on the part of the international financial community to apply even qualified Keynesianism on a global scale, that monetarism is rampant in the chancelleries and treasuries of most western developed capitalist countries, and that our deindustrialisation is now proceeding at a very fast pace. Therefore is it increasingly incumbent upon us to endorse political and economic strategies which involve a planned control of overall trade and, within that, a planned increase in imports, focussed on less developed countries.

Q. *The alternative economic strategy implies a considerable expansion in the economic role of the state. This raises the question of the guarantees against this expansion simply providing the capitalist class with a much more powerful engine of exploitation than it previously possessed. In other words, what guarantee is there that the alternative economic strategy will not simply lead to a more developed form of state capitalism?*

There are very few guarantees in politics, either on the left or on the right, either in the mature capitalist countries or by the now mature 'socialist' countries. Having said that, there is a rather famous

authority from within the socialist hierarchy who has suggested that state capitalism can in fact be the antechamber to socialism.

I think that without endorsing in full the argument of the state monopoly capitalism thesis there is nonetheless a very clear and increasing involvement of big business and the state on a global scale, with the state increasingly providing infrastructural and passive services for large-scale capital on its terms. With the fact that state capitalism is for me state intervention within an unreconstructed class framework in order to preserve prevailing class relations, these are two of the key features of the state-capitalist rationale.

By contrast, the programme which I advocated in *The Socialist Challenge* and elements of which are reflected in Labour Party policy was certainly conceived, promoted and initially endorsed by the Party in the context of *changes* of relations within society.

The key test issues for the labour movement under a Labour government were to prove the following.

One, whether state intervention was passive or active, whether it actually changed what capital wanted to do or whether it simply remained at its service. Two, whether public-enterprise intervention was simply in loss-making or high-risk areas rather than in profit-making sectors. Three, the degree to which the extension of new forms of public ownership and planning control involved trade unionists at the shop floor level through planning agreements as well as trade union leaders through sector working parties. Four, a policy on taxation and public spending which defended and extended the share of public spending on the welfare sector of the economy. Five, and very importantly, the extent to which a wealth tax was introduced which really changed the basic distribution of wealth.

Clearly, by these tests, the Labour government failed to move beyond a state capitalist rationale. Nonetheless such a move was in principle feasible. For instance, I argued that one of the ways in which we could afford to undertake a major extension of public ownership without massive compensation in the early 1970s was both very depressed stock-market prices prevailing in 1973-4 in which in fact you could pick up control of a couple of dozen of the bigger industrial companies at prices equivalent to the annual profits of BP alone and also a wealth tax which operated in the way as PAYE—at source. In other words, there is a very strong case, which is of course very similar to the principle of compensation according to need, that any compensation for public ownership should be related to a wealth tax and that tax rates should be highly progressive.

Q. *What I'd like to turn to now is the sort of obstacles facing the policies we've been discussing. I want to talk about it at two*



'In Chile it seems to me one sense less remarkable that Allende was overthrown than what he was able to achieve before he was overthrown.'

levels. First of all, the more general level of resistance on the part of the capitalist class to such policies. Now certainly in *The Socialist Challenge* you seem to assume that this resistance would be fairly easy to overcome and further you nowhere discuss the existence of the repressive state apparatus—the army, police and so on, bodies committed to and organised around the maintenance of capitalist rule. Now, in the light of events—most obviously the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile in 1973—don't you think it's unwise to ignore the issue of capitalist resistance?

Yes of course it's an important issue. But it's also important to recognise the specificity of individual situations. For example, in Chile it seems to me one sense less remarkable that Allende was overthrown than what he was able to achieve before he was overthrown. There he didn't even have a parliamentary majority and was trying to rule by presidential decree.

He was, therefore in a situation where even the standard parliamentary legitimation of his government wasn't very extensive. Secondly, the economic circumstances of Chile were very specific indeed—the country was 80 per cent dependent for exports on one commodity, copper. The battle was basically over copper—once you'd lost or won that you'd lost or won everything.

However, the general answer to your question implies the broad distinction between a leninist and a gramscian strategy for change. The leninist strategy not only did work in one sense in the Soviet Union in overthrowing tsarism

and the neo-feudal, part-bourgeois society of the time but also clearly has been legitimated in other some other formerly repressive and less developed countries elsewhere in the world.

Gramsci nonetheless, posed the problem of how it was that it in Italy with a very extensive organisation of the industrial working class the left was unable to seize and transform state power and was instead outmanoeuvred by Mussolini, someone who then appeared the buffoon of national politics, and who organised an almost carnival march on Rome yet then seized state power.

Gramsci was posing a question of very considerable importance. The analysis of hegemony and legitimation in Gramsci, however incoherent it may be, to the extent that virtually anybody can pull from Gramsci what they choose to support a particular view, nonetheless is touching the heart of the problem of transformation of advanced capitalist societies.

It seems to me that the role of the repressive state apparatus as opposed to consensus and legitimation is clearly less in countries like Britain than in less developed or more backward societies. The key question then becomes both whether and how one can transform the structure of society by non-violent means. If you take this at the very practical level of whether an army can repress the trade unions and progressive and left forces in a sophisticated capitalist society, you have the record of 20 years of fascism in Italy, you have the record of more than 20 years of fascism in certain Latin American countries, but you also have the recent examples of Portugal, Spain, Greece and Iran.

You also have the situation of countries like Brazil today where even within a decade and a half of very repressive regimes you have had moments of liberalisation, leading now to more genuine political freedoms, because of social pressures and social forces and where advanced capitalism itself favours democratisation.

This is partly because these regimes in being frequently nationalistic can very much restrict capital's freedom to allocate resources thereby very much qualifying its freedom to realise surplus-value and to dispose of it where it wishes. For example, in Latin America many of these very reactionary regimes have imposed very substantial conditions on remittance of profits.

There is evidence that in the liberalisation taking place in Brazil at present the effective pressure for democratisation is coming from multinational capital and its allies as well as the pressure which there is internally from trade unionists and from progressive and left-wing forces. This capitalism is not necessarily repressive as such at the political level.

There are countries where multinational capital certainly is prepared to co-operate with and support highly repressive regimes. But in many cases this is for relatively labour-intensive stages of production and only for segments of its production. This is very much the case for example, with the various South-East Asian countries where multinational capital has been looted. It is apparent that such companies hesitate to locate relatively capital-intensive investment in them for fear of revolutionary overthrow, outright nationalisation without compensation by a new government, etc.

One could of course say that the more capitalism is threatened in its home-base countries by progressive social forces the more it would be prepared to tolerate or support repression, or actively to subvert the democratic process. But even there one must look very carefully at the specific circumstances.

For example, in the United Kingdom I think it is very significant that when there was a general strike in Ulster (in 1974), an army already highly extended both by Ulster and the Army of the Rhine basically gave the message to the government of the time that there had to be a political solution in the short term because they simply could not continue to run gas, electricity, water supply, buses and other services as well as maintain order. And that is with a community of only three million people rather than the whole of the United Kingdom.

It is of course possible that if a socialist programme in one developed capitalist country were allegedly posing at an international level a threat to military security that the intervention of NATO forces from other countries would be sought in order to defend a particular kind of order. But even there it's open to question whether this actually would happen. For a fascist or highly repressive policy to succeed in one of the major metropolitan countries you need either a degree of very brutal simplicity or very considerable sophistication. In one sense at present I'm not convinced that the military is either that brutal or that sophisticated in the more mature liberal democracies.

Q. You mentioned earlier that a lot of the ideas which we've been discussing were embodied in Labour's 1973 programme and that nonetheless when Labour came to power these policies were either not implemented or effectively sabotaged. Can a repetition of this episode be prevented?

I'm not sure that we can prevent a repetition unless we have a quite sizable demonstration by a broad section of the left in this country that they are willing to fight for and support some of the demands of the mainstream left in the Labour Party and the labour movement.

With a government as reactionary as this and assuming that that government does not literally go over the precipice by suspending fundamental aspects of the democratic process, then it seems to me probable that the crisis which their measures will provoke at both the economic and social levels could result in Labour winning the next general election with a decisive majority even if the current Labour leadership doesn't move from its present posture of simply criticising Tory policy. In other words, by the standards of this kind of Conservative reaction, our own social-democratic front bench is quite progressive.

That doesn't deny the fact that it was the Labour government which introduced monetarist policies and measures from 1975, that cut public

spending in real terms over the period of the last government more than by £8 billion which is the equivalent of one year's total spending in the Health Service, that sought yet again in the 1970s as in the late 1960s to harness and restrain labour rather than to harness and transform capital.

I think the conditions for preventing this happening again are part ideological and part political. The social-democratic hegemony in north-west Europe in the post-war period depended very much on the success of the economy. When politicians and governments from social-democratic parties became in effect the political managers of capitalism with a human face, their success depended, as in private management, on delivering the goods.

Although there's been a move to the right in some unions recently, it's a very different climate from the 1950s when one had mainly frictional unemployment, real-income growth every year, real growth in public spending, and no fundamental attack on the welfare state, etc.

Social democracy is in real crisis. It is not even that it is stuck in the Keynesian paradigm. Some of the monetarists in the Labour Party have in fact moved so ardently into Friedmanite positions attacking public expenditure that they have moved to the right of the Crosland position of the 1950s and early 1960s. There are many activists in the Labour Party who previously would not have considered themselves on the left who have to my knowledge become radicalised by what happened under the last Labour government.

After all both the social-democratic tradition and the Fabian tradition were themselves based on certain implicit or explicit values, such as defence of public spending, defence of the welfare state, improving services like housing, health and education in what amounted to a society open to talent but also involving certain principles of social justice.

This has collapsed. The result is a considerable increase in political awareness among many members of the Party, opening up certain fundamental questions which it appeared to some had already been settled or closed 15 or 20 years ago. It thereby has opened up frontiers in what had previously been considered the middle ground of the Party.

If in the coming months and years the demands for explicit and greater accountability of power within the Labour Party with a view to such accountability within government do not win decisively within the conferences and within the constituencies, with the trades councils and within the trade unions, then we cannot expect of itself any necessary improvement if there be a return to office, in other words, we cannot expect to transform the tenure of office into exercise of power.

But if the case of the left, despite the active distortion by the press and by some of the more uncomradely members of our

movement, can gain ground in this period and can be reflected not only in decisions of the conference but also in a gut conviction among activists that these political changes in the structure and balance of power are necessary conditions for the fulfilment of policy, then we have a chance in government next time round at least of having an advance similar in scale to the immediate post-war period, where Labour between 1945 and 1951 changed the terms of reference of politics for 30 years.

There is also, however, a further dimension: how does the left mobilise with this kind of Tory government? We hear time and time again from virtually every quarter of the movement that there should be a mass campaign, yet we don't see the evidence for such a campaign in practice.

It is possible not only that certain unions will resort to strike action but that there will be arguments in favour of general strike action. In my own view it's very important that we think of mass campaigning on certain convergent lines which consciously seek to bring together those elements where there is broad agreement on the left. We must think less in terms of general strikes such, which hardly have a good record in transforming the power structures in society, and do very much constitute an invitation to repression, and more in terms of political action which extends the political bargaining power of the working class.

In other words, we need to develop an ongoing challenge, whether it's in terms of local councils, area health authorities, trade unions on the shop floor, throughout the whole range of political activity, and to make clear that they are quite simply the most reactionary capitalist government since the war.

If we are thinking, for example, of demonstrating collectively our opposition as a labour movement to this government and its attacks on the working class then I think we might well take a leaf from the recent events in Iran. There, instead of the system being challenged after major incidents by one mass demonstration or one general strike, the ayatollahs declared following the murder in the streets of several novices by the Shah's militia in the spring of last year that they would take to the streets every 40 days in demonstration until the regime either withdrew or fell.

Instead of, for example, one-off protest demonstrations, lobbies of Parliament, etc, ongoing and regular demonstrations of this kind, with which broad sections of the population, and not simply those at present active politically, can identify and support, could be a very powerful means of expressing opposition to the new government and its regime.

This may well involve strike action, but it seems to me that the building up of collective pressure against the regime rather than the cataclysmic and, by implication, once-off approach to change can relate to the kind of Gramscian politics which the British left needs today.



THE ONWARD MARCH OF BENN

by Jon Bearman



THERE is a growing struggle for Power in the Labour Party. That much is clear from the press and television coverage. Ever since the Party lost the election in May it has been subject to bitter and intense feuding. The NEC has endorsed proposals that represent a fundamental change in the structure and direction of the Party.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have refused to serve in the Shadow Cabinet, turning to build-up support among the Party's ebbing base. And Frank Allaun, Chairman of the Labour Party, has pledged the Party to resist the sweeping and reactionary measures proposed by the Thatcher Government. Seemingly, from the outside, the Labour Left is well organised, on the upswing, threatening a sharp break with the present capitalist ordering of society.

But is this really the case? For while we can accept that a burgeoning left-reformism is a foreboding prospect to the City and private capitalism, what does it mean for the working class? Over the coming months the present left-reformist grouping in the Labour Party will become increasingly influential among sections of the working class.

In order to understand its development we must set it against the experience of its forerunners. Left-reformism is not a new occurrence, it was not grafted on, but it was the re-assertion of a strain that always present in the Labour Party.

In 1950 Tony Benn was selected to succeed to Sir Stafford Cripps's seat at Bristol South-East. He was a keen young man, just down from Oxford, possessing a handsome wallet of good connections and recommendations. His tutor, Anthony Crosland, recognised in him the fine qualities of an

able publicist and energetic campaigner. Even Winston Churchill, who found his ambition and drive promising, ventured to suggest that he would rise 'close to the summit of his party'.

29 years later, after a career embracing both the struggle against his peerage and the chairmanship of the Fabian Society, Tony Benn is the outstanding figure of a serious left-reformist regroupment in the Labour Party. In this respect it is appropriate that Benn should represent Cripps's old seat, for it was Cripps in the 1930s who was the leader of another left-reformist alignment—the Socialist League.

The Socialist League combined smaller bodies such as the Society for Socialist Information and Propaganda and the New Fabian Research Bureau. It included academics like G D H Cole, H N Brailsford, R H Tawney and Harold Laski, and drew on some support from the higher echelons of the trades union bureaucracies.

Standing on a programme demanding the 'nationalisation of the banks, land, the mines, power, transport, iron and steel, cotton, and control of foreign trade,' there was a strong emphasis on an 'extra-parliamentary' approach which was best developed in Cripps's pamphlet *Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Means?*

Here he argued that a Labour Government should take emergency powers to force through its programme against capitalist opposition.

The climax of the League was the attempt to commit the Labour Party to a united front with the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party.

In the end, Cripps failed because of the weight of the trades union block-votes at Labour Party conferences. The League was disaffiliated from the Labour Party and Cripps was expelled. He was only allowed to return when he had mended his ways, advocating Lord Halifax, a prominent appeaser of Hitler, for the premiership in 1940.

At the height of the League, 1936, Labour Party constituency membership reached 430,614; by 1942, after its death, it had fallen to 218,783 (largely because of the wartime truce between the major parties). Over the same time, trade union membership had risen by 211,911.

The left revived in the 1950s under the leadership of Aneurin Bevan. But the Bevanites, too, were bludgeoned into submission by the huge block-votes wielded repeatedly at TUCs and Labour Party conferences throughout the 1950s. These were the years when a 'triple alliance' of Deakin (TGWU), Lawther (NUM) and

Tomlinson (National Union of General and Municipal Workers) ensured that all left-reformist proposals were soundly beaten.

The Bevanites had their base among the constituency parties and, by 1952, six out of seven of the constituency seats on the NEC were held by Bevanites, but to no avail. At their zenith, 1952, constituency membership stood at 1,014,685. But by 1960, after they had been demolished, it slumped to 790,192. Meanwhile trade union membership increased from 5,071,735 to 5,512,688—nearly half a million!

The present left-reformist grouping in the Labour Party (the Bennite left) is the first major presence since the Bevanites. For some time, perhaps a decade, it has assembled out of smaller, peripheral groups. Like the left in the 1930s it is fragmented and incohesive, claiming support for 'extra-parliamentary' action. And like that of the 1950s, it has built its base among the constituency parties. Yet over the last few years constituency membership has plummeted; in 1977 it was only 659,737.

The traditional working class membership, centred on older and heavier industries, is becoming depleted as the social basis of the party is shifting. Increasingly, constituency activists are drawn from the 'new middle class'—architects, social workers, white collar workers, etc.

Benn himself was an active member of the Bevanites in the 1950s, participating in CND and the campaign against Suez. But with the collapse of the Bevanites, and the forced dissolution of Campaign for a Socialist Victory the left-reformists were faced with barren years. Benn, along with other lefts such as Barbara Castle and Dick Crossman, spent those years building a career in government. However, since the Wilson Government fell in 1970, he has devoted considerable time and effort to reconstructing and re-rooting the Left in such a way that no right-wing party leader could tear it up as Gaitskell did in the 1950s. Benn has emerged as the leader of this Left.

The Bennite Left consists of several key activist organisations that have been instrumental in this process. There is the Institute for Workers Control (IWC).

the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), the National Register of Tribune Clubs, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, some university based groups and Clause 4 in the student field.

These groups, which may seem marginal, have actually made significant headway in re-defining a left-reformist position in British politics. They originally pioneered and sponsored the package of measures that has become known as the 'alternative strategy'. It has been a gauge of their success that support for this strategy has come from the TGWU, NUPE and it is hoped that next year Scargill can deliver support from the NUM. But beyond this, as the movement against the Tories sets underway, an even stronger pull will be exerted throughout sections of the working class.

Of all the groups, the IWC has undoubtedly been the most influential. From 1968 onwards it has engaged in the work of re-building a left-reformist base in the unions. Concentrating on the bureaucracies, such eminences as Jones, Scanlon, Daly and Wright have all, in time, been associated with the IWC. But alone this would prove inadequate, so it has endeavoured to bring Combine committees and alternative plans such as Lucas Aerospace and co-operatives such as IPD Kirkby and Meridan within its orbit. But it is not in the business of building amongst the rank and file, mainly operating as a propaganda group.

In the last few years, Independent Labour Publications (formerly the Independent Labour Party) has emerged committed to 'building the Labour Left.' Through its paper, *Labour Leader*, it is hoping to provide a focus for 'extra-parliamentary' activity towards this end. So far it has attracted a small core of activists—Peter Hain, Peter Jenkins and Geoff Hodgson, to mention a few. Even so, it is in no way geared to industrial work.

To draw together the strands of the present, diffuse, incohesive Left, Benn and

his leading colleagues—Stuart Holland, Brian Sedgemore, Michael Meacher, Frances Morrell and Audrey Wise—at the last Labour Party conference, launched the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Originally it was supposed to spawn lots of local groups, but up to now, the 'inner circle' have run it on the basis of organising joint action for conferences and the like.

As for the 'alternative strategy', it did not begin life as an *alternative* strategy, but as official Labour Party policy. It was formulated in the period after the 1970 election when the left-reformists seized the chance, amidst right wing disarray, to build themselves inside Transport House, dominating the committees.

The forthcoming proposals decanted from these committees thus attained an authority against a backcloth of rising working class militancy. Most of the planks of this strategy became policy via this process; being fought for, and won, under the conditions of an upsurge of the class struggle. Since then it has been added too, though it was basically replete by 1976.

This much vaunted strategy for what Holland has called a 'public enterprise economy' does represent a challenge to private capital. Indeed, it is essentially a state capitalist position, meaning a considerable change in property relationships, but not a change in the relations of production.

It stems from underlying premises that depict Britain as a declining industrial power, becoming incompetent because capitalists have failed to invest, and are channelling funds abroad, into property and speculation. Therefore, they argue, the State must control and plan 'the economy', harnessing the power of large companies, breaking the chains that interlock Britain into the world economy and thus aggravate the situation, and establish a state trading monopoly. That is to say, they propose to restore the competitiveness of British capital

by pursuing a vigorous strategy for national economic development.

The resounding calls for industrial democracy or 'workers control' are but a means to saddle workers with the burdens and responsibilities of production. Only if workers have some form of responsibility can they ensure both the required surplus for investment and the increased productivity.

This strategy only became an *alternative* strategy when then the Labour Government, elected in 1974, reneged on the official policy and embarked on a vicious anti-working class policy, cutting living standards to sustain profits. Throughout 1975 and 1976 the left put up a pitiful rearguard action that dissipated into defeat.

Since then the battle has been waged for internal democracy and accountability inside the Labour Party. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has come to the forefront to organise the efforts. At the last Labour Party conference an attempt was mounted to make all Parliamentary candidates undergo mandatory selection. It was only lost because Scanlon reciled on a delegation decision. But bigger storms are augured for the future over the responsibility for draughting the manifesto and the election of the Leader.

It is this internecine feuding that will consume the major part of the Left's energies over at least the next two years. From a left-reformist standpoint, neither mass actions like that which toppled Heath, nor elaborating grandiose economic schemes are worthwhile if at the end of the day, the newly-elected Labour Government spurns the movement and discards the schemes. For them, the inaccountability of the leadership has always been the sustained inadequacy of the Labour Party.

Of course, the Bennites will try to stage a focus of opposition to the Tories. They will, no doubt, make nasty, vitriolic speeches and hold occasional rallies and marches. But what they will not do is build an action based rank and file movement that can be an agency for change.

The commitment to a form of 'extra-parliamentary' approach is only afforded for the purpose of mobilising the Labour Movement behind the 'alternative strategy', not in organising resistance to the Tories. In the words of Stuart Holland: 'It will only be through the negotiated and bargained support of the trade union movement that such critical change will prove to be possible.'

Presently, the odds are stacked well against the Bennite Left succeeding. Unlike Cripps and Bevan they have taken more care to build a base among the unions, but in terms of block-votes, they are still outnumbered. Their support from the TGWU remains unsteady and Scargill hasn't yet been elected. On the other hand, everyday the right-wing is becoming more vocal and their demands for an inquiry into the party structure more accepted. Soon the balance in the Party may be tipped against the Left. At most, their chances are slight.

Sometimes when you cross the stream you can be swept away by a stronger current.

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Reproduction Rights Under Attack in America

by Mary Deaton



Women's right to choose is not only under threat in Britain. Mary Deaton, of the International Socialist Organisation (US), describes recent attacks on reproductive rights in the United States.

It was supposed to mean the end of back-alley abortions. On 22 January 1973 the United States Supreme Court handed down a ruling saying individual states could not pass laws interfering with a woman's decision to have an abortion.

By 1979 nearly six million abortions had been performed in clinics and hospitals at an average cost of \$280. But, in 1977, Rosie Jimenez, young, poor and Chicana, died of an illegal abortion in New York. More would die. Many would suffer irreparable damage to their bodies. What happened to legal abortions?

The Supreme Court ruling was only a delayed sanction of what had already happened. Beginning in Colorado in 1967, a noisy, militant women's liberation movement had been demanding, and getting, liberalised abortion laws in some states. By the time the federal courts extended the repeal of the restrictive laws to the entire country, however, the women's movement had already begun its decline into separatism and the respectable feminism of former congress woman Bella Abzug and Betty Ford.

With no mass movement to defend abortions, the enemies of women's rights were free to organize and attack. Hiding behind the dishonest labels of 'right-to-life' and 'pro-life' they mounted a massive legislative and legal campaign to restrict or destroy legal abortion.

To nobody's surprise, the funding came from the Catholic Church and a loose coalition of right-wing political and religious groups like Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, Direct Mail, Inc. (the largest right-wing fund-raising company in the country), television preachers like the Rev. Jerry Falwell, and union-buster par excellence Joseph Coors.

A massive propaganda campaign in the country's churches and parochial schools portrayed the anti-abortion position as 'the greatest civil rights issue of the century'.

Kindergarten children were shown gory pictures of the products of dilation and curettage procedures. Foetuses became babies, pregnant women became mothers,

and abortion became murder. Decrying child abuse, hunger, racial genocide, wife beating and other issues normally associated with the women's movement, the anti-abortionists created an image of themselves as the true protectors of mankind's right to live, the last great crusaders in a world gone mad.

Their first major national success was the passage, in 1977, of the Hyde amendment, cutting off federal abortion funds for all women except those who could prove their pregnancy was a result of rape or incest or posed a serious threat to their health. Many states followed suit, some paying only for those abortions needed to save a woman's life. Jimmy Carter told angry poor women that 'life is sometimes unfair' and abortions

and increasingly threatening to the safety of patients.

The zealots chain themselves to operating tables, or block access to procedure rooms. A Cleveland Ohio bomber temporarily blinded a clinic worker and sent women in surgical gowns screaming into the streets when he ignited a gasoline bomb in the clinic. Often, women entering clinics are verbally abused and called 'baby-killers'.

Abortion is not the only reproductive right under attack. In Los Angeles, five Spanish speaking women lost a lawsuit charging a public hospital with forcing them to sign consent forms for sterilization while the women were drugged and in child-birth. The forms were in English.

Two 12-year-old black, Alabama twins were sterilized under a court order because they were mentally retarded. In chemical plants and factories where lead is used, companies are demanding women be sterilised before they are allowed to work. Over a quarter of all Native American women and one-third of all Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age are now reported to be sterile.

Child-care centers are closing for lack of funds. Sex education and birth control information is being prohibited in schools. A California midwife was charged with murder when the baby she helped deliver died. She was released when the parents refused to testify against her. Gay parents are losing custody of their children.

While the attacks are sporadic and sometimes fail, they succeed often enough to be frightening. The danger of women losing even the most minimal of the gains made in the last ten years is very real.

Losing abortion, of course, means women will die, especially poor and minority women who can't buy safe, illegal abortions. Women who refuse forced sterilisations will lose welfare benefits, jobs or needed abortions.

No abortions means nothing less than a return to compulsory pregnancy and mandatory motherhood. While the Margaret Thatchers run governments and the Gloria Steinheims run magazines, the rest of us will be treated like so many cattle, bred or neutered according to government dictum and the color of our skins.

The right-to-lifers are gleeful. Women, after all, were made to bear children. Women are the backbone of the nuclear



paid through welfare programs declined 99 percent.

At the end of 1978, a federal agency estimated that 72,000 women were in danger of seeking, and getting, illegal abortions because they could not afford to pay for legal ones. Many thousands of others were dangerously delaying the procedure while they begged, borrowed and, maybe, stole, to get money for a legal operation.

In 1979, more thousands will be endangered. This year, the Hyde amendment has further tightened its restrictions on federal monies. Massachusetts stopped all abortion funding. California severely restricted funding. Ohio is debating a severe cut-back of state money which would also end state-paid abortion referral and education services.

When the anti-abortionists fail to pass restrictive laws, they resort to violence. More than 20 abortion clinics have been firebombed or burned in the last 4 years. Sit-ins at clinics are becoming more common

family, and it is the family they are trying to save from death. To do that, they know they must prevent women from making further demands for equal work, equal pay and control over child-bearing.

They must stop women workers from organizing for an end to discrimination and sexual harassment on the job, or, worse yet, from joining with their union brothers in the fight against speed-ups and wage cuts. They know they must destroy women's hopes for equality if they are to destroy women's potentially revolutionary desires. Keeping us barefoot and pregnant is one of their weapons.

These champions of Christian morality—thou shalt not kill—are capitalism's battering ram against women. They posture as a dissident minority scaling the walls of government resistance. In fact, however, the government stands aside and pleads coercion.

The seed of the anti-abortion movement grows in the economic crisis of capitalism. Working class women are forced by inflation and unemployment to work, yet, the burden of child-rearing falls ever heavier as child-care and other social services are cut.

To protect falling profits from the demands of women for higher wages and more child-care, the government collaborates with the moralists to further subject us to our biology.

If we want to work, we must give up children. If we want children, we must give up work. If we dare to want both, we are penalized with low wages, poor benefits and the poor health which comes from working two full-time jobs. If we are black, Chicana, Native American or Asian, we have no right to either.

The anti-abortionists know which side of the class line they are on. The largest of the organizations trying to defend abortion don't think there is a class line among women or, if they do, want to be on the capitalists' side of the line and be rewarded with abortion for their loyalty.

The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and the National Organization of Women (NOW) responded to the attacks against abortion with an increase in lobbying and back-room politicking with legislators, a stepped up campaign to have the Democratic Party adopt a position supporting abortion and media and electoral campaigns costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

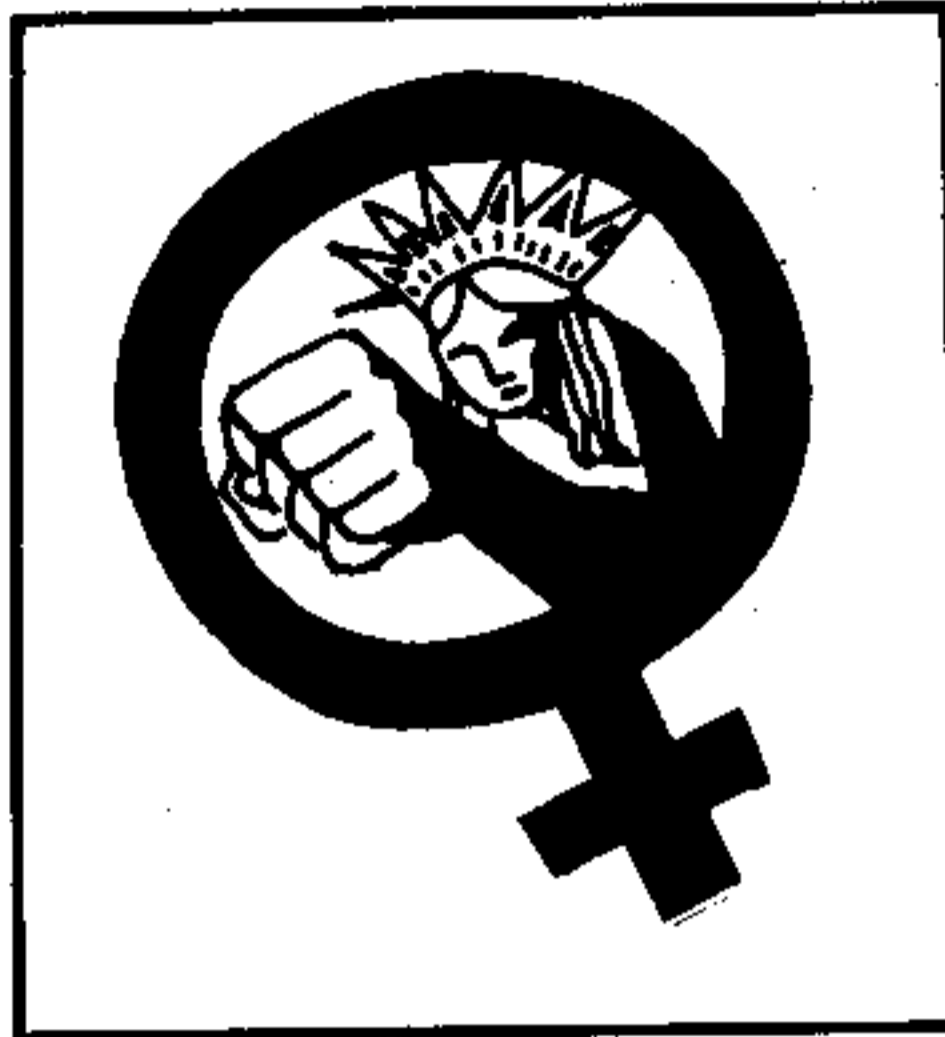
Rather than send women into the streets, they send lawyers into court. Rather than support free abortion on demand, they quibble over how much money should be allotted for abortions and who is going to tax whom to pay for it. Rather than raise the issue of forced sterilisations, they claim it will 'confuse' and 'alienate' abortion supporters.

One mainstay of the pro-choice (they like to use the word abortion) movement actually funds and administers forced sterilization programmes internationally—Planned Parenthood.

The liberal abortion supporters want legal, safe, cheap abortions for white, middle-class, married women. They pay lip-service to the needs of the poor and working, but refuse to budge from their single-issue

mania and link up other reproductive rights issues with abortion. Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW, called a conference in February, 1979, and invited the anti-abortionists to attend.

She hoped to get the cooperation of the so-called pro-lifers in organizing around other issues such as child abuse and battered



wives. The right-to-lifers refused to attend. The conference carefully avoided discussing abortion. When two Cleveland women showed up at the press conference with dead female foetuses and demanded an end to 'the murder of our sisters', the attempt at detente crumbled.

If Ellie and the two body-snatchers had bothered to talk to each other, they would



have found they had much in common. They all defend capitalism and they all defend the family. Ellie proudly calls herself as housewife, just as the leader of the anti-Equal Rights movement, Phyllis Schlafly, a housewife, just as the leader of the anti-she has been a full-time right-wing agitator for nearly 20 years.

Fortunately, the growing attack against women's reproductive rights has begun to produce a new militancy among the rem-

nants of the women's movements left-wing. Early this year, a coalition of socialist-feminists, women's health care groups, abortion clinics, socialist organizations and reproductive rights groups from around the country met in Chicago to found the Reproductive Rights National Network.

On 23 June, while the National Right to Life Committee was holding its annual convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1200 angry, militant women and men marched through downtown Cincinnati demanding an end to government funding restrictions, forced sterilization, violence against abortion clinics and safe, effective birth control for all women.

Forty of the marchers spent their morning fending off an attempted clinic sit-in organized by convention delegates. After the march, 100 protestors picketed the convention site, throwing coat hangers in the hotels entryway and tearing down the sign welcoming the anti-abortionists. During the International Days of Action in March, nearly a hundred thousand women in cities all over the country marched or held meetings to protest abortion restrictions.

This growing left-wing of the reproductive rights movement has brought a new militancy, energy and politics to the fight. Although many of the local groups hesitate to revive the 1960s demand of free abortion on demand because of its association with socialism, they don't hesitate to point out the racist intent of forced sterilization.

Some are afraid a demand for gay rights would put-off people, so they talk, instead, of freedom of sexual expression. And, this new left wing is primarily white and of middle-class backgrounds, a weakness common to the modern women's movement.

Socialists and revolutionary feminists have been instrumental in organizing the reproductive rights movement. It is crucial we stay involved and contend for leadership. We need to argue for the struggle to win reproductive freedom always to be fought as part of the fight for women's liberation and socialist revolution. The role of women in the capitalist family must be central to our propaganda.

To attract working women, we must insist the fight for abortion and against forced sterilisation be tied to the fight for jobs and decent incomes. Minority women can be attracted to the movement if we push an uncompromising line against racial genocide and in favor of free abortions for all women. And, the position on gay rights must be a strong one.

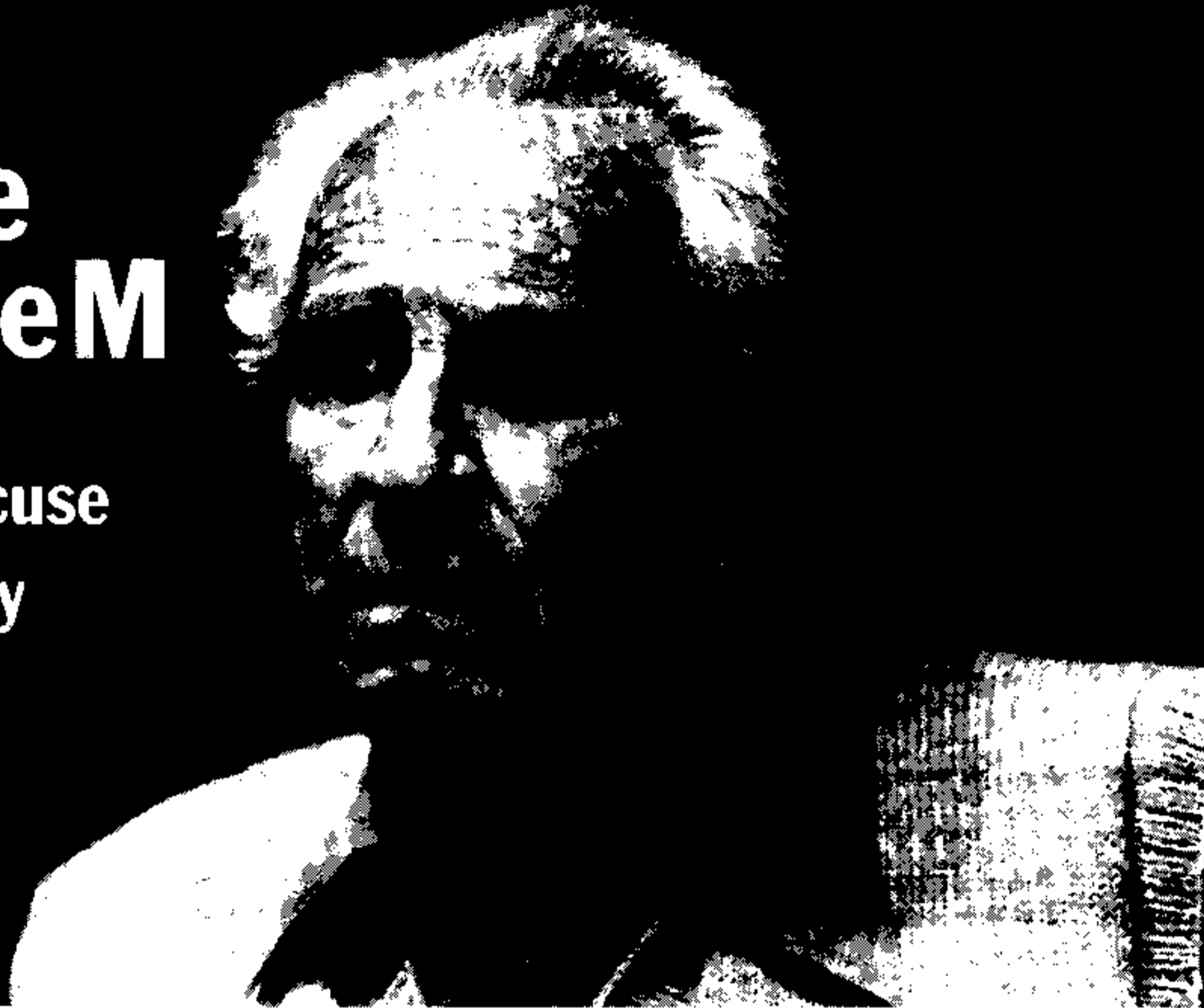
We have our first opportunity in nearly ten years to rebuild a fighting women's movement and to make that movement one of working class women. We can't blow our chances by compromising politics to attract the liberals' money and support.

Rather than soft-pedal the socialist content of this movement, we must bring it to the fore. The right-wing has attempted to attract working-class women to its side by presenting an easy answer to the fears and confusions generated by an economy in crisis and a society in chaos. We have a better solution, and we must not hesitate to say so.

Goodbye Comrade M

Obituary of Herbert Marcuse

David Widgery



London July 1967; The Roundhouse when it was still an engine shed; Anti-psychiatrists on acid, Stokely Carmichael glinted with black pride, Paul Goodman cruising and various heads, Marxists, layabouts and hippies . . . , banks of them, listening.

Herbert Marcuse rises to give his lecture; gaunt, a bit haughty, grey face veiled with lines, 'I am very happy to see so many flowers here and this is why I want to remind you that flowers, by themselves, have no power whatsoever, other than the power of men and women who protect them and take care of them against aggression and destruction'. Much marxist mirth and hippy discomfort; a genuinely Hegelian joke. But made by a man who had resigned from the German SPD almost fifty years earlier over that Party's complicity in the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

A man whose obstinate Marxism overarched the century and plunged back into the closing years of his life into delighted and defiant solidarity with the revolutionaries of black America, the students of Berlin and the peasant army of North Vietnam. And a man who ended his '67 oration with what should, against his reputation, be considered his motto: 'No illusions, but even more, no defeatism'.

Marcuse is known by some marxists solely as a man who thought the working class were finished as an agent of social change and most liberals as the brains behind the student revolt. He was neither.

It is true that his tone was more often of intelligent pessimism rather than irresponsible optimism. He can be hard to follow because he is always striving to write what he means rather than find sentiments that fit his vocabulary. But his preoccupations in the intellectually dark decades of the 1940s

and 1950s were to be curiously prophetic, as if his intellectual life had been a planned preparation for what was to happen in North America in the late 1960s.

The central concern of Marcuse's early writing was the relationship with marxism and Hegel's thought, the problem that so concerned Lenin. But between 1933 and '41 he published over a hundred articles and reviews for the Frankfurt School's journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* and it was from a project on sexuality and the rise of National Socialism terror sponsored by the Institute-in-Exile that his 1955 *Eros and Civilisation* arose.

The book broke nearly fifteen years of near-silence, an era in which marxists who had escaped the catastrophe of Europe were obliged to face the virtual annihilation of the revolutionary Left in Russia, Germany, and Spain. Yet despite its Aesopian language and the fact that just about everyone from Auden to Fromm were also searching for a Freud-Marx synthesis, (mostly abolishing the latter in the name of the former), *Eros and Civilisation* is a unique and passionate vision of a non-repressive order where sex is dethroned from the genitals, the elders and the men, rescued from sadism and masochism, and returned to life and work . . . echoing not only Marx but Fourier and Morris.

Marcuse's next two books, *Soviet Marxism* and *One Dimensional Man* are exuberant books too, despite their measured, difficult prose. The former is concerned mainly with a philosophical critique of stalinism, one of the weaker elements in orthodox Trotskyist theory, the latter with capitalism's apparent ability to baffle bamboozle and neutralise the forces historically destined to abolish it. Here

history has shown Marcuse and many of the descendents of Frankfurt to his right to be static and superficial about modern class consciousness. But the force of Marcuse in the early 1960s lay not in his political predictions, which were wrong, but his blistering attack on the brain police, on the state of infreedom known as 'normality' and the moral squalor of the affluent society.

This was Marcuse's great refusal; it was the philosophical No that preceded the revolutionary Yes. Writing of a close colleague Fritz Neumann, Marcuse said 'In his last years, he tried to find the answer to the terrible question of why human freedom and happiness declined at the stage of mature civilisation when the objective conditions for their realisation were greater than ever before.' Marcuse did this and more, he witnessed and joined with those forces which were the human answers to that terrible question, the 3D replies to the one dimensional men.

Marcuse's short, last book *Counter-revolution and Revolt* is, in my view, his finest, a passionate return to the ranks of the struggling, a fraternal embrace for the Women's Liberation Movement, a polemic on revolutionary art. Most of all a new insistence on the role of the organised and the committed 'bending' the objective tendencies which make for socialism—bending them now; today and tomorrow and the days after tomorrow . . .

Marcuse outlasted the Roundhouse flower people but I think he would have appreciated their music. In 1967, when there was a punk record in the Top Twenty which summarised his fifty years of theoretical work in five words: 'Babylon is burning with anxiety'.

REVIEWS

Picking up the Pieces

Beyond The Fragments

Sheila Rowbotham, Lynn Segal and Hilary Wainwright
Second printing forthcoming from the Merlin Press. £1.25

'Publishing event of the year for all of us pondering the problems of "the way forward" must be Beyond the Fragments, by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynn Segal and Hilary Wainwright. "The movement for socialism must accept an autonomous feminist movement. And it must itself be changed by the demands and insights of that movement", say the authors. Well, every once in a while, someone sits down and draws together all the things that we've all been thinking about and puts them down in one book, which then becomes our book. So it is with Beyond the Fragments. It's absolutely essential reading for any socialist, whether feminist or libertarian (and, for Leveller readers, it really describes what the Leveller is, or should be all about.)'

The Leveller August 1979 issue. Many socialists and would-be socialists are seeing this book as the answer, the way out of the fragmentation of the left, the solution to building a new socialist movement. In fact this book, written by three socialist feminists, is none of these things, although it is a significant contribution to the debate.

The author of the main essay *The Women's Movement and Organising for Socialism* is Sheila Rowbotham, who puts forward three main aims for the book: 'How I think some of the approaches to organising which go under the heading of Leninism and Trotskyism are flawed; how I think the assumptions of what it means to be a socialist carried within Leninism and Trotskyism and which prevail on the left now block our energy and self activity and make it harder for socialism to communicate to

most people; why I think the women's movement suggests certain ways of reopening the possibility of a strong and popular socialist movement.'

The aim of the book is to take the experience of the Women's movement and to generalise from it on the question of building socialist organisation and socialism, in other words to see the women's movement as a model for socialist organisation.

It is impossible to take up all the points raised in the book. Many of them are examples of personal experiences to which it is impossible to reply; many others contain distortions and, in one or two cases, dishonesty, which aren't worth replying to point by point. The aim of this review is to look at the propositions Sheila advances and to look at her strategy for socialism. The first question is whether leninist and trotskyist approaches to organisation are flawed as Sheila says. By this she is referring to the emphasis that Leninists put on the workplace as the centre for organising the working class 'certainly it is still possible to find among Trotskyists an assumption that class consciousness comes solely from the experience of work. There is still a preoccupation with the moments of confrontation—1917, or the betrayals of the trade union leadership aided by the CP in the general strike for instance.

The problem of why workers accepted such leaders is evaded.'

Sheila feels that firstly the workplace is not the sole or even major source of class consciousness, or secondly that it is wrong to focus on the major events in history as the means of developing and changing consciousness. Her analysis is of course typical of the women's movement in that it seeks to justify methods of organising outside the workplace and the whole concept of consciousness raising.

Yet what is the reality? Class consciousness can be and is derived from many complex sources. It derives from the whole pattern of people's lives—their culture, background and so on. But that is not the key question. We know that most people do not grow up with revolutionary, or even reformist, socialist consciousness. So the problem is, how does consciousness change?

What is it that transforms the ideas of tens of thousands of workers and makes them challenge the whole of bourgeois society, instead of being dominated by bourgeois society's ideas. Some individuals change their ideas by reading or by argument on a one to one basis. Most do not. Most people change their views when their own preconceived ideas come into conflict with reality. That usually only

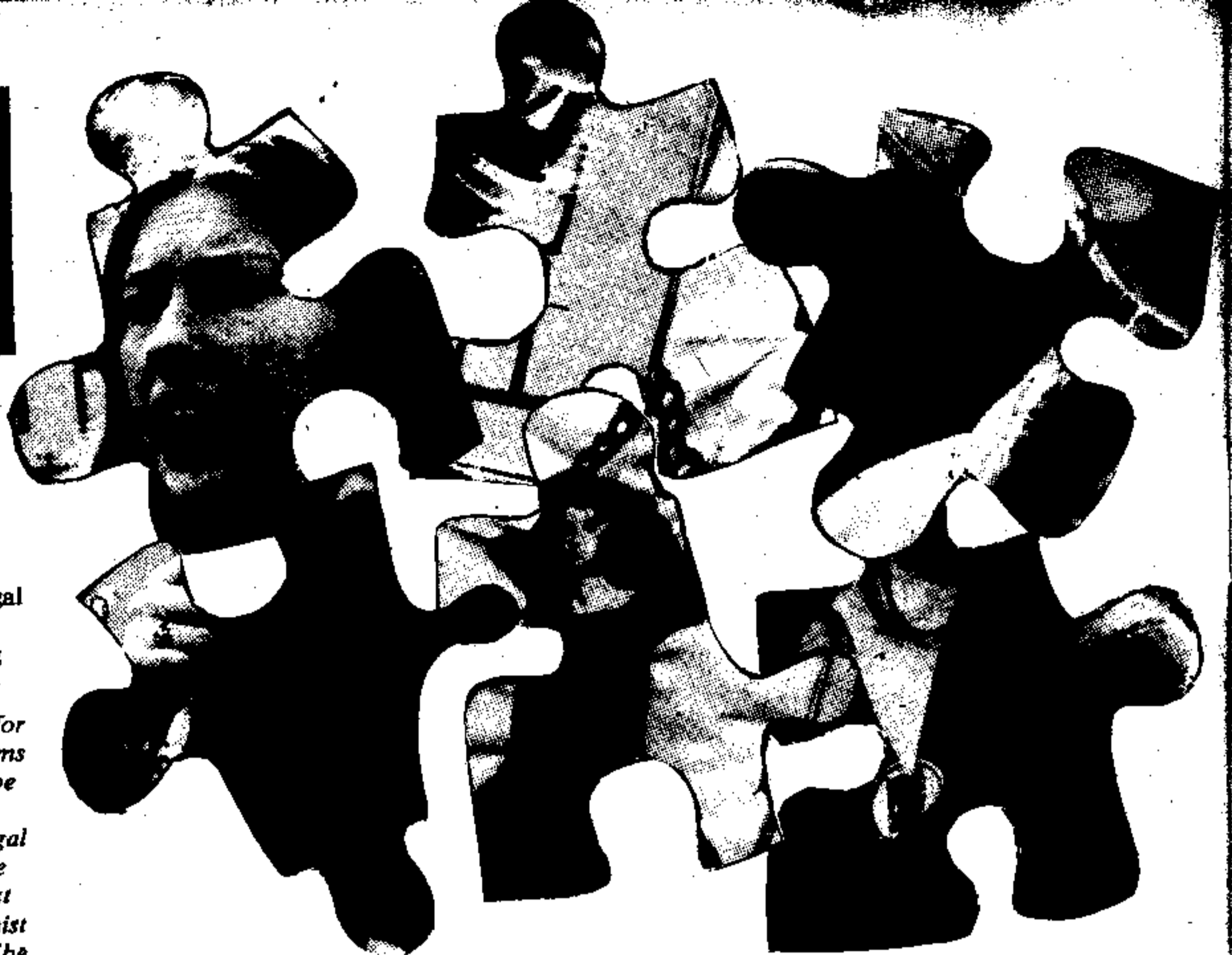
happens when they are involved in activity which is out of the ordinary—strikes, elections, evictions etc which begin to show to them the way in which society works—and their power to change society rather than be passive spectators.

Examples abound of changes in consciousness—on a very wide scale; Portugal 1974/5, Iran for the last year, France 1968. Or, on a more modest scale, a whole series of strikes involving firemen, hospital workers or lorry drivers, with many of those striking not part of traditionally strong sectors.

Now of course that change of consciousness isn't static. Unless those workers see a clear alternative to present society, and unless they think that alternative can be won, they can easily sink back into accepting the old ideas. The role of revolutionary socialists has always been to try to provide a view of that alternative and show how it can be won.

That is why Leninists place emphasis on the 'high points of history' as Sheila calls them; that is where large numbers of people change their consciousness in ways that cannot be done on an individual basis. That too is why the emphasis for Leninists has to be on the workplace.

Not only is the working class the only class with the power as a class to change society, but also the way in which workplace organisation encourages



collectivity means that the potential for workers binding together to fight common grievances is greater, and that the potential to change consciousness is also greater.

The second area where Sheila seeks to prove that leninist and trotskyst forms of organisation do not work is where she tries to show 'how leninist and trotskyst assumptions of what it means to be a socialist block our energy and self activity and make it harder for socialism to communicate to most people.' Here she focuses on two things; democratic centralism and the concept of leaders and cadres.

Sheila argues that democratic centralism is not a neutral form to be adopted in certain circumstances, but is inherently undemocratic. She cites as evidence of this the Communist Party, and the arguments of those who left the CP in 1956. She continues:

'If you accept a high degree of centralism and define yourselves as professionals concentrating above everything upon the central task of seizing power you necessarily diminish the development of the self-activity and self confidence of most of the people involved.'

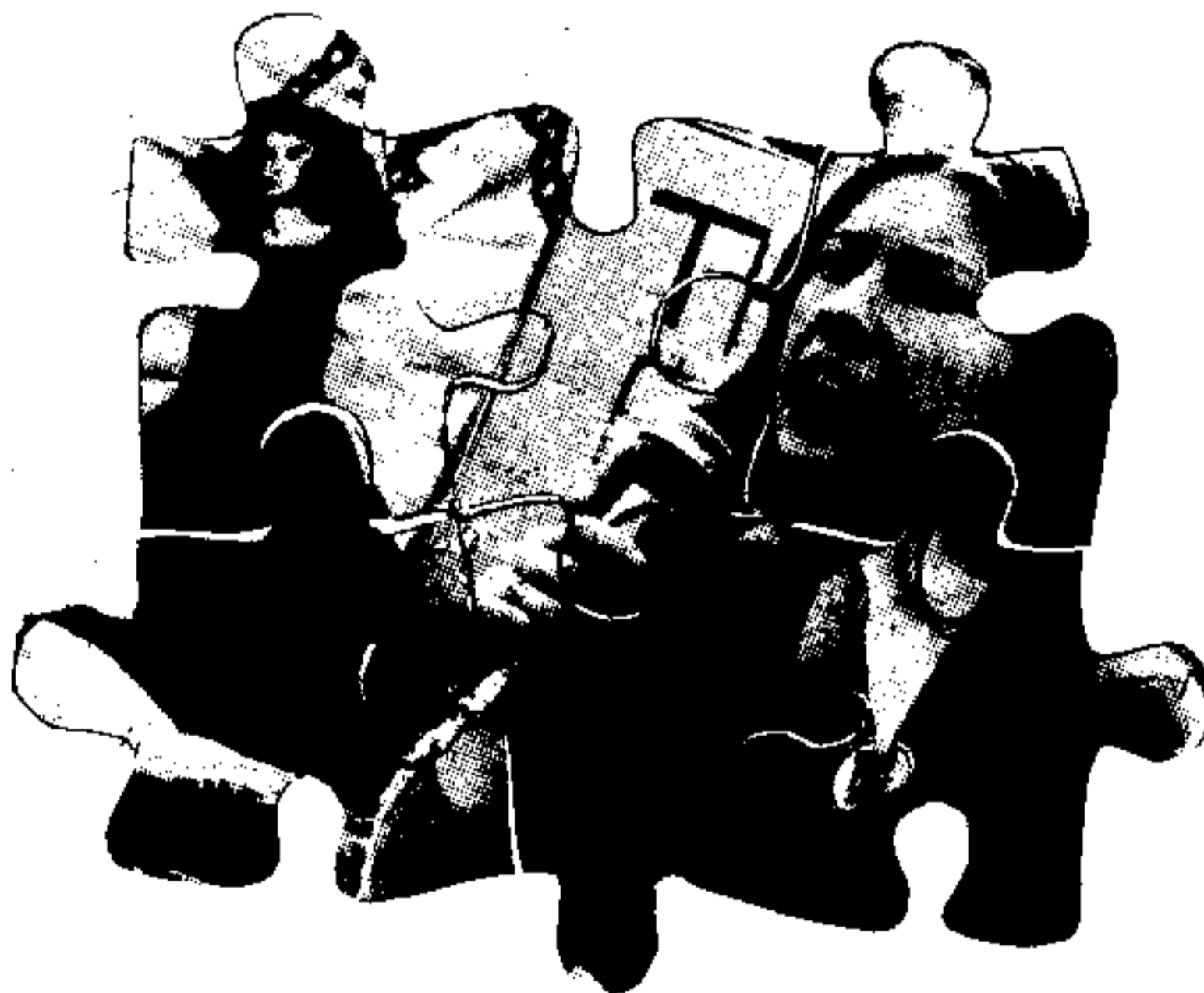
Yet it is clear that Sheila doesn't really understand what democratic centralism is all about. She is right about one thing: democratic centralism is not neutral. The concept as formulated by the Bolshevik Party and by Lenin could not for them be separated from the type of organisation that they were trying to build. For them, the party did not *represent* the class, or was it a substitute for the class. The party learnt from the class, from class struggle, and also tried to lead the class, through developing its theory and practice in relation to the experiences of the class.

The only form of organisation which could fit such a party was democratic centralism. Democracy had to exist for maximum debate of the issues facing the class, centralism to try to obtain the maximum unity in practice, to implement the democratically decided perspectives of the party.

That form of organisation doesn't fit any other type of party. If you try to substitute for the class then the experiences of the class don't matter to you anyway. If you believe that party and class are synonymous then there is no need for centralist organisation.

It is no wonder that CP members in 1956 felt that their manipulative and substitutionist party was not democratic—they were right. Neither was it democratic centralist, nor was it Leninist. It had a high degree of centralisation, and no democratic debate. The neutrality of democratic centralism is a nonsense, as is the idea of applying the form to organisations which are non-Leninist. The alternative which Sheila puts forward is that of participatory democracy. She herself condemns this form of organisation.

'The problems of participatory democracy are evident. If you are not able to present you can't participate. Whoever turns up next time can



reverse the previous decision. If very few people turn up they are lumbered with the responsibility. It is a very open situation and anyone with the gift for either emotional blackmail of a conviction of the need to intervene can do so without being checked by any accepted procedure.'

Despite all this, she claims that 'it does assert the idea that everyone is responsible equally and that everyone should participate. It concedes no legitimating respect for permanent leaders of spokespeople.'

Yet there are leaders in the Women's Movement and in other participatory democracy bodies like NAC. They are usually women who have some time to spare for working in the group, a certain level of education and articulacy, and sometimes a certain recognition through being journalists,

writers and so on.

These people are seen as representing, as speaking for, the movement as a whole, both inside and outside it. There is therefore a legitimating respect for permanent spokespeople. I would far rather argue about and vote for people I wanted to represent my views.

A further point which needs to be taken up; do revolutionaries and the structures of their organisations put people off? Do they stop workers—or anyone else from joining the socialist movement? As far as I can see, most working class people regard most socialists and members of the women's movement as a little odd. That is hardly surprising in a non-revolutionary period,

having a fixed concept of the vanguard. As earlier, she feels that there is an obsession with the workplace.

Most movements erupt spontaneously. Any number of contributing factors may trigger off a movement, or a strike, or a revolution. They may be the most unexpected things. Often those spontaneous upsurges do not come from sections of traditional trade union militants or from the political party. It is often true that such a movement or upsurge may take party members—who have argued with their fellow workers so long they feel nothing can change them—by surprise, and that their consciousness may lag behind.

This process of course makes total nonsense of a fixed or permanent vanguard. In such situations the leadership of the class becomes a very fluid thing. But such situations do not last forever. So it is no good socialists merely cheering on some sections of the class which have suddenly shown the will to fight, whether against the boss or against the state.

The role of the party is to absorb the experiences of these struggles, to learn from them and to generalise from them. For socialists the question is not who is going to erupt next, but how do we weld together different sections of the class in order to advance the fight against capitalism.

The position of Sheila and the women's movement is instead to tail these struggles, not to advance them.

What then is Sheila's strategy for socialism?

'The recognition which was present within pre-leninist radical movements of the importance of making values and culture which could sustain the spirit and help to move our feelings towards the future, has been reasserted by the women's movement. This means we can begin to think again about the problem of how we move towards socialism. Leninism has been particularly weak in relation to the actual transition to socialism.'

She quotes Sarah Benton in *Red Rag* approvingly. 'It's not enough for the individual woman to "know" she is possessed or dominated, indeed in order not to want to be, there must be an alternative culture in which such values are seen to be dominant and to be practised.'

What Sheila is arguing for is a 'prefigurative political form',

one which contains at least something of the socialist future we want, 'such forms would seek both to consolidate existing practice and release the imagination of what could be.'

It seems to me that this form of organising, whatever its other points, contains two serious misconceptions. Firstly it allows for a large amount of individual choice. Most workers, men and women, do not have the choice as to where they live or work, or spend their leisure time. Such choice is not open to them.

Secondly the idea could only work if you believed in a war of attrition against capitalism.

That brings us to the question of state power. Can socialism be the minds of more individuals, by building counter-hegemonic blocks, or by taking over certain sectors of society without challenging the capitalist state at a global level? What will happen then? Will this war of attrition continue, or will the capitalist class attempt to smash any emergent socialist movement?

I believe the latter, which is the experience of revolutions throughout capitalism, culminating in the bloodbath of Chile. It is not enough for workers to assert their rights—they also have to wrest control

of society from those who possess it at present. They have to seize the factories and destroy the institutions of the state. They have to smash the army and the police and anything else that fights for the old order.

Workers will have to build their own organisations, their own society, on the ruins of the old. All that requires determination, organisation and a clear idea of what workers have to do, and the lengths to which the ruling class will go to hang on to their power.

Sheila doesn't accept any of this. She doesn't accept the need to organise in this way to take

control. Nor does she appear to recognize the centrality of taking on the state in order to achieve socialism. She believes in a form of organisation which simply tries to change ideas, and doesn't recognise that the working class has to show itself capable of leading in order to build up the confidence of itself and of other oppressed sectors of society to win.

It is because she never comes to terms with this problem that in the end the only strategy she has for socialism is one which does not go beyond the reform of individuals within capitalist society.

Lindsey German.



Voice of Struggle

Let Me Speak — Testimony of Domitila, a woman of the Bolivian mines.

Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer
Stage 1. £2.95

How is it that the life-story of the wife of a Bolivian tin-miner becomes internationally acclaimed, translated into 11 languages within a couple of years, read by people who have never before even heard of Bolivia? Can such a thing occur without distorting the struggle of which it tells? What is it about this book that makes it much more than just another tale of misery and exploitation, making us feel sympathetic but inadequate?

As the title announces, it is a *testimony*. Domitila is bearing witness, not simply telling a story. The idea for the book originated at the Tribunal for International Women's Year in Mexico in 1975. This was attended by women who were not official government representatives, and Domitila, one of the few working-class women who were invited to attend, made a huge impact.

While the book itself is directed at a wider tribunal, consisting of all its readers, it is still asking to be considered carefully, to be sifted through and interrogated, not simply enjoyed.

Nonetheless it is an extremely good read—hard to put down. This is because even with the problems of translating a Spanish coloured with the

idioms of the Indian language that Domitila grew up speaking, it is a real voice that speaks.

Every sentence rings true and vivid. There is an extraordinary absence of cliché, of pre-packed messages and ideas. As Domitila herself keeps stressing, all she has done in her life has been based on direct experience, both her own and that of people around her.

She was born in 1937, the daughter of a member of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement who lost his job because of his political activities. Her mother died when she was nine and she had virtually sole responsibility for her four younger sisters.

Her husband got work in Siglo XX, the huge Twentieth Century tin-mine that made its former owner, Simon Patino, one of the five richest men in the world. Here she soon got involved in the housewives' committee, which had been formed to support the miners in their struggles against the state-owned mining company.

Domitila was soon secretary-general of the housewives' committee and it is her account of the continuing violent confrontations with the government over the last 15 years that forms the major part of the book. In the course of these struggles she has been twice in jail, tortured, beaten up, her husband dismissed from work because of her activities, several times on hunger strike, exiled to the tropical lowlands, many times thrown out in the street.

But all these events are told without a trace of sentimentality or self-pity, not in order to shock or excite sympathy, but as part of a very clear-headed and engaging analysis of her own development as a political leader in the context of recent Bolivian history.

She writes as a leader and as a housewife. About political leadership she has many interesting things to say: what a leader owes to the rank and file and vice versa. She is dispassionate—even humorous—about the defeats, and about the reasons why she never sold out. This as she points out is not so much a personal achievement as a result of the extraordinary courage of the Bolivian working class, their commitment to their hard-won organisations, their refusal to be smashed into submission.

But above all she speaks as a woman and a housewife, and it is this that is the most striking aspect of the book. The housewives committee in Siglo XX was fighting over the costs of reproduction of the workforce well before we had even invented the 'domestic labour debate' in this country.

Mining communities, oriented solely towards the extraction of mineral often have few alternative sources of employment and thus rely more exclusively on the 'family wage' (so-called) than other sectors of the working class, but the struggles organized by Domitila have not only been for food and housing and education, but also involved taking hostage US engineers, denouncing over the local radio those men who beat their wives, coping with a long saga of sexual jealousy, violence and drunkenness, hunger strikes for the release of imprisoned miners.

In a country as poor as Bolivia it has long been the strategy of whoever is in power to make the most of internal divisions within the exploited classes, for example between workers and peasants, between different organizations, and in the mines between the housewives committee and their husbands who in a male-dominated society were obviously sensitive to jokes and abuse about their wives.

One of the many ways that the book can serve as a useful basis for discussion as it was intended is in thinking about these internal divisions, and instead of treating them as diversions from the main struggle taking them as seriously as does Domitila.

It is because the book is a challenge that it goes way beyond the recent Thames TV film about the same mines by Jonathan Dimbleby, which for all its correct analysis and moving scenes of poverty was intrinsically a *middle-class* view. It made viewers feel shock, pity, with they could do something to help, and since they can't do much go back to the washing-up, switch channels or whatever.

Domitila, and Moema Viezzer who wrote it all down, did not wish just to draw attention to the struggles of the Bolivian miners, but to provide a manual of lived experience for all people involved in struggle. It is *our* book and should be read as widely as possible.

Olivia Harris

Looking for an Alternative

The Workers' Report on Vickers

Huw Beynon and Hilary Wainwright
Pluto Press £2.40

The Vickers' Combine Committee has succeeded in having a book written about itself. It has almost certainly failed in its bid to keep 650 people working at Vickers' Scotswood plant in Newcastle.

In the north east—heart of the old Vickers empire—closure piles upon closure, and the Tory government's spending cuts can only speed up the process. 1,500 jobs lost at Courtauld's Spennymoor plant, 560 at Monsanto, 850 at Spillers French, 2,000 at Plesseys, 330 at Tress Engineering (with a little help from the NEB), over 1,000 (so far) at Swan Hunter and 487 at Doxford Engines and this list is nowhere near exhaustive.

At the very end of last year, according to a report from the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, there were 593 welders on Tyneside chasing just one job, (leaving 592 Social Security scroungers for the Tories to hammer). 759 painters were after 17 jobs and even in traditionally secure areas of white collar employment there were nearly 3,000 clerks seeking interviews for just over 400 empty desks.

With so many battles to be fought, is there any point in sitting back and writing a book? Fortunately, Beynon and Wainwright have produced something good enough for the answer to be yes.

Their report on Vickers—the Combine Committee provides just three pages of introduction and innumerable quotes—is much more than an isolated account of just one company. It is a picture of developments in British industry and the beginnings of the trade union response.

At one time, Vickers employed nearly 20,000 at its Tyneside engineering plants, today it is chaired by former Labour MP Lord Alf Robens, who thinks that engineering is 'finished as a trade in this country'. (The book is not short on juicy quotes but this one must have arrived after it had gone to press)

The Workers' Report charts this progress. A ruthless logic of profitability that allowed plants

to decline through lack of investment and maintenance. Vickers estimate that it would cost £4 million alone to repair the roofs and buildings of its Scotswood plant. Leaving its workers to stand under dripping roofs working on antiquated machinery, the company was happy to rake in the profits they produced, even in the difficult years of 1973-76.

In the meantime, Vickers was getting out of armaments and into plush London offices for which they make all their own—and many other peoples—desks, filing cabinets and duplicating machines.

The pace of the changeover was dramatic. 'By 1971 almost a third of the company's sales were from businesses acquired since 1964.' 20 companies were taken over in 11 years. In the early 1960's, Vickers was nowhere in Europe; by 1976 it had 22 subsidiaries on the Continent.

All this is carefully documented and analysed by the authors, as is the close relationship with the British state. Readers of this book could not wish for a more vivid illustration of why the CBI rushed breathless to Downing Street to try and stop the cuts in aid to industry. To steal just one example from the book: in taking over the machine tool company KTM, Vickers had to thank the government for writing off £5.2m worth of liabilities, giving £1.9m in financial assistance together with an unsecured loan of £1m and buying £900,000 worth of non-voting shares. Vickers paid £803,000 for 86 per cent of the voting equity. Not surprisingly, the deal 'was celebrated by a party at Millbank Tower with representatives from the Department of Industry as guests of honour.'

Neither did the company have any worries about nationalisation. Apart from £16m in compensation, Vickers was able to hive off its burdensome steel and aircraft interests and retain its most profitable shipbuilding—or as the company calls it, 'offshore engineering'—work. It is only a matter of time before the government hands back any profitable naval yards that are still part of British Shipbuilders.

The picture painted of Vickers clearly justifies the author's argument which begins the second half of the book: for there to be an effective trade union response 'plant based organisation is not enough' But it is here that the book begins to pose as many questions as it answers. The solution for the Vickers workers was to establish a combine committee aimed at bringing together workers at all the company's plants.

One of the benefits of plant-based organisation is that it is, at least potentially, highly responsive to rank-and-file demands. A combine committee may be a challenge to that democracy. The book quotes a steward talking about the Combine at Ford; 'Where there used to be a gulf between the officials and the steward, they're now developing it where the gulf will be between the convenors and the stewards, and the stewards and the men'.

The authors say there is nothing inevitable about this. Rightly so; but it is notable that they have to record just a few paves previously that 'a comprehensive pattern of report-back meetings information and discussion has not been established consistently within the Vickers combine.'

The combine also 'established the principle that all struggles over redundancy and plant closure will be supported throughout the company.' The unsuccessful campaign to Save Scotswood illustrates the difficulty of turning principle into practice, and it is a pity that the authors only devote three pages to an issue that highlights the major problems facing combines. Problems such as uniting unskilled labourers in Brighton with time-served craftsmen on Tyneside, in other words of translating trade unionism into political action.

As a solution, the authors devote a chapter to 'Alternative Plans' as piloted by Lucas Aerospace. But does making kidney machines—and Lucas profitable in the process—really offer an alternative life for the workers involved? Is the aim of organisation based on such plans as the authors suggest 'to place a far more effective pressure on corporate and government decision making'?

Perhaps no clearer answer could come than from an 'Economic Audit' on

Scotswood prepared by such worthies as Stuart Holland MP. It estimated that Scotswood could be viable again in three years. Viable for Vickers to take further doses of state aid, cream off the profits and close down again in five more years.

A short review cannot do justice to Beynon and Wainwright's perceptive discussion and neither can the second 100 pages of their book deal with the problems and developments of combine committees. We should be glad that they have opened the debate so well. A Bookmarx Club choice: choose it.

Ian James

Looking Backwards

The Education of the Future
Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wustenberg
Pluto Press, £3.95

This is a curious book. We are told nothing about the authors, what their own involvement in education is, what inspired them to produce this analysis now, and how appropriate they think it is to current positions amongst socialist educators in Britain today. And the title is somewhat misleading since the book is essentially historical.

Its historical basis is 'Owenism', the principles on which Robert Owen ran his school at New Lanark, his own 'utopian' model factory. I think it is a pity that the authors began from there because 'Owenism' was based on a major educational contradiction: it was awarded from above to its recipients, not negotiated within a community of political equals.

Far more radical, and relevant today, was the programme the Chartist, William Lovett, wrote in prison in 1840, 'Chartism; A New Organisation of the People'. In this programme, Chartism clearly displayed, which Robert Owen did not, a profound distrust of state education: 'Bowed down and oppressed as we are, we manage to keep alive the principles and spirit of liberty; but, if ever knavery and hypocrisy succeed in establishing this centralizing, state-moulding, knowledge-forcing scheme in England, so assuredly will the people degenerate into the pestilential calm of despotism.'

Even if, argued the Chartists,

they won universal suffrage, they wouldn't trust the state when it came to education.

Having argued that, there is much that is very useful and informative in this book. It describes well the educational ideas of Marx and invaluable collects together many of the early Soviet proclamations on education, still breath-takingly radical today. It looks at education in East Germany and China as representative of self-proclaimed systems of socialist education, and examines these claims critically, yet generously.

Two major omissions, though, are the absence of any reference to Bronfenbrenner's very important study, *Two Worlds of Childhood*, which detailed the effects of Soviet education, compared to those of American education, on the acquired political characteristics of the students, and Gramsci's writings on education.

There is a pre-occupation in the book with boarding-school experiments and children's colonies. This of course represents a strong tradition within one kind of socialist education, but personally it fills me with horror and dread.

I can only see a positive socialist education arising in the secular and contradictory world of everyday life, in the streets, amongst the young and the old, in the midst of the conflicts of cultures and temperaments—not in the socialist equivalent of a monastery or a borstal.

That is why I query very strongly their advocacy of the Tvind schools in Denmark as a model of how things could be. Having stayed there myself for a week about four years ago to see how it worked, I felt on return that I had been on a journey of socialist penance. For the most part it is a self-contained community which regards the outside world as corrupted and therefore incapable of making socialism.

The characteristic mode of political belief begins with a confession of previous worldliness: 'I used to live a terrible life, squatting in Copenhagen, listening to Jimi Hendrix, getting drunk, but now . . .' Sexual relationships are discouraged as diversionary, babies and children disqualify membership of the community; this is not the route to the future, in educational or any other terms.

Nevertheless, it's a useful book to have because there are

many important discussions within it, which aren't currently being raised, and even if its educational and socialist tendencies are rather too statist for my own liking, its well-informed and provocative. *Ken Worpole*

Dissidents in 'Socialist' States

Power and Opposition in Post-Revolutionary Societies
Il Manifesto
Ink Links

This book contains a selection of contributions made at a conference in Venice in 1977. Organised by the Italian group Il Manifesto, it brought together part of the European left to discuss the problem of opposition in the co-called 'socialist world'.

However, despite an impressive list of speakers which included dissidents like Leonid Plyushch, the majority of contributions add little to our understanding of 'power', 'opposition', or what the organisers call 'post-revolutionary societies'.

Most of the western European contributions consist of heart-searching rather than analysis, although all are agreed that something rotten has been enacted in the name of socialism. The problem is what, and how do we relate to it?

It is here that the book's real interest lies—as a record of the assessment of these societies by part of the European left. In essence this was really a conference of eurocommunists and their left-wing camp followers, all of whom have a lot more heartsearching to do than some others on the left.

Welcome though it is to at last have these societies put at the centre of the debate on the left the discussion is disturbing in two senses. Firstly, many of those present were clearly taken with the notion of 'post-revolutionary societies', 'societies of a new type' etc.

But what do these phrases mean? The old categories of socialism and degenerate workers states at least had the virtue of being wrong. These categories are another matter. They are what I think of 'kitchen sink' concepts in that they are so vague as to include

'everything but . . .' and so become meaningless.

They serve to hide both what exists in these countries and what socialism really means. If as Althusser argues here, we are facing a liberating crisis of marxism, then let us liberate ourselves from the kind of thinking that leads Istvan Meszaros to say 'post-revolutionary societies are also post-capitalist societies in the significant sense that their objective structures effectively prevent the restoration of capitalism.'

Related to this is the problem of what went wrong in the one society which did have a genuine workers' revolution instead of one by proxy—the Soviet Union. We must all recognise and explore the hundred different ways in which the Revolution was born crippled and deformed but we must all too hold on to one of the key lessons that the success and failure of 1917 teaches us—the need to smash the state—the necessity of building socialism on a capitalist society that has been torn asunder.

This is not what we have here. We are back to Kautsky and transitions to new forms of state. Yet it was after all a certain Karl Marx who dismissed those who sought 'the root of all evil, not in the essence of the state but in a particular state form, in place of which they want to put another state form.'

This does not eliminate the problem of revolutionary political power but it does define it.

These are crucial issues for all of us. A successful revolt in Eastern Europe is only likely to come after a revolution in the West, but in turn we will not succeed unless we cast aside our illusions. As Plyushch puts it we go 'forward together or down together.'

But in the meantime going forward in Eastern Europe is no easy matter as the East Europeans make clear. Marxism has been exterminated there and it is not surprising that isolated groups of dissidents should be hostile to it. We need to relate to them critically but sympathetically. Through the labour movement we need to link up the question of human rights with social rights, to attack the structure of repression.

It is Plyushch who spells out a key link here 'the movement's present failure to take up the question of the right to strike

amounts to depriving the working class of its most basic weapon and its most essential right . . . (it) is a kind of guarantee of all other rights—which is precisely why the Soviet constitution lists nearly every other right except the right to strike. As long as this has not been achieved, all the other rights will remain effectively suspended.' *Mike Haynes*



This summer a number of journals have published articles that are worth noting, reading and/or borrowing where they are expensive. *State Research* has published the results of research into the size and role of the Special Patrol Groups around the country in issue 13. It is available from *State Research*, 9 Poland Street, London W1 for 50p (cheques/P.O.s should be made out to Independent Research Publications). This issue also contains information on Truemit, the right wing backed organisation at work in the unions.

Capital and Class, the journal of the Conference of Socialist Economists, has published an article by Richard Hyman in issue No 8, on 'The Politics of Workplace Trade Unionism'. I found Hyman's article worth reading despite my disagreements, but his theoretical observations are almost completely undermined by his lack of empirical data and the absence of a dynamic for his framework of analysis.

This cannot be said of John Suddaby's bizarre article in *New Left Review* No 116 on 'the Public Sector Strike in Camden: Winter '79'. Suddaby is an honest man fallen among voyeurs who appears to have tailored his views to those of the NLR editorial board, for here is an article that argues for socialism in one borough.

In Camden almost the whole of the NUPE claim for £60 for 35 hours was met, due, it seems, to the homogeneity of the proletarian forces, the marxist penetration of working-class

consciousness and the successful achievement of dual power in one borough.

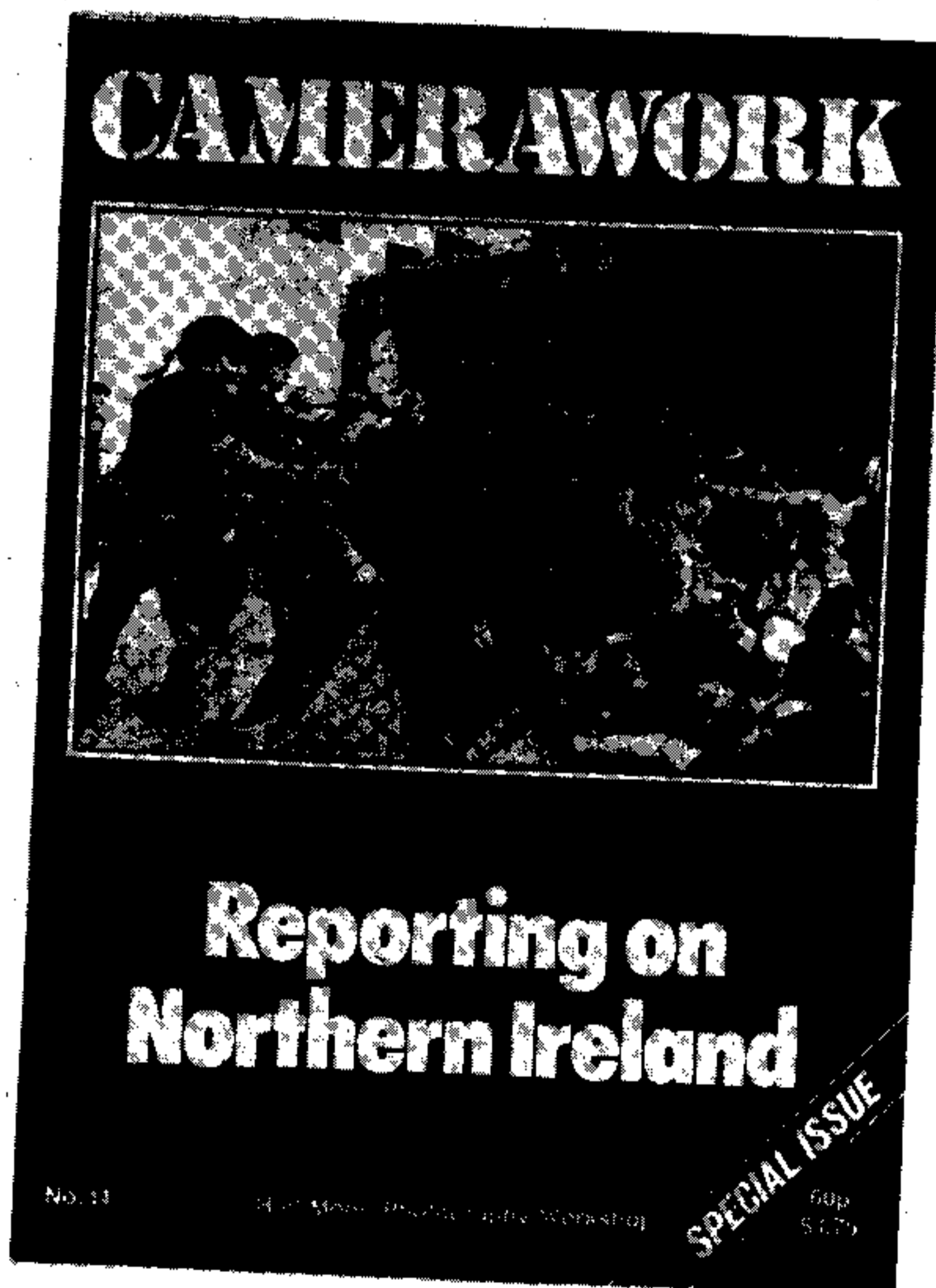
Westminster, where the offices of NLR are located, was rather different. There, the dustmen were, as the crude economists of Socialist Worker might have put it, 'bought off' at an early stage by the offer of large bonuses to clear the rubbish.

Imagine the despair in 7, Carlisle Street, to be served by public servants who were less homogenous, dominated by bourgeois ideas, steeped in false consciousness, who, let it be clarifyingly articulated, were more interested in money than dual power.

Camerawork No 14 is an excellent issue on Reporting on Northern Ireland. It is available for 60p from the Half Moon Photography Workshop, 119/121 Roman Road, London E2. *Camerawork* 'makes no claim to provide answers to the problems of Northern Ireland; but we feel that we can publish photographs in a context that will demystify the issues that affect the Six Counties—a context in which they can be

understood.' This issue of *Camerawork* is a Bookmarx Club Choice.

The debate initiated by E P Thompson's book *The Poverty of Theory* has been taken forward a little by articles in *History Workshop* No 7 and the American journal *Radical History Review* no 19, which is available in left wing bookshops. Several essays in each journal take up the issue of marxism and history. The Benwell Community Project in Newcastle have published a Report on *The Making of a Ruling Class: Two Centuries of Capital Development on Tyneside*. It is available for £1.50 from the Benwell Community Project, 85/87 Adelaide Terrace, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne. The report shows the central role that local ruling-class families have played in the post war transformation of the north-east region, and the way that former bankers, industrialists and coalowners have become key figures in the contemporary world of large-scale financial institutions and multinational corporations. *Alastair Hatchett*





The Nuclear Nightmare

The China Syndrome

By the time you eye scans this page, just about every newspaper and journal in print will have carried a review of *The China Syndrome*, the new film about a nuclear power accident.

None will have failed to remark on the unplanned sequel which followed three weeks after its release in the States—a real emergency at the power station on Three Mile Island which almost ended in a 'melt-down', the most horrific of all the potential nuclear disasters.

All the indications are that in the absence of the real accident, the film would have been given a rough time, labelled more as a fantasy than a forewarning.

In the event, some couldn't resist having a go all the same. The *London Evening Standard* piled in, attacking what it called 'the protest-prone outcries of a glamour-coated, semi-skilled intellectual like Jane Fonda' and even arguing that 'there exist scientists' who will say that a melt-down just could not happen. So what, you might say, who wants to bet on a long shot like that?

But what the *Standard*, to its fury, picked up and what many other critics missed is that the film's strength lies not in the demonstration that a melt-down could happen, nor in showing that officialdom tries to keep us in the dark about the dangers that accompany nuclear power.

We know both of these things already. No, the real guts of the film are in what follows both the 'incident' and its cover up.

A senior plant worker, very straight and vehemently pro-nuclear discovers that quality-control procedures on a pump weld were faked by a firm of contractors, and as a matter of routine informs his bosses that the part should be replaced.

The problem is that fixing a giant pump inside a radioactive containment building isn't like

changing a light bulb — the whole plant would have to be closed and the safety clearance for the proposed building of a similar power station would be delayed.

The power company has cash-flow problems, and the delay would finish them off. So there's a second cover-up, more desperate than the first, as the company employs the most ruthless means to keep the fault secret while running the plant up to full power and hoping for the best.

The brilliance of the film is in its exposure of each one of the series of madly irresponsible decisions as being, to those who make them, quite rational and essential: from the sub-contractors' employees who privately concede the tests are faked but point out that they have to do it to keep the costs down, to the power company executives who will lose millions of dollars and their company if the new plant is delayed. After all, no-one can be expected to do all these tests, and the risk is very small.

The film is uncompromising in its message: even if it were possible to build risk-free plants, the capitalist system insists that things are done on

the cheap, corners are cut and risks are taken.

And no matter how many public watchdog bodies and enquiries are set up, there is no foolproof answer to outright trickery. Sooner or later, someone will be caught out—only we will be the ones who pay.

That is what upset the *Evening Standard* so much—Fonda's film strikes not only at the danger of nuclear power but at the economics and resultant ethics of the system that makes an already dangerous piece of high technology into a machine for certain death.

There is a story that goes something like this. Asked what it felt like as his rocket took off, an American astronaut replied that foremost in his mind was the thought that he was sitting supported by hundreds of thousands of vital functioning pieces of equipment—each of them built by the lowest bidder.

As the camera in *The China Syndrome* wheels through the concrete silos and past the roaring turbines of the plant it becomes clear: this is just how we will feel for the rest of our lives if the nuclear power programme continues. *Colin Brown.*

LETTERS

PO Box 82

London E2

Arming the Workers

Recently the radio news here in New York State told us of an incident in one of New York City's long queues for petrol. One car had bumped another whose owner was so enraged that he produced a gun and shot the offending driver—dead. That story was particularly highlighted because of America's 'gas crisis', but stories of citizens shooting each other over

details of their personal lives are fairly common.

Then, in the May/June copy of *Socialist Review* I read that as its first act the Paris Commune decreed 'the suppression of the standing army and the substitution for it of the armed people,' the implication being that every self-respecting dictatorship of the proletariat will do likewise. It's a point which has been made over and over again in the revolutionary left

press, usually without any further expansion or clarification. It has become an obligatory item of the socialist catechism.

What does it mean? Does it mean that we will all have guns to keep in our broom cupboards so that we can pour out into the streets and shoot at any capitalist stooge that crawls out of the woodwork? If we use the phrase 'armed population' often enough as a cliché, the image we conjure up is just that. Lots of guns in the hands of you and me.

If this is one of the requirements for 'a far higher degree of democracy' then American society is halfway there. Its population is very well armed—and the results are disastrous.

You can't point out that capitalist America has different conditions from a future proletarian dictatorship, because that doesn't answer the point. Socialism will not do away with personal conflict or nasty tempers. Indeed in the immediate post-revolutionary period there is

likely to be more hardship, more chaos and more opportunities for injustice and tragedy. The prospect of an 'armed population' then, is a frightening one.

So what does the phrase mean? How can we exercise democratic control of the guns? How can we explain it to non-revolutionaries so that it will really seem like a more democratic and just way of doing things? After Southall, after Northern Ireland it is not difficult to see that the army, its guns, coshes and mountainous stockpiles of atomic warheads must be scrapped.

Just as we must take collective control of our economic production so we must establish control over the machinery of violence not as individuals but as a people. It seems to me that the guns must be locked away somewhere, maybe in small arsenals available locally, but under the control of elected representatives and with their use subjected to debate and a vote.

Once we decide to use them, that use must be disciplined in order to be effec-

tive, but then how is that battle-order discipline to be organised? Who is to control it and how are they, in turn, to be controlled? There is a problem here which should not be evaded. The need for speed, effective action against our enemies, conflicts with the needs of democracy.

The Paris Communards' National Guard of 300,000 men were smashed by 'the dregs of the Bonapartist soldatesca' numbering only 40,000 (see *The State in the Transitional Period* by Arrighi Emmanuel, *NLR* 113-114 Jan-Apr 1979).

Perhaps we should not allow ourselves the luxury of 'an armed people' until Socialism is assured—(until there is no one left to fight against? . . .) But in that case are we not in danger of instituting the dictatorship of the party—not of the proletariat? So the idea of 'an armed people' far from being an automatic vehicle leading to higher forms of democracy seems to me fraught with problems. How are we going to carry it out in practice?

Please tell me if I'm wrong, but although I agree that Marx's comments on the Paris Commune remain valid today, they need to be explained, expanded and discussed in everyday terms, their implications drawn out until they become alive again after the death by a thousand repetitions which they have suffered at our hands.

I would welcome some discussion in *Socialist Review* on this question.

EWA BARKER

Gay Movement: 1

Lionel Starling's article on the gay movement in *SR* 12 makes some useful points and some pertinent criticisms of the Gay Liberation Front and its tradition. However, I think that there are some important inaccuracies in his discussion of the contemporary gay movement, which he uses to justify an incorrect conclusion about the strategy for gay liberation.

The article states or implies in several places that no part of the radical gay movement is interested in involving non-gay organisations, and the labour movement in par-

ticular, in the gay struggle. Thus: 'The central drive in the gay movement is therefore to involve homosexuals per se. The result is that non-gays are systematically or indirectly excluded from gay struggle'. or: 'Gay liberationists (presumably meaning people involved in the gay movement—JG) are likely to emphasise their oppression over and above their exploitation on the basis of their experience of the world'. Congruent with this, the influence of the GLF tradition on the gay movement now is enormously exaggerated.

In fact, ever since 1970, there has been a small but important current in the gay movement which has argued for an practised an orientation to the left and the labour movement; this current has consistently grown over this period as the lessons of successive struggles here and abroad have been learnt by the movement. (In some countries, e.g. Spain, this current is the majority).

It is autonomous gay groups which have initiated the fight inside the unions for support for gay rights; with the backing that this has gained from the left in the unions, several unions have now been won to positions against discrimination (NALGO, NUPE, CPSA, SPSS). The left of the gay movement has a long and honourable tradition of support for broad anti-fascist mobilisations and has never, even in the heyday of the GLF, had a perspective of *merely* fighting Nazis 'as homosexuals in gay anti-fascist groups' as Lionel claims.

The article urges homosexuals to go 'on the Right to Work marches arguing support for gay liberation'; exactly this was done by an autonomous gay group in 1976 (and with no encouragement from the organisers!)

Lionel mentions approvingly the demonstration in February 1978 'which mobilised a large section of the left in defence of *Gay News*'. What he omits to mention is that this demo was organised by an *ad hoc* group which, though it correctly stated its openness to all who wanted to organise against Whitehouse, was set up by an autonomous gay group and in

the event consisted entirely of gay people.

I agree with Lionel that the task is to win the working class as a whole to the fight for gay rights. I agree that we need a mass party that can lead this fight. But the fact remains that neither of these things will happen without constant pressure from a movement of gay people organised around a socialist perspective. Surely this is obvious from the history of the last ten years?

It is undoubtedly true that a large part of the gay movement (in this country) does not have this perspective, and that (this side of socialism) part of it never will. But that does not make the fight for this perspective less important—rather the reverse.

A movement of gay people with a socialist orientation is the best way of drawing in other gays into the struggle. For particular campaigns it can initiate groups open to gays and non-gays and to different political tendencies to create maximum involvement. The article does not seem to rule out this last type of group, but the only positive proposals are for the involvement of gays *as individuals* in campaigns *other than* those around gay issues, and to join the party. These are laudable proposals, but inadequate.

Lionel argues, in short, that an 'independent' organisational form for the struggle against gay oppression . . . (is) a crucial weakness in the organisation of the working class . . . In fact, it is a *response* to that weakness, and a way of overcoming it.

JAMIE GOUGH
North-West London

Gay Movement: 2

So Lionel Starling (*Socialist Review* 12) thinks that the gay movement is separatist. Perhaps he has forgotten the way in which the early Gay Liberation Front participated in demonstrations against the Vietnam war and Heath's Industrial Relations Act; perhaps he has forgotten the visible gay presence at Lewisham and countless other anti-fascist activities; perhaps he has forgotten the regular and well-organised lesbian presence on the

Grunwick picket line.

The gay people who participated in these activities thought it was important not only to be there with their comrades but to be seen to be there. That way we are taking part in the common struggles (along with our comrades in the SWP etc) and giving encouragement to less organised, closeted gays at the same time.

If that's what separatism is about, then Lionel will have to explain what's wrong with that. He may work in a particular manner but that is hardly sufficient reason to put down the attempts of other organised gays to take the gay question into other areas of contemporary life.

But what is equally alarming about his article is its tone. There is no sense in it of the message 'Gay is Good'. I became involved in the gay movement because I felt oppressed about fancying men and often despised myself for doing so.

In the gay movement, in struggle with other gay people, I began to shake off that self-oppression and value my desires more positively. That, in turn, affected my view of many other things. It affected my view of my relations with women and children as well as other men.

I began to re-examine the nature of all authority and the supposed centrality of sexuality in relationships. It made me question, too, my views of education, of the welfare state, of the media, of work, of racism—and of the whole anti-capitalist struggle.

My attempt to gain some control over my identity did not mark the end of my socialist politics: rather it marked a new beginning. It is a pity that Lionel did not write about that kind of experience—which is not uncommon in the gay movement. His apologetic and derogatory lament did us a great disservice.

I have no clear answer to the problem of linking up sexual politics with traditional left politics. Nor does anyone else, it seems, although many of us are struggling to find answers. But one solution I will not be considering is Lionel Starling's leninist closet.

BOB CANT
North London

BOOKMARX

BOOKMARKS has just expanded. We now have TWO floors containing an almost unparalleled selection of books and pamphlets for socialists and trade unionists. The expansion will make it a great deal easier for customers to see and browse among our stock, as well as allowing us to add a few new attractions to our range—a proper display of second hand books.

But Bookmarks has never been just a bookshop. We see the distribution of socialist literature as a vital function of any socialist organisation and there's more to that than waiting for customers to walk in the door.

Bookmarks began in 1967 as a £30 float to buy a box of books and pamphlets called, rather grandiosely, the IS Book Service. In the days before the upsurge in socialist publishing of the past few years, the Book Service was a method for the International Socialists branches (now SWP) and individual socialists to get at least the Marxist classics by post. As it developed the Book Service was also distributor for the IS pamphlets. It quickly grew and, as IS Books, was soon capable of employing a full-time worker, finally opening as a full retail shop in 1973.

Since opening as a shop we have continued to explore new ways in which we could encourage the spread of socialist ideas. In 1976 we launched the Bookmarx Club—now in its third year and eleventh quarterly selection. In 1977 we pioneered the Socialist Bookfair together with a number of socialist publishers, and the third Bookfair will be held in London this November.

Last year we were joined by SW Recordings and with them we cooperated in putting the Socialist Bookbus on the road. Under the umbrella of Socialists Unlimited the SWP's pamphlets are now distributed

from Bookmarks, together with recordings, badges and other 'aids in the struggle'. Our latest venture, the Trade Union Book service, fulfils a long-standing aim to provide for active trade unionists in a single mail order service books and pamphlets useful both in the union and in everyday struggles. The initial response has been extremely encouraging.

Whereas there was a time when we started that we did practically all our trade by mail order, this has now become a relatively small part. Partly this must be due to the many socialist and alternative bookshops which have opened up and down the country in the last decade, partly, of course the need is filled by the book club, but our mail order service remains an important element.

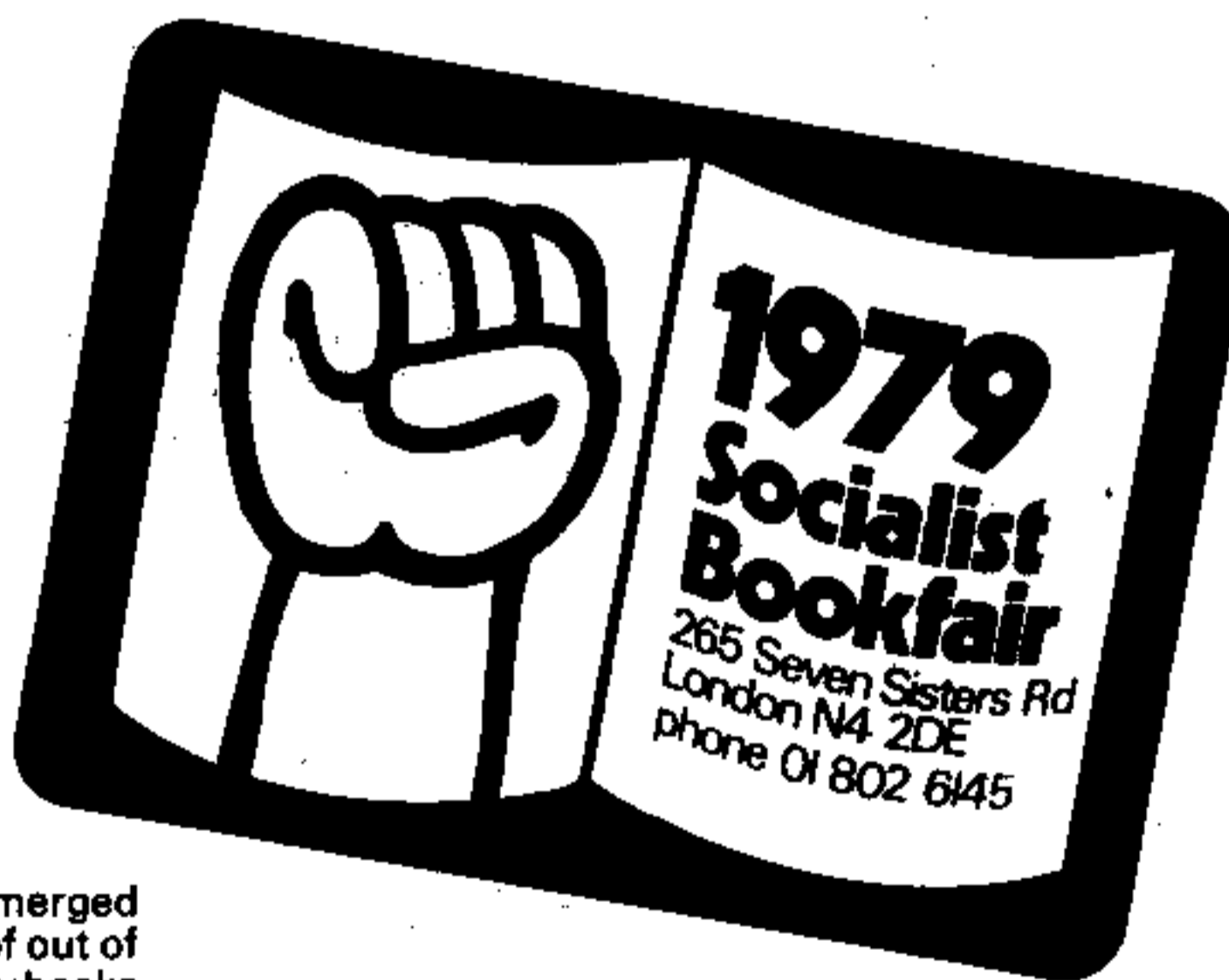
In particular we are keen to encourage SWP branches to use books and pamphlets in their educational and general political work, and special discounts apply for branches buying in bulk. We are also very ready to supply bookstalls for particular meetings, conferences or other events where the organisers can guarantee to return the unsold books reasonably quickly.

But the service we are most proud of is being a good bookshop. This shop is no cobwebbed and sleepy resting place for tired and musty tomes, but part of a living movement, and using its resources to the utmost in building that movement.

So come along and visit us as soon as you can. We are half a minute's walk from Finsbury Park Station on the Piccadilly and Victoria tube lines and the British Rail services to Hertford, Welwyn and points North. Bus routes too numerous to mention run right past our door from all over London.

See you soon.

Out of the Ghetto The Socialist Bookfair



Socialist publishing and bookselling has emerged from the ghetto of tiny pamphlet houses and of out of the way shops with a couple of shelves of dusty books and grey pamphlets among the jars of coriander and the clusters of rope-soled sandals.

In the years since 1968 socialist publishing has blossomed a number of medium-sized, specifically radical publishers, as well as innumerable titles slotted into the lists of almost every leading publisher. There are now some hundred socialist and alternative bookshops up and down the country. Every large general bookshop now stocks a growing number of socialist books.

The Bookfair is a celebration of these facts. It is also a demonstration to the book trade in general

that we are here. The flop that was the 'freedom bookfair' put on by Aims of Industry can only have reinforced this message.

Finally the bookfair is a place in which information is exchanged and deals are struck. Publishers present new and old titles, booksellers exchange gossip and put down their orders and the public at large enjoys a rare chance to see under one roof the whole wide range of socialist books.

1979 Socialist Bookfair—Camden Town Hall Fri/Sat 2/3 November.

The Communist Party (CPGB) in 1979



The Communist Party of Great Britain is deep in crisis. Part one of this article (in the July/August issue of the *Socialist Review*) pointed out the collapse in claimed CPGB membership from 30,000 to 20,000 under the last Labour Government. The reason for this decline lay partly in the shipwreck of the CP's industrial strategy.

For ten years from the mid-1960's the prospect of 'Left advances' through the trade unions seemed very real. But with the trade union bureaucracy's near total acceptance of the social contract in 1975 and 1976, the CP saw a whole series of former 'progressive' trade union leaders 'slip away'.

As a consequence the CP are now attempting a new 'turn to industry' with more emphasis on the 'rank and file'. But, as was argued in part one, the continued reliance on 'left' officials (both full-time and factory convenors) makes it unlikely that this 'turn' can be carried through consistently.

What makes a regeneration of the present CP even less likely is the internecine warfare between the 'right' and the 'left' eurocommunists. This political struggle is the subject of this second article.

The CPGB and Russia

From its foundation until 1968, the Communist Party was publicly uncritical of the Soviet Union. Indeed, for a large proportion of its members, the Soviet Union was the principal inspiration in their struggle for socialism.

In the rightward moving climate of Britain in the middle 1970's, however, the

leadership of the CPGB looked to France, Spain and Italy, to the 'successful' mass Communist Parties and saw an argument called eurocommunism gaining ground. This trend can be summed up as the acceptance of western-style parliamentary democracy as the framework for achieving socialism and a rejection of the stalinist one-party system.

After 1968 and the CP's criticism of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the earlier informal requirement of 'support for Russia at all times' was first qualified and then virtually dropped out of use. After 1968, the CP recruited large numbers of members who felt no need to defend Russia, often from the student movement where these recruits had also rejected the struggle perspectives of the revolutionary groups.

As the eurocommunists gained ground across the Channel, they were also gaining ground in the tiny CPGB. Indeed, the argument developed that it was as a result of the continued presence of open stalinists within the CPGB that the CP remained small and distrusted.

In January 1976, the former general secretary John Gollan, wrote a mealy-mouthed article in *Marxism Today* gently suggesting that stalinism might not have ended with Stalin. This was the opening shot in a strategy aimed at breaking with the open stalinists without wrecking the Moscow connection (which is still largely responsible for keeping the *Morning Star* in publication through the 14,000 daily copies sold to Eastern Europe).

Gollan then toured the major centres arguing the case for a more critical

OUT AT 60?

(Part 2)

**The Political
Disaster**

by Steve Jefferys

attitude towards Russia as the basis for the new draft *British Road to Socialism* that was extensively discussed in the CP throughout 1977. The long, careful preparation paid off.

In the summer of 1977, with a little encouragement from the Russian embassy (who wanted to keep their options open), Sid French led a small breakaway of 500-1000 CP members to form the *New Communist Party*.

They broke exclusively on the issue of the CP's new attitude to Russia, arguing that the advance to socialism in Britain required *more* stress, not less, on the achievements of 'socialism in Russia'.

By the 35th CP Congress, in November 1977, the political committee deemed that its 'de-stalinisation' had gone far enough and bent the stick the other way. A 60th anniversary greeting to the Soviet Union was sent describing Russia as 'the mightiest country in the socialist family' to which there were only 10 dissenting votes.

But the argument did not stop there. The 'right' eurocommunists, having scored one victory in alliance with the PC, wanted to go still further. They wanted a complete break with the closet stalinists within the party. After Congress their attack continued.

The fight sharpened with the 25 November 1978 issue of *Comment*, the CP fortnightly discussion publication. Its lead article on 'Stalin—the missing 10 million—and us' was illustrated by a front page drawing of a stream of bodies disappearing down Stalin's throat.

The flippancy of this provoked an outcry which mingled with the deep resentment of the closet stalinists. A flood of angry letters hit *Comment* and Sid Easton, old-timer prominent in the TGWU, resigned as official publisher of *Comment*. When the executive condemned the cover as an 'error of judgement', they were attacked by the right wing.

The closet stalinists waited for their chance to strike the next blow. The battle renewed when the PC decided to send prominent anti-stalinist Monty Johnstone along with Bert Ramelson on a delegation to an international conference in Budapest against the explicit wishes of the 'Left' Eurocommunist-controlled London district committee. Gerry Cohen first resigned as London district organiser, then withdrew his resignation after the 1 April emergency executive committee meeting voted by 28 to 6 to endorse the PC decision. The affair had brought the fight into the open in readiness for 36th CP Congress in November 1979.

Inner-party democracy

Yet the dispute was not merely about Stalin and Russia. It is also about the nature of a stalinist party. The CP tradition has been that the 'line' is decided by the Political Committee, endorsed by

comment



Living with a difficult past: The cover condemned by the executive

the Executive Committee and carried by the membership without question and, certainly, without on-going debate.

But the official adoption of 'pluralism' under 'socialist democracy', that is, the 'continuing rights of parties hostile to socialism' at the 1977 Congress 'by a five to one majority), meant that members felt themselves free to continue inner-party debates even after the Congress had supposedly settled them.

The initiative was, or course, taken by the clearest of the 'pluralists', the 'right' eurocommunists. And it was deeply resented by the 'left' eurocommunists and the traditionalists. They were angered not only by the policies presented by the 'Rights'. They also objected to the party press being transformed into a continuous debating forum.

The fight about 'inner party democracy' is now focused on the Report of the Commission set up to look into the problem by the 1977 Congress.

In forty-five detailed pages, the 16 Commission members looked at virtually every area of CP policy-making and concluded with 54 proposals which basically imply—**more of the same: more democracy** (PC minutes to be available to the EC, etc) within the same structure.

Yet 6 Commission members, led by Dave Cook, CP national organiser, went further. In another 15 pages they argued four alternative proposals which, they believe, will radically shift the structure. Their perspective was absolutely clear. For them, the 'new edition' of the *British*

Road is tantamount to a new road:

'The new edition of *The British Road to Socialism* is in accord with existing conditions in Britain and the world and with new developments in marxism...The principal task of this Commission, and the Congress, is to bring the way we work as a Party into conformity with the approach of the new edition of the *British Road* and the decisions of our last Congress. This will mean making a decisive break with those parts of our practice which bear the stamp of the negative aspects of our heritage.' (my emphasis—SJ).

They then put forward proposals to allow CP members to form factions in the pre-Congress discussion period, to disagree publicly with decisions taken by Party committees on which they sit, to remove the dominance of the full-timers on the Political Committee by making it 50 per cent non full-time and forcing it to meet in the evening, and to elect the 42-person executive directly at Congress without an EC/PC recommended list.

The Nicholson/Foster Tendency

The struggle within the CP has, however, not been confined to the relevance of wages militancy, the ghost of Stalin and inner-Party democracy.

During most of the 1977 Congress overwhelmingly the CP bureaucracy was in alliance with the 'rights' to defeat the

Fergus Nicholson/John Foster tendency (some of whom describe themselves as the 'Bolshevik' tendency within the CP). This grouping spoke against the abandonment of the centrality of the class struggle, argued against the idea that the State could be reformed and even questioned the validity of earlier editions of the *British Road*.

The 'rights' and the bureaucracy describe those CP members who continue today to use Marx and Lenin as guides to analysis and action as 'sectarians', and term their defeat at the 35th Congress as a victory for the 'mass' or 'broad' party idea over 'sectariness'.

The result of their defeat at congress was for many of the 'Bolsheviks' profound disillusionment. It was clear it would take years of beavering away inside the CP for them to accomplish anything. Several dropped out. Others resigned themselves to the long haul. In Glasgow, where they continue to have a small semi-organised base amongst a few CP activists, tensions between this group and the Glasgow CP mainstream of 'left' eurocommunists (basing their reformism on the holding trade union/positions rather than the community action orientation of the 'Rights') still exist.

But since the Nicholson Congress Foster grouping has ceased to operate as a national force within the CP. So despite the battle between the 'Left' and 'Right' Eurocommunists there is now no oppositional anti-eurocommunist tendency in existence offering a 'third' way.

The Morning Star

The battle within the eurocommunist block began even before Congress ended. The issue? The *Morning Star*. Jon Bloomfield, former CP student organiser, and Birmingham organiser since 1976, a leading 'right' eurocommunist, moved a successful amendment calling for a 'thorough review of the content, role and presentation' of the *Star*.

The amendment was opposed by Gerry Cohen for the political committee and the EC. The bureaucratic centre, still dominated by the pre-1968 leadership in the form of individuals like Bert Ramelson, the industrial organiser until 1977, resisted strongly the 'rights' move to open up another Pandora's Box.

The real issue, Cohen argued, was whether everyone had 'made the fight for the circulation of the *Morning Star* priority No 1'. The style, content and method of control by the CP of the *Star* did not need wider discussion than took place through the regular channels.

Yet the EC was defeated—for the only time at Congress—by 193 to 137, reflecting both the major disquiet felt by the CP membership with the *Star* as well as the real strength of the 'right'.

Since then the *Morning Star* has continued to be the subject of continuous internal debate in the CP and in 1978 its average circulation fell by 2,000 copies a

day. A letter to *Comment* one year after the 35th Congress directly attacked the editor, Tony Chater, for having failed to carry Congress policy and for producing a lousy paper.

It was printed by the 'right' eurocommunist editor of *Comment* and divided the *Morning Star* staff and the CP full-time apparatus into two camps within days. 37 *Star* staffers wrote to *Comment* denouncing the publication of such 'malicious personal abuse'; 19 other staffers then replied arguing 'we feel it is important that people should be free to comment on any matter of legitimate concern to the left—which includes the right to make criticisms of those in positions of leadership, either of the party or the *Star*'.

The review of the *Star* set up by Congress significantly failed to come to grips with its problems.

Many CP members hoped it would come up with answers to the boring presentation, the narrow news coverage and the lack of political argument. Some 'rights' had tentatively raised the proposal that the daily paper should be scrapped and replaced by a big, bright weekly paper less closely tied to the party.

Yet this was unthinkable to those who believed the *Star* had to relate to the daily industrial struggle; and the centre was well aware that the daily was now the key differentiating feature between the CP and the SWP.

A compromise was reached on the *Morning Star*: the daily would be retained but from 21 April 1979 its Saturday edition would be an expanded 8-pager. This would enable more features and political argument to be included.

Yet in order to be financially viable, the sales had to rise. It needed not only the 'thousand' sales volunteers fought for during the autumn of 1978 to try and restore the average daily sale to over 20,000; it also needed an extra 10,000 *Star* 'specials' sold every Saturday.

By mid-June 1979, however, the 'thousand' volunteers scheme had disappeared—the last total they reported was 340. Joe Berry, the *Star*'s circulation manager wrote that 'Daily sales so far this year have held fairly steady, but now there are signs of decline setting in again'.

In a 'normal' year this might not have been too ominous: in a general election year in which the CP had just stood 38 candidates, the situation was desperate. Even the extra orders for the Saturday special had only just topped 6,000, about half what was needed.

But the 'compromise' remained unsatisfactory, especially to the 'Rights'. The present formula for control of the *Star*—editorial policy and editor decided by the political committee, actual financial ownership in the hands of the People's Printing Press Society—remained unchanged.

Formal democracy; in reality, tight CP control over an organ which is allegedly trying to mobilise the 'broad democratic alliance'. While the 'rights' continue to

believe this narrow control is a major hindrance to the expansion of support and readership for the *Star*, they are apparently now resigned to the status quo while the key fight over inner party democracy takes place.

Demoralisation

The combination of the renewed criticism of Russia, of the open challenge to aspects of the bureaucratic Stalinism which pervades the CP, and of the persistent nagging doubts about the *Morning Star*, has proved disastrous for morale. And not solely for those most on the defensive: the trade union militants, the closet stalinists, 'left' eurocommunists, the majority of the 50 CP full-timers and the *Morning Star* staff.

The entrenched conservatism of whole areas of the CP meant that although the 'rights' won a battle at the 1977 Congress, they had not won the war. In his major article in *Marxism Today* in December 1978 ('The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party'), Dave Cook admitted,

'Although the new edition of the *British Road* provides the theoretical approach with which to tackle these problems (declining membership, circulation and votes)... the fact of its adoption is not enough in itself to overcome them. The significant minority who do not understand, or who oppose the new programme, remain uneasy or hostile. Some of its most enthusiastic supporters have tended to lose heart'. (my emphasis, SJ)

The loss of confidence by the 'rights' was most clearly illustrated by the drop in attendance at the 11th Communist University of London. The CUL has long been a stronghold of the student 'rights' within the CP, yet attendance in July 1979 was down to some 600 compared to the record 1100 in 1978.

Once the 'right' eurocommunists turned from their victory over the 'marxist sectarians' to trying to shift the leadership and the party as a whole they had run into severe problems. They wanted the generally elderly or middle-aged CP branches, steeped in electoral routinism and the middle reaches of the trade union bureaucracy, to embrace and give a lead to the radical movements of the late 1970's: the anti-fascist struggle, the women's and gay movements, local anti-cuts campaigns etc etc.

In just one edition of the *Morning Star* vertical columns of text were abandoned on page two in an attempt to address the 'punk' movement. This tokenism was reflected in the rest of the 'turn'.

In practice the CP largely missed out on the biggest of these movements, the Anti-Nazi League, because in most areas it was unable to overcome its sectarianism towards the SWP and could not work within an organisation it did not 'control'.

On its own, however, the CP fared even

worse. When it called its own unemployment lobby on 14 February 1979, the affair was a total disaster. The response from CP districts was very poor; from non-CPers it was virtually non-existent. And then came the 3 May 1979 General Election.

In 31 of the 38 constituencies contested the CP vote declined. The CP polled only 16,858 votes in total compared to the 17,426 votes polled for 29 candidates in October 1974. Its votes were not significantly higher than those of the other left groups who also stood candidates.

It remains to be seen whether this latest election disaster provokes serious self-criticism. It is likely however, that both warring tendencies will sit on the evidence of the bleakness of the 'parliamentary road'. The 'rights' were divided beforehand: some argued the CP should not put up any candidates so as not to upset the Labour Party; others believed the CP should put up at least 50 candidates so as to get TV time for the 'broad democratic alliance'.

And the 'lefts' are inextricably linked to electoralism. Indeed, since they consciously separate their trade union work from their political activity, the abandonment of parliamentary and or municipal electoral activity is for them tantamount to liquidation of the CP altogether. So rather than the most dramatic evidence of the failure of the CP's total strategy—its election results—being the occasion of a major reassessment of the *British Road*, both sides will grit their teeth and stagger on.

BDA versus AMA

Introducing the new draft *British Road* at the 1977 Congress, the lacklustre CP general secretary, Gordon McLennan, emphasised its continuity with earlier editions.

'The new draft of our programme estimates these changes, draws lessons from them and, building on the essential positions of previous editions of our programme, further develops our strategy'.

The PC majority and old-time CP bureaucracy didn't mind a change of words to accommodate their new gramscian wing. They welcomed the fact that 'Congress has decisively rejected the dogmatic sectarian challenge' of the anti-eurocommunists; and they remained (they believed) in the driving seat.

The 'right' eurocommunists saw things differently. Dave Cook began his *Marxism Today* article,

'Since World War 2 there have been major shifts in strategy by communist parties in most advanced capitalist countries; a recognition that insurrectionary models from past eras and different conditions are totally inappropriate. The adoption of the first edition of the *British Road to Socialism* in 1951 was part of this process. Subsequent editions have

developed the general orientation, but that adopted at our last Congress contained important new strategic ideas'. (my emphasis—SJ)

The most crucial new idea was the broad democratic alliance.

The strategy of the CPGB has traditionally centred on the notion of an 'anti-monopoly alliance' uniting the working class with all those social strata (including sections of the capitalist class) exploited by the big monopolies.

The broad democratic alliance, by contrast, is less a class alliance than an attempt to bring together a variety of different struggles—those of trade unions, of 'the various movements against oppression, women, youth, black people's etc'. The objective of this strategy is 'transform the political understanding of the majority of people in Britain', winning their support for a 'left government' that will 'democratise' British society.

The struggle to weld together the different forces involved in the BDA under the 'political lead' of the Communist Party requires intervention far outside the workplace and the union branch: 'Starting from now "working-class leadership" will have to penetrate areas of the state—neighbourhood councils, local radio, boards of nationalised industries, watch committees, council sub-committees and beyond...

'Bound up with this is the need to win ideological leadership'.

The two other ideas that Cook claims are 'new' and 'strategic' are that,

'the achievement of socialist revolution is seen as a lengthy (but not gradual) process of struggle...about alternative ways of running things—about ways of expanding the control working people are able to exert... To take it so its conclusion will involve the fullest democratisation of the state in Britain'.

In other words the transformation of the existing capitalist state into a 'socialist' state without a decisive break in history, a revolution.

And thirdly, Cook discovers the importance of the

'dense undergrowth of activity, organisation and ideas by which people live their lives and express their aspirations, ranging through work, family, leisure, sports, culture, etc.'

These three ideas—the BDA, revolution as a 'lengthy process' and the 'dense undergrowth' of civil society—hardly support Cook's claim that 'within the left over the previous decade... marxism has received potent reinforcements from a host of important thinkers and experiences'. They are as old as reformism itself.

In June 1979, Mick Costello, Bert Ramelson's successor as CP Industrial Organiser, wrote an article in *Marxism Today* openly attacking Cook. 'The Working class and the Broad Democratic

Alliance' is essentially an attempt to redraw the BDA to mean the old 'anti-monopoly alliance' (AMA). Costello redefines the BDA thus:

'The broad democratic alliance is not only 'workers plus others'. It is also workers acting in different ways, bringing pressure to bear on capitalist rule from many different angles, from within different democratic movements, in association with other strata who are oppressed by the monopolies'.

Costello reinserts elements of a struggle against the capitalist state and the monopoly-capitalist ruling class into his perspective. He emphasises the need to 'force through changes which encroach on the powers of the ruling class, weaken the state machine and make possible the winning of power by the working class'.

Costello also sees the BDA/AMA as essentially a working-class alliance which also has the responsibility of winning to it 'forces beyond the working class', rather than being a 'democratic' multi-class alliance within which the working-class merely plays a significant part. For any working-class alliance, 'the daily class struggle throughout the land' is central. Costello argues,

'It is only in struggle around the issues the working class is already willing to do battle on, that the politically conscious sections, the left and the Communist Party above all, can usefully conduct that propaganda for basic social change'.

And so, like McLennan, Costello emphasises the continuity of the 1978 version with the earlier editions of the *BRTS* and attacks 'Comrade Cook's interpretation of the 'new' which puts it in contradiction with the 'old' and would give the impression that the 1978 edition of the *British Road to Socialism* was the founding document of a new party that was writing off its roots in the labour movement'.

The 'left' eurocommunists, including the majority of the political committee, have therefore mounted a major attempt to roll back the influence of the 'rights'. This involves both the denial of the 'newness' of the 1978 *BRTS*, and the return to the idea of an anti-monopoly capitalist alliance based on the fighting strength of the working-class organised in the unions.

But there is a problem when arguing for the continuity of a line that has patently failed. Either you have to admit its failure and then argue the 'new' circumstances which 'now' make it relevant in a way it wasn't in the past; or you have to deny its failure. Costello takes the latter course. He ignores the reality of Scanlon and the massive defeat in the AUEW and the subservience of the Tribune group to Wilson and Callaghan.

The central political lesson arising from the 1974-79 Labour Government is that faced with major capitalist crisis, Left reformism totally failed. The denial

of this reality is essential for the 'left' eurocommunists since their strategy is dependent upon building a 'left alliance' which under the pressure of mass working-class action will deliver left reforms.

The left reformists start within the framework of the 'national interest'—what is 'good' for the firm and for the nation. The 'Left' Eurocommunists have no disagreement with the 1978 *BRTS* when it argues,

'The fight to safeguard Britain's industrial future is central to the future of the working class and the development of revolutionary struggle'.

Their 'alternative economic strategy' is essentially a plan for the 'national' salvation of British capitalism: import controls, departure from the EEC, state direction of investment into manufacturing, 'industrial democracy' as the price the capitalists have to pay for being put right. They are proposals based upon the false idea of 'viability'. And by accepting the notion that 'your firm or country could be profitable if...' they ultimately reinforce right reformist and class collaborationist ideas.

There has clearly been no death bed conversion to the need for a *revolutionary* struggle for power on the part of the CP leadership. The nub of their programme remains the belief that British nationalism can be directed progressively—against monopoly multinational companies, for import controls and 'non racist' immigration controls.

The 'British' solution remains critical for them. So the *Star* frequently attempts to portray working-class action as action for Britain—on 22 January 1979 its banner headline on the public service day of strike action was 'LOBBYING FOR BRITAIN'.

And the 'Left' eurocommunists are correct when they assert the fundamental continuity of the British Road. The agency which it has held since 1951 can be moved to the 'left' in order to implement the 'alternative economic strategy' in Parliament and within that institution, the Labour Party. Thus on 13 June 1979, Costello wrote a *Star* feature on 'Why Labour lost' in which he began from an earlier article by Ken Gill:

'The central task remains. It is to change the policies and leadership of the Labour Party'.

This perspective secured an overwhelming majority at the 1977 Congress. The latest *BRTS* states unequivocally,

'The Communist Party does not, however, seek to replace the Labour Party as a federal party of the working class, but rather strengthen its original federal nature...'

And the proposal to delete this in favour of the need to replace the Labour Party by a mass revolutionary CP received the smallest opposition vote (just 14) at Congress.



The June 1979 Rank and File Conference.

During the last five years the CP strategy of shifting the Labour Party to the left didn't work. The Labour government and the trade union bureaucracy shifted steadily to the right.

If you were serious about fighting this you either had to accept that an entirely new socialist force was needed to act as a counter pole of attraction to the Labour Party (as we in the SWP believe) or you could follow the logic of the CP's case. If the Labour Party could be shifted leftwards, then surely good socialists should be inside the Labour Party to fight the good fight?

What next for the CPGB?

Today, with the decision of Tony Benn to try and build a new grass roots left reformist movement inside the Labour Party and a forthcoming conference in November of this new grouping, this logic is likely to be even more compelling.

In the past the CP had sufficient pull and prestige to be able to argue (even if unconvincingly) that it could best assist the Labour left by organising outside the LP.

But now the CP has one third fewer members than in 1974 and it is rent with a major internal political feud. Many of those who take seriously the CP's traditional argument that the Labour Party can be won to the left are, more than ever, likely to draw a personal conclusion as to where they should place their political activity.

The Tory Government of 1970-74 saw a temporary turnaround in the fortunes of the CP. Many CP members will doubtless be expecting the same thing to happen again. But the intervening years, and the current disputes, have taken their toll. In 1970 the CP took the first broad-based initiative against the Tory Industrial Relations Bill.

Although the Liason Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions may pull a new conference out of the bag this Autumn, the June 1979 Rank and File

Conference which attracted over 1000 delegates has already made its mark. Even if the CP does lumber into real activity against the new Tory laws (to date it has only done some huffing and puffing), it will not have anything like the commanding lead in that area that it had ten years ago.

Political parties survive if their politics accurately reflect existing class interests and if they can organisationally hang together to express these interests publicly and articulately. On both these scores the Communist Party's survival as a real party past its 60th birthday next year must now be in doubt. It will, of course, continue as a bureaucratic rump—its property assets (King St. and the *Morning Star* building) and the interests of more than one hundred CP and *Star* full-timers ensure that.

The likely victory of the 'left' eurocommunists at the 36th Congress in November 1979, or at very least, the halting of the advance of the 'rights', will do nothing to stop this process. A stale pudding is every bit as unpalatable as an uncooked one.

For the Communist Party of Great Britain 1980 will be '60 and Out' as a living force within the working-class movement. The problem for revolutionaries is that despite the small presence of the Socialist Workers' Party, no credible alternative is yet 'in'.

We cannot crow about the defeat of the CP. The long decline of the CP as a left reformist tendency within the class has not been compensated for by an equivalent expansion of revolutionary strength.

Our numerical weakness means that a split of any size away from the CP towards the SWP is highly unlikely. But there are still many individual CP members who can be won from the ruins as well as a host of other trade union activists who up till now have always looked to the CP for a lead but who are now increasingly open to what we have to say.

F is for Feuerbach



Obviously Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) never was 'the first one to see it was wrong', as Alex Glasgow's song claims. Speaking as one myself, I can reveal that it has never actually been necessary to be an unemployed philosophy lecturer as Feuerbach was to see *that* the exploitation in class society is wrong.

Only in the last issue, on this page, Phil Evans gave us the example of the cartoonist Gillray, who had managed to work out that much, fifty years before Europe was favoured with the idealist philosophical theories of radicals like Feuerbach.

And by straining our wits a little we could make up quite a list of others who also saw *that* exploitation was wrong a good few years before Feuerbach—people such as Gerrard Winstanley, Wat Tyler, Jesus of Nazareth, Robin Hood, Mary Cary, Spartacus, and a few million more, named or nameless, fighting and suffering—or just suffering.

So it was hardly original of Feuerbach to see that exploitation was wrong. Nor was he unique in producing a powerful intellectual challenge to Christianity, for which he is best remembered. By the time that Feuerbach came along, that process had been building up with increasing force for more than 200 years.

What Feuerbach really did contribute was the beginnings of an understanding of *what* was wrong, of just *how* exploitation managed, and still manages, to be accepted by so many people as 'natural' or 'inevitable'. His partial understanding was taken up and transformed by Marx, as I shall explain. Marx didn't always do full justice to Feuerbach, but that's another story.

We can start to see what Feuerbach's contribution to our continuing struggle for human freedom was, by letting him tell us in his own words, for which he was never at a loss.

'It is a question today ... no longer of the existence or non-existence of God but of the existence or non-existence of man; not whether God is a

creature whose nature is the same as ours, but whether we human beings are to be equal among ourselves; not whether and how we can partake of the body of the Lord by eating bread, but whether we have enough bread for our own bodies; not whether we render unto God what is God's and unto Caesar what is Caesar's, but whether we finally render unto man what is man's; not whether we are Christians or heathens, theists or atheists, but whether we are or can become men, healthy in soul and body, free active and full of vitality...

'I deny God. But that means for me that *I deny the negation of man*. In place of the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of man, which in actual life necessarily leads to the degradation of man, I substitute the tangible, actual and consequently also the political and social position of mankind.'

Though he owed much to his contemporaries, Feuerbach was supreme amongst them in his ability to confront religion, and its intellectual cousins in philosophy, aesthetics and social theory, with that most devastating of all opposition, the opposition which *understands* the enemy better than they do themselves. (The technical term for this, by the way, is 'critique'.)

In crushing detail and powerful scholarship he showed how religion is the perverted and self-deceiving child of people's hopes and desires for *this* life, made over into empty tales about the *next*, in which the fantasy projections of themselves enjoy the power, happiness, creativity etc of which they are systematically deprived in real life.

In short, he showed how religion had been for many thousands of years what first the novel, then cinema, sport and T.V. were later to become, after his books had been published! And he spared no irony in pointing out the way in which religion, like its ideological companions, actually cheats and oppresses the very needs out of which it springs, for which services it is of course duly rewarded by the exploiters of every age.

Feuerbach again: 'The more empty life is, the fuller, the more concrete is God. The impoverishing of the real world and the enriching of God is one act. Only the poor man has a rich God'.

And: 'Above morality hovers God, as a being distinct from man, a being to whom the best is due, while only the remnants fall to the share of man. All those dispositions which ought to be devoted to life, to man—all the best powers of humanity—are lavished on the being who wants nothing... The bloody human sacrifice is in fact only a material expression of the inmost secret of religion.'

And the real content of religion, and all other departments of ideology, as we have seen him say above, was for Feuerbach ourselves and our actual human relationships with other people. The effect of his *Essence of Christianity* was overwhelming, on the young Marx as on most leftist intellectuals of the day. As Marx made clear in his writings from this period, it provided a general method for the critique of bourgeois institutions and their supporting theories, with enormously fruitful results.

But Marx saw that it could never be enough merely to expose the divisive and

contradictory forms of ideological oppression. He rejected Feuerbach's idealist hope that sweet reason alone would suffice to put things right, that if we could just straighten out everyone's ideas then all would be well—a myth which endures today with our Gramsci-ological 'new left' intellectuals, for whom it is so important that 'the revolution' should be possible without working-class activity, without swear-words, without the dirtying of hands, without the shedding of blood, and, oh, above all without the loss of well-paid jobs!

Instead of Feuerbach's safely abstract, and hence really idealist, 'materialism' of theory, Marx saw that the real question would always be which social forces upheld the oppressive status quo, ideas and all, and which could be mobilised successfully against them.

By a brilliant transition, he showed how the critique of the production of ideas, and in particular the critique of bourgeois ideas about production, could only be completed by workers' 'critique' of the actual practice of production under capitalism. And so Marx argued that... But something has to be left for the rest of this ABC! *Rip Bulkeley*