

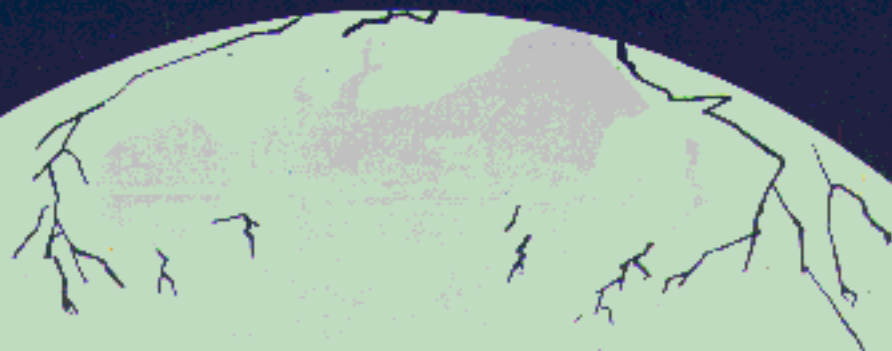
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socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

WORLD IN CRISIS

**BRITAIN
MIDDLE EAST
EASTERN EUROPE
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IRELAND**



Bad news for bankers

In August, Mexico, the world's biggest debtor, announced it could no longer pay what it owes. **Pete Green** looks at the consequences.

Mexico owes around 80 billion dollars. Coming on top of the continuing problems with Poland, and a whole series of less serious crises, Mexico's crisis has shaken confidence in the whole international banking system.

The severity of the crisis is indicated by the speed with which an emergency rescue programme has been put together. The US Government, Western Central Banks, and the International Monetary Fund are putting up 8.4 billion dollars between them. Under IMF discipline Mexico will negotiate a rescheduling (postponing payment) of its debts with the commercial banks.

As one Swiss banker put it, the rescue is necessary to 'ensure continual smooth functioning of the international financing system'. But even if a crash on the scale of 1931 is averted the repercussions will still be serious - for Mexico, for the Western banks, and for world capitalism as a whole.

International bank lending soared in the 1970s. Western banks flooded with deposits of 'petrol dollars' from the OPEC countries were anxious to profit by lending them out again. Selected countries in Eastern Europe and the Third World were only too willing to borrow to pay for imports from the West and sustain rapid rates of growth.

That lending propped up the world economy as a whole in the late 1970s. As did lending to corporations in trouble or seeking to invest, inside Western economies themselves. But it stored up problems for the future. When in 1980 the world

economy again began to slump, the whole precarious mountain of debt threatened to come tumbling down.

As Marx once put it, 'The credit system (his term for bank lending) accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world market. . . . At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of . . . crises - and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production'.

There is an important difference between capitalism in Marx's time and capitalism today. Central Banks will step in as 'lender of last resort', and pump money into the banks to avoid a collapse. States will intervene to prop up companies such as British Leyland or Chrysler when banks have had enough. As Mexico shows that even applies to international lending. But what that means is that the system staggers into slump rather than crashes into disaster.

'The current slump is on another downward spiral and any recovery is going to be very weak indeed.'

Of all the major debtors, Mexico with its massive oil reserves seemed a better bet than most. But in the summer of 1981 the slump hit the oil market and revenues plummeted. Prices of its other exports such as coffee, copper and silver were also falling. That pushed Mexico into even heavier borrowing just at the time when rising interest rates were adding a crippling burden onto its existing debt.

Dollars poured out of the country despite

successive devaluations of the peso. The country's largest private company, the Grupo Alfa, announced huge losses and an inability to pay its share of the foreign debts. But it was the Western banks themselves who finally precipitated the crisis. Mexico needed to borrow another 25 billion dollars this year just to cover payments of old debt and its balance of payments deficit. When the banks said no, the game was up.

Inside Mexico, even with the rescue package, the crisis will have savage effects. All but the most essential imports will be slashed, leaving huge construction projects uncompleted, disrupting the economy, and hitting exports from the West. Public spending and wages will be cut to make room for paying off the bankers. Unemployment, already a staggering 40% will go even higher.

For the banks Mexico is only the most overwhelming disaster in a world where an estimated 25 countries are in arrears on their debt. In Latin America alone they have around 220 billion dollars at stake. Argentina with debts of 32 billion dollars has also been cut off from new loans and a major rescheduling has only been delayed because of confusion over Britain's freezing of Argentine assets.

In West Germany the banks, already shaken by their heavy involvement in Poland, have had to write off 60% of their loans to AEG-Telefunken, the electrical giant, and the country's seventh largest employer.

In Italy the largest private bank, the Banco Ambrosiano, has collapsed amidst a scandal in which the Vatican is heavily involved. Its Luxemburg subsidiary, which the Italian government refuses to rescue, owes around \$400 million to other banks.

But it is in the USA that the major banks are most worried. Already this year one small bank, Penn Square, has collapsed after lending on speculative energy ventures (another case showing that the fall in oil prices is causing as many problems as their rise). Braniff Airways has gone bust. The multinational, International Harvester, owing 4.2 billion dollars, could well follow it despite trying to sell off most of its European operation. Other loss-making airlines, Massey Ferguson, the Canadian Dome Petroleum, and countless smaller borrowers are all running up debts as the slump continues.

But in Mexico, with one estimate that the nine largest American banks have lent it 40% of their capital and reserves, that outweighs them all. Should those loans be written off, and a major bank or two start declaring losses, the crisis of confidence could become acute. The reduction of international lending that has already started would turn into a severe contraction of the whole system.

That reduction of lending risks pushing other major borrowers such as Brazil over the edge. All of Eastern Europe, apart from Hungary, has already been cut off. That would mean a further fall in worldwide demand, feeding back into the Western economies as their exports fall. The current slump is on another downward spiral and any recovery is going to be very weak indeed.

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A new mood of resistance?

'The more political you are, the more cynical you get.' That was how one London hospital worker summed up his surprise at the Royal College of Nursing's two-to-one vote against the latest government pay offer. There is no doubt that the determination of the health workers, and the widespread support they have won from other workers, came as a welcome surprise after a string of defeats.

This resistance is all the more welcome since it comes immediately after the crushing defeat of ASLEF — as much at the hands of the TUC as British Rail and the Government.

As we go to press, trade union bureaucrats are volunteering for martyrdom at the rate of one a day. At a first look it might seem that Moss Evans and company have been transformed from the people who stitched up ASLEF into working class heroes ready to suffer for their class.

If we take a slightly longer view of the movement, the picture that emerges is a bit different. The direction of the movement is not simply a matter of a few speeches by leaders; it depends much more on the overall balance of forces at the rank and file level.

One of the indices of this balance is the relationship between wages and prices. Overall, both government and employers have been trying to keep pay settlements below the level of inflation — in plain words, impose wage cuts. If you were to believe some of their propaganda, then they have been getting away with it.

In the public sector the government has

taken a very hard line — the hospital workers are only one example of this. Usually they have managed to get away with quite low settlements without as much resistance.

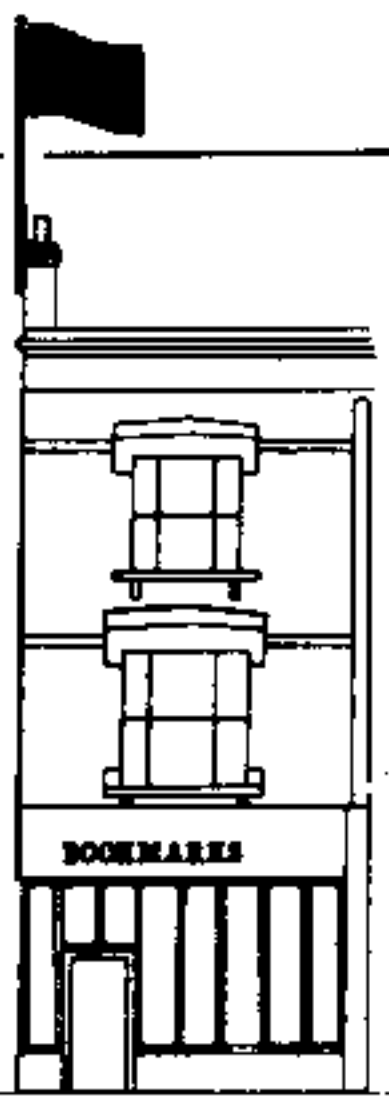
In manufacturing, the picture is rather more complicated. In August the CBI released figures on pay movements in the manufacturing sector over the last twelve months. 55 per cent of settlements were for seven per cent or more, with the bulk of them in the seven to ten per cent bracket. Only about five per cent of settlements led to increases of 11 per cent or more.

With 95 per cent of pay settlements at or below the annual rate of inflation, the employers should be very pleased with themselves. No doubt, overall, the final figures will eventually show that most workers experienced a fall in real wages in 1982.

But the figures for final settlements conceal something else which is just as important. The whole weight of government and employer propaganda has been that the crisis is so bad that a zero offer, or at best two or three per cent, was all that most workers could realistically hope for.

In fact, even in manufacturing, where bankruptcy and closure are an everyday reality, only about 30 out of 1150 reported settlements were for three per cent or less. The propaganda about a 'new mood of realism' is just not borne out by the figures.

The first consequence of this is that the government will try to drive down wages even further next year. Sir Geoffrey Howe



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has already announced that he wants very low pay settlements this autumn. The maximum figure that they have in mind is the seven percent target to which they hope inflation will have dropped by the end of the year. Where they think that they can get away with it they will make an effort to enforce much lower settlements.

The other consequence of the CBI record is that a lot of original 'final offers' of two or three percent ended up as 'final final offers' of seven or eight percent. Of course, many of those settlements include substantial productivity concessions, but they still illustrate a definite refusal to accept cap in hand whatever the management deigned to offer.

The picture on the shop floor, then, is one of retreat, but not of disorderly rout. The ruling class have won a series of battles but they have not won the class war.

At the top of the movement, there is a slightly different picture. A number of trade unions are in deep financial trouble and the pressure towards mergers and to reliance on the TUC for services and 'advice' is increasing.

Loss of members—still overwhelmingly due to unemployment rather than mass desertions from trade unionism—and the retreat on the shop floor, give a free hand to the most craven elements in the bureaucracy of individual unions. And the weakness of individual unions gives a free hand to the most craven elements in the TUC bureaucracy.

If we look at what the TUC has actually done over the last twelve months, the victory of the craven — both of the official right and the official left—is obvious. On unemployment, wages, anti-union laws, the best they have been able to manage has been some half-cock propaganda.

Grim picture

The decision to call for action on 22 September does not contradict this. It is, in fact, yet another attempt to head off trouble and strengthen the hold of the bureaucrats.

It has been obvious for some time that quite large numbers of workers are ready to take at least limited action to support the hospital staff. Usually the employers have had enough sense to keep quiet and steer clear of the legal options open to them under existing government legislation.

The Newspaper Publisher Association, who have a string of anti-union victories behind them, most notably at *The Times*, took a different line. They sought and won six injunctions against named trade union officials preventing them taking action.

Such injunctions must be 'served' on the named officials. Five officials sat meekly in their offices and waited for the law before calling off their action. Only Geraghty, a lower level bureaucrat, took the obvious step of making himself scarce so that he did not get the injunction.

The fact that Geraghty could do this, that the electricians could defy the court and take action, that they could put off paying the fine until it was met by an anonymous capitalist, is an object lesson to the TUC leadership.

The first lesson is that the hospital workers dispute is an issue upon which it is possible to

mobilise, and thus it might be possible to use it to push the Tories into something more of a negotiating position.

The second lesson is that a messy situation outside of the direct control of the bureaucrats was developing. If it was allowed to continue, it might get out of hand with somebody being locked up. That would mean a real fight, and hardly any trade union leaders want that.

Both of those pressures meant that the trade union bureaucracy needed to get control of the movement in order to make sure that it does what they want. They have no intention of leading a real fight. If you look behind the headlines at what Moss Evans really said, you find that he did not declare himself ready to defy a court injunction, only to refuse to pay any fines.

In many ways this string of events is a small-scale repeat of the role of the TUC in the 1972 'Pentonville Dockers' case. Then a number of rank and file workers defied the law and went to prison. Other workers struck in solidarity with them. The TUC called a one-day general strike for a week later. The dockers were released. Two weeks later the TUC leaders were engaged in talks with the Heath government.

This strategy may or may not work. In particular, any mobilisation of the membership involves the possibility of accidents. Someone might end up in prison, and then the TUC would find itself in a situation where the stakes were much higher. On the other hand the Tories might decide to ride out September 22 and challenge the TUC to do better next time. Whatever is the outcome, however, it does not represent a major change of spots on the part of Len Murray and company.

If we look at the Labour Party over the last twelve months, we find an even grimmer picture. This time last year the left was on the offensive. Tony Benn very nearly won the post of Deputy Leader. The right wing of the Labour Party have not become any less horrible since then. If anything their patriotism over the Falklands war has deepened their attachment to the most reactionary policies.

This year Michael Foot and Dennis Healey are unopposed for their posts. The left wing have formally abandoned any pretence at winning the Labour Party. Tony Benn is making speeches backing Foot as leader.

The Labour Party are not simply making a tactical retreat. They are on the run. They are worried that the right wing will win control of the National Executive.

What is more, their retreat is a cowardly one. Most, but not all, of the left have opposed the witchhunt against *Militant*, but the defence campaign has been feeble compared with the effort they put in for Benn last year. Then there were a string of massive meetings at union conferences which helped to shift things. This year there have been no such meetings, on the defence of the *Militant* or anything else.

If we look more closely at the NEC elections, the extent of their weakness is spelt out very clearly. One of the posts left is contesting this year is that of Treasurer. Michael Meacher is running for the left against Eric

Varley, a living incarnation of everything that is rotten about the right wing of the Labour Party. Meacher's own union—COHSE—has failed to nominate him. Varley is nominated by the National Union of Mineworkers. Last year the NUM voted for Tony Benn after a membership ballot.

Neither, it seems, has the left succeeded in transforming the grass-roots of the Party. Although the constituency parties are still largely Bennite, and will vote against the attack on *Militant*, they still seem to be losing members. The 1982 figure is given as 276,692; this is the lowest since 1929.

No doubt the outflow conceals the fact that people are still joining the Labour Party, but it is clear that the left have made little impact on the life of constituency parties. The level of political involvement can be judged from the fact that these 276,692 people contributed a mere £561,000 to central funds last year—round about two quid a head. That *has* to mean paper membership, apathy, lack of involvement—the traditional face of a dying electoralist rump.

Failure in the unions and failure in the constituencies come together on Party finances. Membership contributions, because of inactivity, amount to 17 percent of what the electoral machine needs. The rest comes from the trade unions—in effect from the unchallenged bureaucrats. The defeat of the left is general.

Picket lines

The idea was always to reform the Labour Party in order to reform society. Benn and his camp followers have failed even in their first aim.

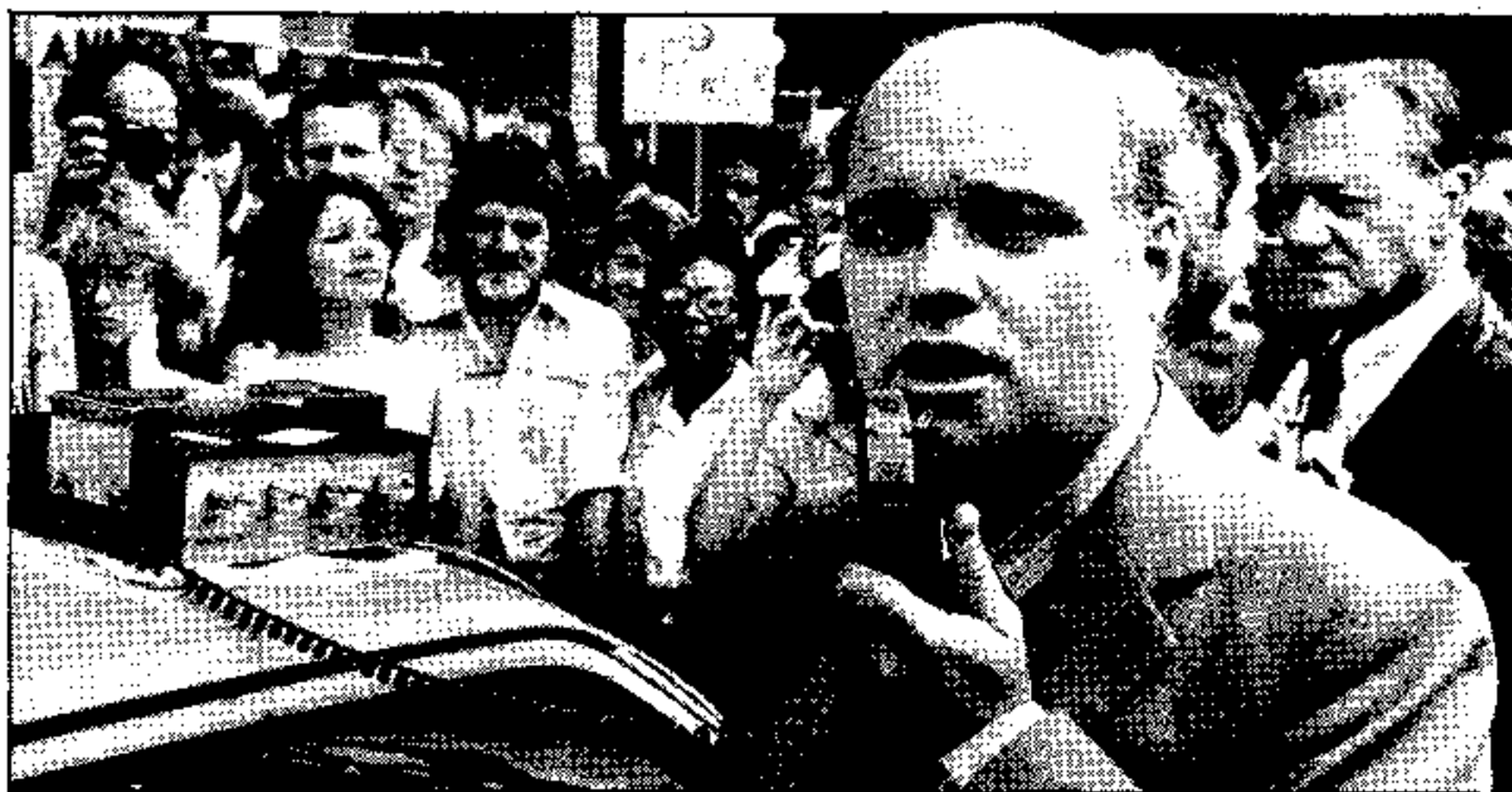
What the left have achieved out of their much publicised campaign amounts to the right to run the GLC, 'Fortress Islington' and one or two other councils—within the limits laid down for them by the Tories and the courts. About the only concrete result has been the creation of a large number of well-paid research jobs.

Both on the political and industrial fronts the picture over the last year is one of continuing retreat. There is no guarantee that the hospital dispute will represent the end of that retreat.

Rather than speculate on the possible outcome of the dispute it is better to note that it illustrates that no downturn is ever complete and total. Even in a period when most workers are scared into silence, some groups are ready to fight.

The downturn which followed the defeat of the 1926 General Strike was much deeper than the one we are experiencing now. Trade union membership fell. Workplace organisation was more or less smashed. The trade union leaders moved very sharply to the right. Nevertheless, even in this period there were very sharp struggles.

The cotton industry, for example, was very hard hit by unemployment, which in 1932 had reached 38% of the insured population in Lancashire. But even here there was resistance. In 1929 a wage cut was only imposed by means of a three week lockout. In January 1931 attempts to enforce speedup resulted in strike action in Burnley,



Fleet Street electricians defy the Tories

followed by a general lockout. In 1932 there were more battles culminating in a long and bitter strike. These battles were defeats, but the fact is that even in very bad conditions workers were prepared to fight.

Sometimes these battles came from the most unexpected quarters. Thus the most determined resistance to the 'Bedaux' productivity system was a strike in 1932 by 10,000 unorganised women workers at Lucas in Birmingham.

All of these, like the current hospital workers strike, were examples of what we might call 'upturns inside the downturn'.

For socialists, there are two important consequences of this. The first is that it is important to continually stress that downturns do not last forever—that the working class is not completely atomised and is capable of recovering quite quickly. We can cite in our support the opinion of the *Financial Times* which argued that:

'...it is fear of the dole rather than respect for the law which restrains the unions ... when the economy picks up, or when the fear is replaced with active resentment, the law may be exposed to a challenge more fierce than any that it has seen in this country since the war—including the events of 1972 and 1974 ... The union's collective strength, though latent, is still the greatest in civil society.'

The wording ('civil society') betrays the fact that this was probably written by some ex-Marxist who has sold out to Fleet Street,

but the analysis is clearly in line with the thinking of the saner elements of the ruling class. Plainly put, they are saying: 'Don't crow too soon, the upturn is on its way.'

But a development which will happen at some unspecified time in the future is not a complete guide to action. Socialists always try to relate to the actual state of the class struggle. We do not stand around with folded arms waiting for the situation to develop to the point where we might condescend to *do* something.

The hospital workers' dispute throws in to sharp relief the fact that it is possible and necessary to do something, however limited, even in the depths of a downturn. All of the experience shows that it is possible to help win the struggle. It is possible to visit picket lines. It is possible to take hospital workers to other factories. It is possible to take collections. It is possible to get delegations from branches and stewards' committees. It is sometimes possible to get industrial action. The Geraghty affair started from just such modest work.

The fact that even that modest activity has had its effect on the trade union leaders show, that it is worthwhile. And the fact that they have been forced to take some sort of action creates new and greater opportunities for intervention.

That is the major lesson of the current dispute. The gap between a future upturn and the present is not bridged by just waiting. Opportunities, however small, can be seized with profit.

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Lebanese labyrinth

Following their crushing defeat of the PLO military organisation, the Israelis are trying to claim that they have 'pacified' Lebanon. **Mike Davis** looks at the real history of the country and at the obstacles to Begin's plans.

There is every sign that Israel is digging in for a long stay in Lebanon. The government is budgetting for an occupation of at least 6 months, while in the Lebanese mountains Israeli troops are being issued with winter clothing.

In Tel Aviv the Israeli government's *hasbara* (propaganda) department is hard at work attempting to repair Israel's tattered image, and is projecting the occupation as a 'mission of justice'. With their ally Bashir Gemayel elected as Lebanese president, the Israelis argue that they are already part way towards re-establishing peace and harmony in Lebanon.

To back up their claim the Israelis have enthusiastically filmed scenes of Lebanese civilians welcoming the Israeli army. They have claimed that Lebanon is celebrating the expulsion of the PLO.

As their occupation continues Israel has discovered more and more evidence of Palestinian 'atrocities'. The Palestinians are projected as a 'parasitic' presence in Lebanon, the PLO as a 'cancer' that had to be removed if Lebanon was to return to the harmony of former years.

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon is a

result of the mass expulsion of Arabs from Palestine in 1948. Of the one million Palestinians displaced by Israel some 100,000 fled north into Lebanon. They faced appalling conditions in the refugee camps that were slowly established.

The Palestinians' conditions were made more unbearable by the attitude of the Lebanese authorities. The government feared that the presence of Palestinians would destabilise the complicated political system that guaranteed control for a small number of wealthy Maronite Christians.

Maronite landowners had long controlled the most fertile areas of Lebanon, and had extended their interests into trade and commercial life. During the nineteenth century the occupying colonial power—France—worked hard to consolidate the Maronites' position. They were closely linked into the French trading network and given exclusive use of the educational system that was established in Lebanon. To this day most Maronites speak French as well as Arabic, and many are almost obsessively Francophile.

By the 1920s the system of privilege that had emerged looked uncannily like that of the Orange State of Northern Ireland. Muslims—who made up some 50 per cent of the population—were largely poor, uneducated and deeply resentful of their Maronite rulers.

In 1943 the system was formalised under the National Covenant or constitution, later described by Maronite leader Pierre Gemayel as having been 'fashioned by geniuses'. Under the Covenant the Maronites were to hold a dominant share of top positions in government, the administration

and the army. This was said to be the result of a fine calculation that would ensure balance between Lebanon's dozen religious sects. In reality it simply legally enshrined Maronite control.

During the 1950s the Lebanese ruling class feared that the pan-Arabism which was sweeping the Middle East might threaten their control, and they saw the Palestinians to be the most susceptible element in an increasingly edgy population. An attempted uprising in 1958—only put down with the aid of US Marines—heightened the Maronite fears.

The 15 Palestinian camps in Lebanon became permanent ghettos. Most families had no real means of support, clinging on with UN aid and other occasional handouts. Almost no Palestinians found permanent work. The peculiarities of the Lebanese economy—with its tiny industrial sector and large service function—offered few of the opportunities that were appearing in nearby Arab states.

In addition Palestinians were excluded from all public and most private employment as a matter of policy. They were not granted passports and were denied welfare benefits—even though these were deducted at the same rate as from the income of the Lebanese. The camps were closely watched by the agents of military intelligence—the Deuxième Bureau. Treatment of Palestinians in Lebanon was probably worse than in any country of the diaspora.

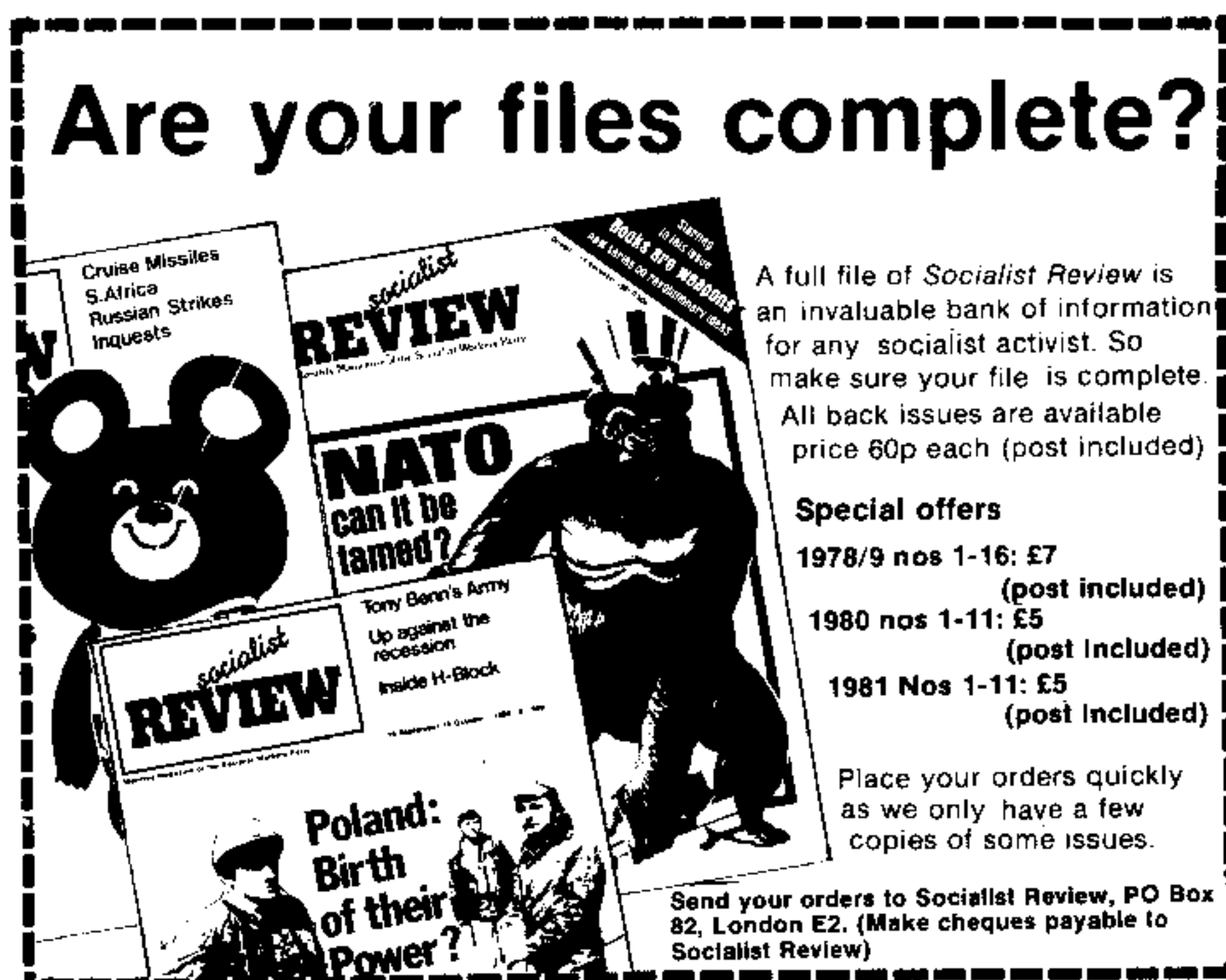
Guerilla war

In the mid-60s the Palestinian 'revolution' was born. The guerrillas of the armed groups soon found enthusiastic support in the camps of Lebanon, sharpened by almost 20 years of institutionalised oppression. The Deuxième Bureau responded by increasing its activities. Those suspected of involvement in Palestinian organisations were frequently beaten and imprisoned. In 1966 a Fatah member was killed after torture by the Lebanese authorities, and an Arab Nationalist Movement member was said to have been beaten 'to a plaster' at the Bourg al Shemali camp near Tyre.

By 1969 the Palestinians were seen as a serious threat to the government. Its success in mounting guerrilla attacks that proved a diplomatic—if not military—embarrassment to Israel was leading many young Lebanese to join the PLO. The southern cities of Sidon and Tyre were especially fertile areas for recruitment.

The Lebanese government—with its built-in Maronite majority—feared that the Palestinian raids would provoke Israeli retaliation. They were unconcerned about the fate of Palestinian residents of the camps, but worried that Israeli attacks might create pressure for a larger and more effective Lebanese conscript army. The existing selectively-recruited national army was con-

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trolled by a largely Christian officer corps.

Events came to a head in 1969 when a huge demonstration of Lebanese and Palestinians in Beirut protested against Israeli attacks and the army's inability to respond. In the months that followed Palestinian and Lebanese Muslim cooperation developed rapidly. The Deuxième Bureau was expelled from many camps and the army prevented from entering. In November 1969 the Cairo agreement was signed. This provided that the PLO should have the right to carry arms and operate as an independent force in certain areas, including those of the camps.

The success of the Palestinians in defying the Lebanese government was a great stimulus to the Muslim population. The Muslims—now in a majority—had become increasingly frustrated by the cynicism of the Lebanese ruling class. During the 1960s land had been concentrated in fewer and fewer hands as the landowning families expelled peasant cultivators in favour of their citrus and vegetable projects.

At the same time, with the region moving into the oil boom Beirut had become commercial centre of the Arab world. Maronite businessmen—and a few prominent Muslims—had developed a taste for flaunting their fast-growing wealth. Beirut became known as the Soho of the Middle East. But only yards from the nightclubs and boutiques of al Hamra were the slums of the Muslim poor—and the Palestinian camps.

In 1970 King Hussein's Black September offensive drove tens of thousands of Palestinian activists from Jordan into Lebanon. Beirut became the headquarters of the PLO and the relationship with the Lebanese left strengthened. Leftist organisations began to mushroom, recruiting principally among the cities of the south—Sidon and Tyre, Tripoli in the north, and in West Beirut.

All the nationalist and socialist currents of the Arab world were represented. Ideologies varied from the hard pro-Moscow line of the

long-established Communist Party, to the Nasserites and Ba'athists and the semi-mystical populism of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). In all of them leadership was principally in the hands of the Muslim middle class. Their socialist rhetoric reflected the rapidly-growing bitterness of the Muslim poor.

In 1969 Kemal Jumblatt—hereditary

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 ... For Palestinian socialists con-
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 ... movement is the key to change in the
 ... region, the developed economies of
 ... Egypt, Iraq and the Gulf offer the
 ... possibility of success. Lebanon was
 ... an armed base—it could never have
 ... been the base for a powerful political
 ... offensive on Israel.

leader of the Druze Muslim sect and of the PSP—had founded the Progressive National Parties and Forces. This grouping of leftist organisations supported the Palestinians and called for the abolition of sectarianism and changes in the constitution and the electoral laws. During the early 70s the PNPf became the focus for the growing leftist movement.

In 1975 Lebanon exploded into civil war. Significantly the first spark was the army's attack on a demonstration supporting Muslim fishermen in Sidon who were protesting against the fishing monopoly of Maronite businessman and former president Camille Chamoun. Within weeks skirmishes between leftist and rightist militias had developed into all-out conflict. The PLO soon joined the reformed PNPf—now known as the Lebanese National Movement. By November 1976 60,000 Lebanese and Palestinians were dead.

A group of wealthy families had long feuded amongst themselves for leadership of the Maronite community and of the Lebanese system. Chief among the contenders were the Franjiehs, with their base in the northern mountains, the Chamouns of Damour near Beirut, and the Gemayels of the central mountain area.

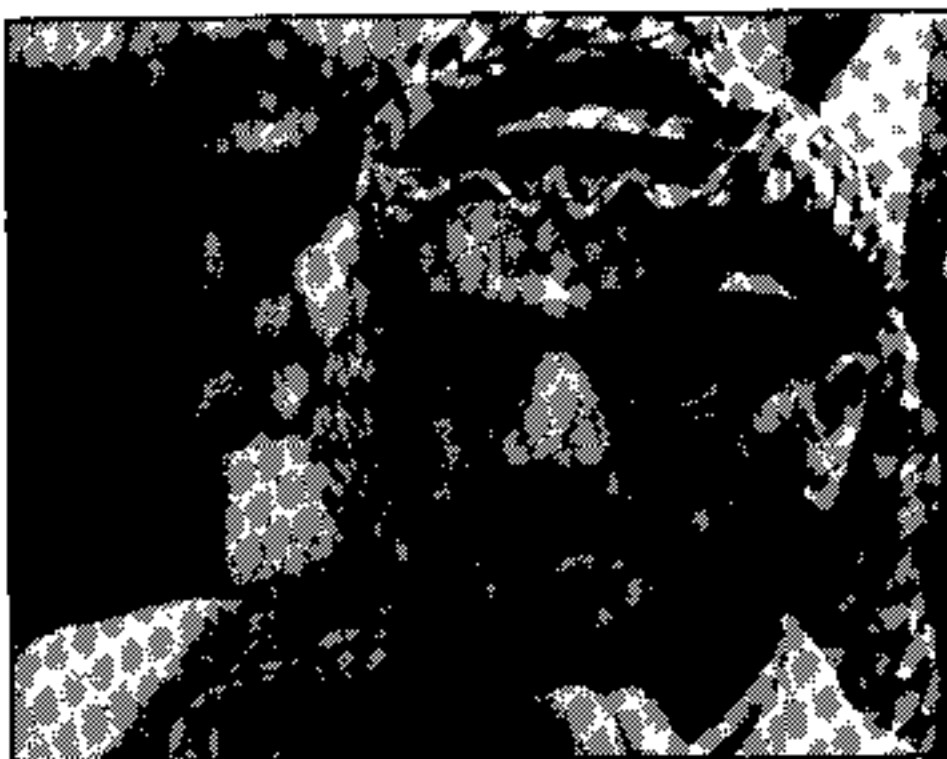
The Gemayels had always been the most ruthless and the most successful. Their Phalange or *Kataeb* had been established in 1936 shortly after Pierre Gemayel had visited the Berlin Olympics to admire Nazi Party organisation. The Phalange borrowed directly from the fascist model, with paramilitary organisation, fascist salute and marching songs. It developed a racist ideology—always latent in the Maronite tradition—that drew on European fascist notions of 'Aryan' superiority. The Gemayel version had the Maronites deriving from 'Phoenician' stock. Other Lebanese were 'mere' Arabs. The Phalange was obsessively anti-communist and dedicated to expelling

the Palestinians from Lebanon.

Most Maronites had kept their distance from the Phalange, but on the outbreak of civil war many threw in their lot with the Gemayels. The various Christian Militias united to form the Lebanese Forces, but as the National Movement and the PLO combined against them, the Maronites were soon in deep trouble.

Their militias were driven into a small enclave north of Beirut where the PLO and LNM threatened their final defeat. At the critical moment a 40,000-strong Syrian army—which had formally entered Lebanon to support the Palestinians—swung into an alliance with the rightists and opened a new offensive on the PLO.

With support from the Syrians the rightist militias felt free to carry out a series of horrifying attacks on Palestinian and Muslims. Earlier in the war they had killed hundreds of Muslim and Palestinian poor in the Beirut slum of Qarantina in an episode recalling the pogroms of Central Europe. In retaliation



the PLO had destroyed the Christian town of Damour, South of Beirut. Now the rightists tightened their blockade of the Palestinian camp of Tal al Zaater. After months of siege and lengthy artillery bombardment, they succeeded in killing some 10,000 of the inhabitants.

When the fighting stopped in November 1976 the Syrians were in full control. The Maronites were permitted to extend their en-

clave to the south and east. After more bloody battles with the Syrians, the PLO and leftists were restricted to the town of Tripoli in the north, to West Beirut, to a thin strip of land along the coast including Sidon and Tyre, and inland towards the Beqa Valley.

With Israeli support the Maronites also acquired a strip of territory along the Israeli border, soon named 'Haddadland' after former Lebanese army officer Saad Haddad, who had entered an open alliance with Israel.

The Lebanese state had collapsed. There were now three power bases—the Maronite militias, the PLO and the Syrian army. Among the rightists the Phalange set out to consolidate its position. The Phalange had come under the command of Pierre Gemayel's youngest son Bashir, who had already won a reputation for what his brother Amin described as 'megalomaniac violence'.

In June 1978 Bashir organised the murder of 30 members of the rival Franjeh family, including Tony Franjeh, son of the former president. A year later the Phalange effectively liquidated the remnants of Camille Chamoun's 'Tiger' militias. The Gemayels strengthened their alliance with Israel, who had for years supplied them with cash and the best American weaponry.

Liquidating the PLO

When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978 there is little doubt that their adventure had been thoroughly discussed with the Phalange leadership. Only the Israelis' inability to secure a quick breakthrough against the PLO fighters in the south—and the apparent consternation this caused amongst strategists in Tel Aviv—seems to have prevented them striking north to link up with the rightists forces. In the end Israel settled for a strengthening of the Haddad militia, and an extension of his enclave north towards the Palestinian positions.

Throughout this period the Palestinians were subject to repeated Israeli attacks. It is also clear that their relationship with the Lebanese suffered badly in some areas. Following the civil war large quantities of money and guns flowed from Arab capitals to the various sections of the PLO. The PLO became more bureaucratic, concentrating in Beirut with less and less control in the camps. Many Palestinians will today admit that some of their fighters bullied the Lebanese, especially in the south. But there is no evidence of the Israeli allegations of PLO torture and killing that have followed the 1982 invasion. Indeed during the late 70s the PLO continued to recruit among Lebanese, especially in the towns of the south.

When Israel invaded Lebanon again in June 1982 its leaders had no intention of 'solving' the Lebanon problem on behalf of the Lebanese people. Their aim was to liquidate the PLO, driving the largest number of Palestinians out of Lebanon. They then aimed to establish a permanent Phalangist hegemony.

There were at least two external reasons why Israel launched its June invasion. The possibility of a deal between the United States and the PLO—with Arafat recognising Israel—caused the Israelis to try and wrest the initiative away from Washington

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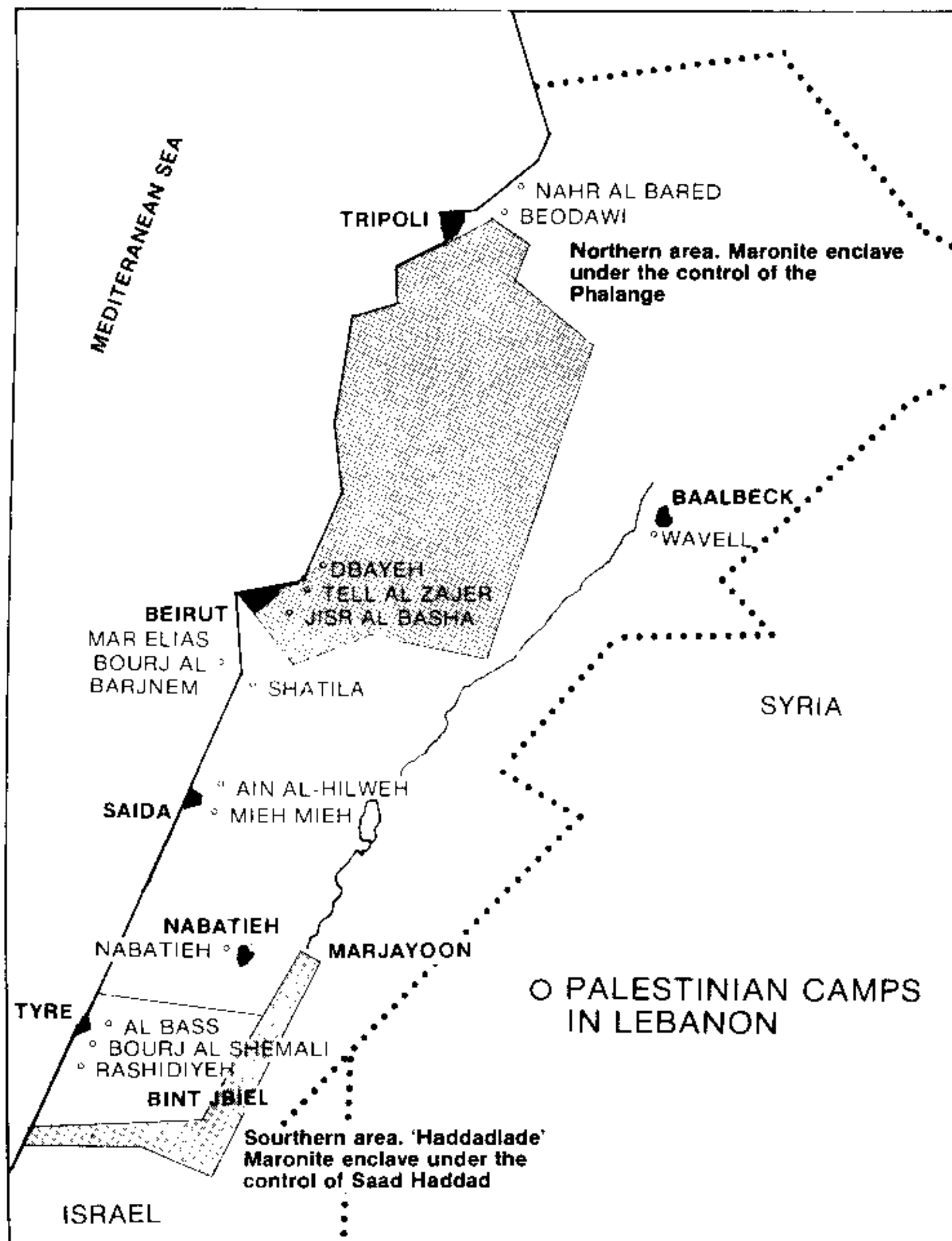
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deepening divisions in Lebanese society will prevent them exercising effective control over the resentful masses of the Muslim slums and villages.

There is little chance of an effective 'leftist' fightback—the left is ideologically poverty-stricken and deeply divided. But after a decade of experience in organising against the right and the Israelis, the organisations of the LNM will not simply disappear. Bashir Gemayel and the Phalange are deeply hated by large numbers of Lebanese. The idea that he can 'unify' Lebanon, when his rise to power has been motivated by obsessive sectarianism is similar to suggesting that in a population two-thirds Catholic the UVF could expect the support of the whole population of Northern Ireland.

Continuing struggle

If Gemayel faces serious difficulties in establishing his new apparatus the Israelis may feel compelled to stay and support him. Now that the United States appears to have begun a 'Camp David Mark 2' operation, they may also feel that their presence in Lebanon will be a useful bargaining counter.

But with every additional month of occupation the Israeli forces will be compelled to develop practices little different from those of the Phalangists they so badly want to see in full control. Their continuing presence may do much to unite the rather motley collection of leftist and nationalist groups presently in some disarray. Fighting it out in the streets of Lebanese cities could cost Israel dear.

The Palestinians still have a role to play in Lebanon. Despite its military battering the PLO retains the support of the 300,000 to 400,000 Palestinians who remain. Unless Gemayel and the Israelis can force them all out into Syria or Jordan, a renewed co-ordination with what remains of the LNM is likely. The Palestinians will carry on their struggle, though under far greater pressure than that to which they became accustomed over the past 15 years. The Israelis drove the Palestinians into Lebanon in 1948. Eight wars and two invasions later they have still failed to get rid of them.

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and a 'moderate' Palestinian leadership. In addition Begin was anxious to carry forward his plan for liquidating the PLO militarily as a prelude to the annexation of the West Bank.

But Israel has also long held ambitions to intervene in Lebanon and to impose its own plan on both Lebanese and Palestinians.

Israel wants to turn the clock back 20 years to a time when the Maronites controlled a still passive Muslim population and had effectively imprisoned the Palestinians in their camps. Ever since the PLO provided the catalyst for the organisation of the Muslim population Israel has been determined to smash their alliance and try and ensure that there can be no repeat of the 1976 situation when the combined PLO and LNM forces threatened Maronite power.

Israel has placed the Phalange in control over wide areas of occupied Lebanon and is now prepared to back them to the hilt in their effort to construct a new state apparatus that will consolidate rightist control. In return the Israelis expect their ally Gemayel—recently elected after a farce of purchased votes and open intimidation—to recognise the Zionist state.

The more hawkish Israeli strategists have

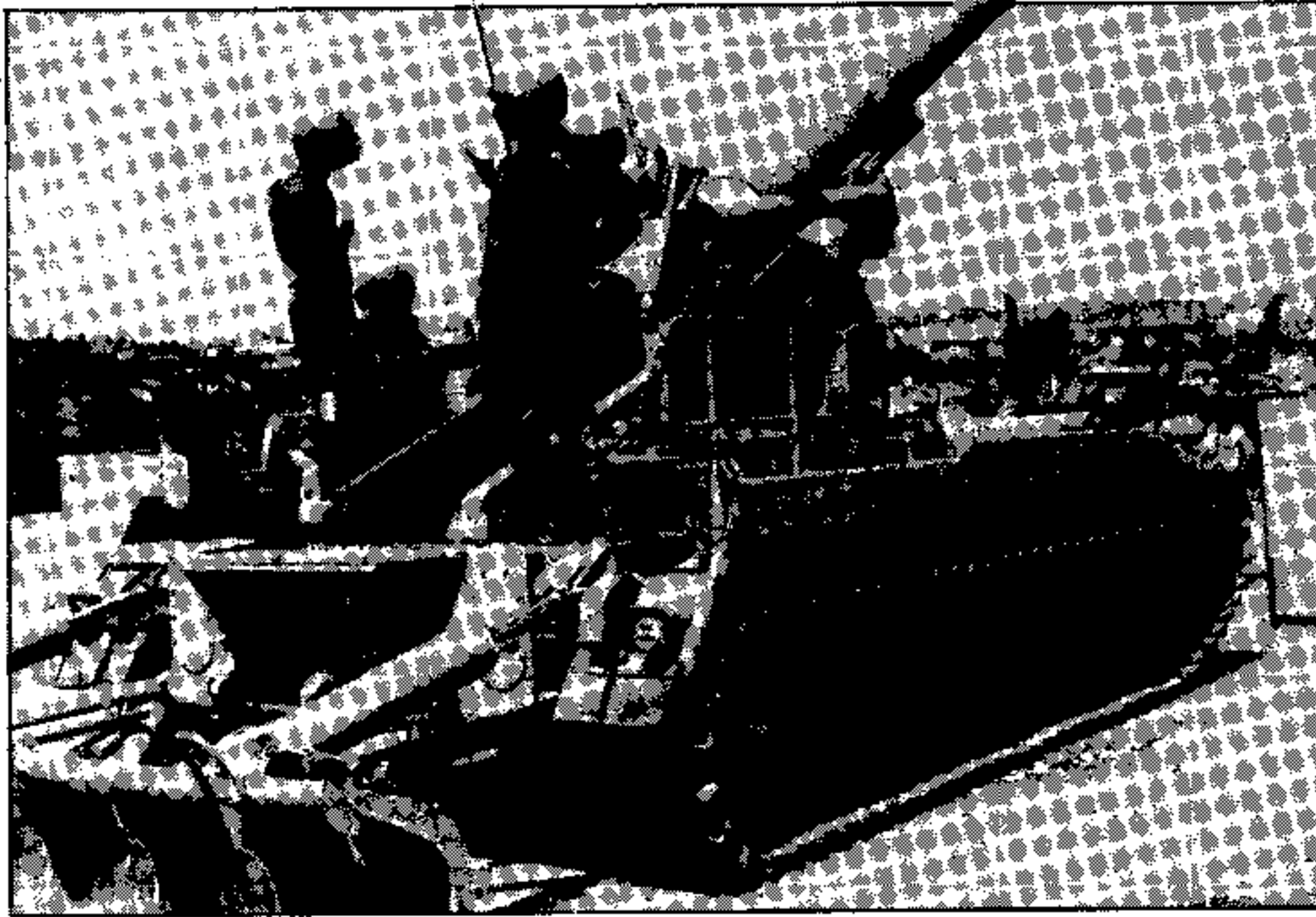
other intentions. Some would like to incorporate the whole of Lebanon south of Beirut as a northern province of Israel. Others favour an occupation of the southern territories with the intention of squeezing out all the remaining Palestinian population and tapping the much-prized waters of the Litani River for irrigation projects in Israel.

The present government is already hoping for a lucrative trading relationship with Israel across a border they intend should always be under their control. In July and August trade between the two countries amounted to \$10 million—larger than Israeli-Egyptian trade over a whole year.

But the whole Israeli project is fraught with difficulties. The Maronite population is now in a minority. An estimated 60 per cent of today's population is Muslim, and after 10 years of almost continuous conflict and Israeli raids and invasions, they have become poorer and more desperate.

In the short term Gemayel may have a chance of trying to reconstruct a new national army and of drawing in selected Muslim elements.

Traditional Muslim leaders will come to an accommodation with him—but as in the past, their inability to solve the problem of



Israeli soldiers show off US-made Howitzer

Uncle Sam's nasty nephew

The USA is Israel's backstop. Noel Halifax looks at this special relationship.

Israel's existence is due to the USA. Since 1948 the USA has poured vast amounts of aid and arms into the country. Without US support Israel would not survive. As a nation state it is an economic monstrosity. Almost constantly at war, by 1950 44 per cent of all government outlays was on arms. Inflation fuelled by this is well over 100 per cent a year. It is one of the most clear cases of a client-state, a parasite on the American economy, imperialism by proxy.

To see why the USA should support Israel to such an extent you have to look at two major factors: America's economic and political interests, and the ideological victory of Zionism in the west, especially in the States.

America's prime economic interest in the Middle East is oil. The Middle East has the largest stocks of oil outside of Russia and China. As the editor of *Har'aretz*, a leading Israeli paper, put it in 1951:

'Strengthening Israel helps the western powers to maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog.'

A powerful Israel is like a knife at the throat of Arab nationalism which is potentially at least, hostile to US interests. Both Israel and Iran, in the days of the Shah, were built to guard American interests. There is an 'equilibrium' of violence and Israeli expansion, at the expense of the displaced Palestinians.

With the fall of the Shah and the bitter memory of direct involvement in Vietnam, America even more feels the need of a power-

ful client state. As the *Financial Times* put it after the invasion of Lebanon, the US government:

'has confirmed their view that Israel is the only ally in the Middle East strong enough, both military and political, for the US to rely on ("The most effective rapid deployment force the US could possibly hope for" is how one policy advisor described it).' (15/7/82).

So in spite of all the noise and shouts for peace, and Camp David Agreements, the US concept of peaceful co-existence remains that of acceptance of Israeli and American dominance of the area.

Marxists have always opposed Zionism. In the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe and Russia there was a long tradition of anti-zionist socialist jews. Zionism as a dominant ideology did not win the battle of ideas till the defeats of the 30s and the effects of the Second World War.

Victory of Zionism

After the war the economic/political needs of American capital coincided with and reinforced an ideological victory of Zionism within the left. The call for a 'home for the Jews' became a progressive demand in the minds of most liberals or 'socialists'.

Horror at the gas chambers of Hitler, the rise of anti-semitism in Russia, the defeat of the socialist movement—all meant that there was little opposition to Zionism from the left. More commonly it was the anti-semitic Right that opposed the creation of Israel. In Britain the Labour Party supported Israel, seeing the Kibbutz as socialist and a counter to the reactionary semi-feudal Arab states.

What was true in Britain was a thousand times true in America. Zionism won hands down. The more liberal you were, the more

pro-Israel. Hence Jane Fonda entertaining the troops outside Beirut.

Only after the recent invasion of Lebanon and the attempt to exterminate the PLO have there been signs of opposition to Israel amongst American liberals, and this has been smaller than the anti-war movement in Israel itself.

There are something like 6 million Jews in the US. Of course not all of them are Zionist, but the vast majority support Israel. The Jewish lobby is one of the most powerful lobbies in American politics. Traditionally it has been a liberal pressure group fighting for civil rights, particularly strong on the eastern sea board.

The Jewish lobby is a source of continuous private capital in the form of gifts and loans. Under US law gifts to Israel are tax deductible. It has helped to create a whole social world for rich to middle-class Jews centered on supporting Israel. Dinners are held, births celebrated with presents such as a tree in Israel etc. All of this makes support for Israel a powerful force highly resistant to dissent and logical argument.

There have recently been signs of criticism of Israel inside the American Jewish community. During the Beirut blood-bath, page advertisements signed by prominent liberal Jews appeared in the newspapers condemning the Lebanon invasion.

When Begin arrived in America just after the invasion, only 1,000 showed up to greet him. He had expected 30,000. At the annual convention of American Reform rabbis, a motion criticising Israel was lost 2 to 1.

Despite this, during his trip to America Begin toured the country raising funds for the war. The Bronfman family (they control the world's largest distillers Seagrams) gave a cheque for \$250,000 at a fund raising lunch at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York: \$27 million was raised over the lunch hour. There seems little sign of the funds drying up.

But as well as the financial help, the Jewish lobby gives Begin one of his most powerful weapons: political clout inside America. In Philadelphia or New York an anti-Israel policy means not just lost votes but lost elections. This was brought home to Reagan last year over his fight to sell Saudi Arabia AWACS.

AWACS are air-borne radar stations that can look over the horizon and monitor all plane movements for hundreds of miles. Reagan wanted to boost his relations with Saudi Arabia now that Iran was lost and looked like upsetting the all important Gulf area. However Reagan came up against the Jewish lobby since Israel considered the sale a threat to its power.

Saudi Arabia has never gone further than words in its condemnation of Israel. It is much more concerned with keeping its own population in control. But it still took the whole might of the White House to pressure and flatter the deal through the Congress.

While the issue was in the balance it caused a wobble in American-Saudi relations, ironically upsetting the vital oil policy that Israel was originally supported for. So the relationship between client and centre is no longer one-way. The American government is hindered in its options over Israel. The client can pull a few strings back.

The quarrel over the sale of AWACs was not an isolated incident. The long established tie between America and Israel has come rather unstuck recently.

Israel has evolved very differently from the dreams of 19th century Zionists. It was to have been a totally Jewish state with all classes being Jewish. But as Israel expanded it has incorporated more and more Palestinians. Israel's industry has grown on the demands of the military, some Arabs have been sucked into the system as low-paid workers. The Palestinian 'problem' has been absorbed into the state of Israel. Over 400,000 Palestinians now work in Israel. If Israel annexes the West Bank, as Sharon appears to want to do, this will only increase the problem.

'Greater Israel'

At the same time there is the aggressive behaviour of the Begin government and the growth of fanatical Zionism calling for a more expansionist policy and a 'Greater Israel'. This ultra-aggressive Israel is to take the logic of Zionism to its conclusion and is personified by the Defence Minister Sharon. It was Sharon who pushed for harsh treatment of the West Bank Arabs and for the 'final solution' to the PLO in Beirut. Behind Sharon are the even more sinister Gush Emunin. Their solution to the 'problem' is to expell all Palestinians or 'persuade' them to leave.

The mightier the client-state becomes the more willing it is to bite the hand that feeds it. As Sharon has put it:

'The Americans should not treat Israel as "natives"... and we should not behave as beggars' (*Time*, 3/5/82).

When America publicly criticised Israel for seizing the Golan Heights in 1981, Sharon went as far as to declare that Israel could survive perfectly well without American help. Similarly Begin has sometimes been bitter over American comments:

'The people of Israel have lived for 3,700 years without a strategic co-operation agreement with America and

can continue without it for another 3,700 years.'

Of course much of this is public posturing. Israel and America are linked as much as Britain and Ulster. Israel could not survive alone. The American government is unable to break its commitment. Also Israel still does America's dirty work—action the US would love to do itself but couldn't because of internal and world reaction. Underlying the surface rows there still remains a role for Israel as America's policeman in the Middle East. As the *Financial Times* put it on 30/6/82:

'If the US is annoyed with Israel, it is only in the manner of an over-indulgent parent worrying about the tantrums of a spoiled child. US-Israel relations may be at their lowest ebb for 25 years... but even today US affection for Israel runs deep.'

Israel also plays a useful role as an extension of American foreign policy. In the 70s Israel acted as a bridge for American influence into black Africa and other areas where the local rulers were unwilling to openly deal with the USA. Similarly, with CIA guidance, Israel helped train Ethiopian forces and has strong links with South Africa. Whenever there are problems in openly dealing with a country or training its troops, America can use Israel.

The reason for America's criticisms of Israel has been the new relationships with Arab states. Arab nationalism, that seemed such a threat to American interests in the 50s and 60s (Nasser is the most obvious example), had wilted, leaving only Libya. The even more erratic Iran mouths anti-imperialist slogans. Arab nationalism floundered on a combination of factors, not least of which has been the Arab governments' fear of their own people and economic collapse.

Dangerous hostile Arab states have evolved into loyal friends of America, queing for aid like Egypt or Jordan. Or, like Saudi Arabia, they are conservative states busy keeping down their own populations and looking to the dominant force in the area,

America, to help them in the process.

Israel is no longer America's only friend in the area. It is now dotted with them. The problem for America is that most of these new friends are unstable and memories of the Shah run deep. None of the Arab states seem to be able to provide what America wants. As a stable client state to police the area, Israel retains its central role.

Reagan is faced with an increasingly unstable situation. Israel is prone to internal problems. The Arab states hit by the world crisis live in fear of their own people and run to America for arms and aid. Recently they have sought to solve internal problems in the style of Israel, by going to war. It all makes for a complex and volatile area. Rifts inside the Reagan government reflect different pulls of policy, while on a world scale American economic might declines.

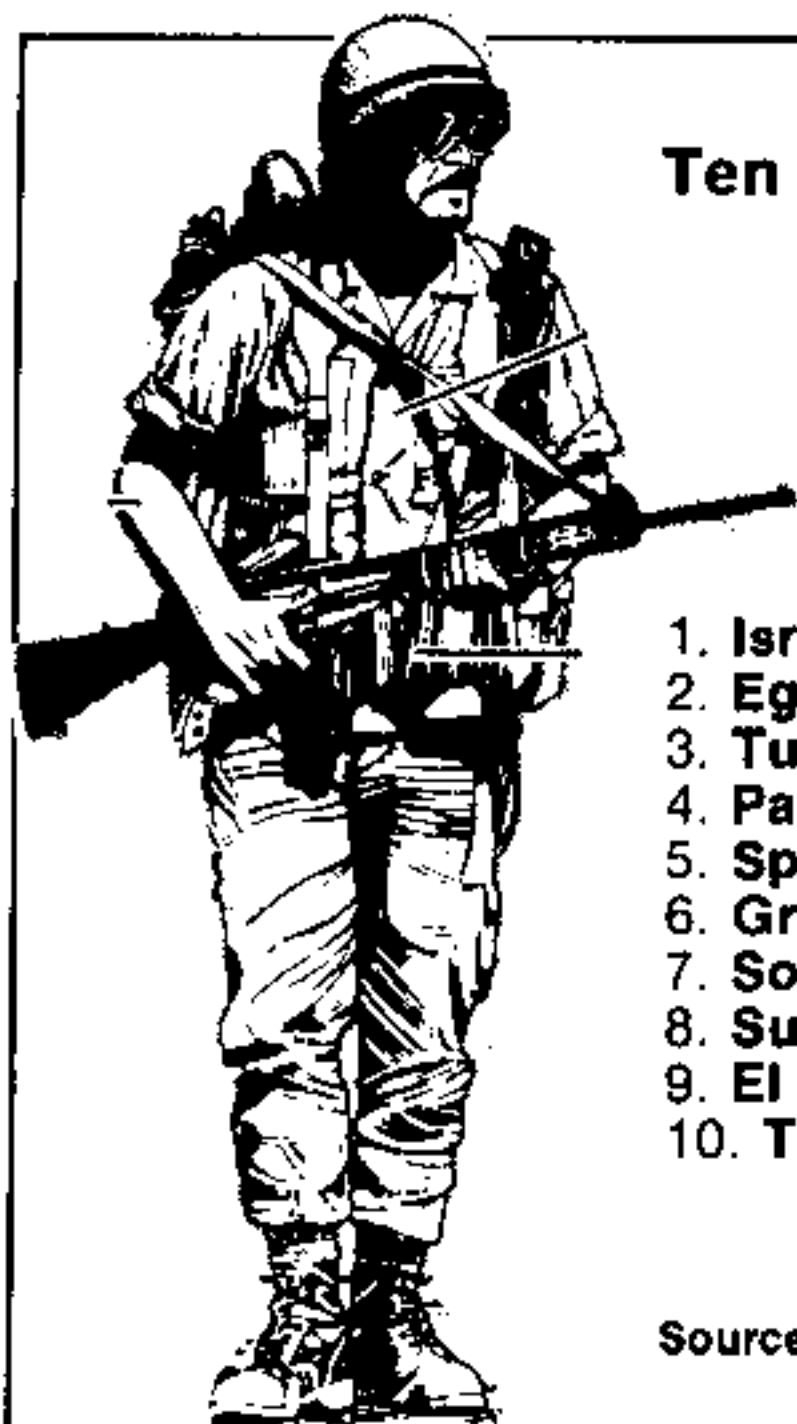
Military machine

So far the Palestinians have fought against Israel as one nation against another. With the might of America behind Israel it always looked like the Palestinians would lose. Israelis have found themselves citizens of a military machine and many of them are becoming aware of this. The Arab states' failure to do anything in support of the PLO in Beirut ought to bring home to the Palestinians that Arab governments have more interest in maintaining their rule over their workers than helping the Palestinians against Israel. Ruling class interest, as always, over-rides any sense of national solidarity. For arab workers outside Israel the issue of the Palestinians has successfully been used by their rulers to divert any opposition to their oppressive rule.

The uncertainties of the area has produced an increase in the arms expenditure to an alarming degree (see tables). Billions of dollars worth of arms are being pumped in. America now sells to Egypt and Saudi Arabia as well as Israel. To make a comparison, the whole of Central America is planned to get under \$500m of US aid in 1983, the Middle East is to get over \$7 billion. El Salvador is scheduled \$226m, Israel \$2,485 billion. Over 65 per cent of *all* US aid is allotted to the Middle East/North Africa zone! Most of this 'aid' is arms. The wars to come would seem to be nastier and more likely with these amounts of arms around.

Israel, with US help, now have their own arms industries exporting to third world countries. It is all leading to one huge escalation in the amount of weaponry, not only in the immediate area, but in any country whose rulers feel insecure.

The Middle East is inter-linked into one system geared to providing oil for the west. The solution to the present carnage lies in workers' action on a scale beyond that of national boundaries. A mass arab workers' movement seems the only force that could put an end the present system of endless wars. When that happens no amount of manipulation by the White House could patch up the system. Meanwhile the deals go on, the deaths mount, and all because of the west's need for a 'safe' oil supply. The price of petrol is very high these days.



Ten largest recipients of US military and related assistance (\$ millions)

	1982	1983
1. Israel	\$2,206.0	\$2,485.0(+12.6%)
2. Egypt	\$1,673.0	\$2,052.0 (+22.7%)
3. Turkey	\$702.5	\$819.0(+16.6%)
4. Pakistan	\$100.6	\$450.8(+348%)
5. Spain	\$144.0	\$500.0(+188.2%)
6. Greece	\$281.2	\$282.6(+0.5%)
7. South Korea	\$167.4	\$211.9(+26.6%)
8. Sudan	\$201.2	\$171.7(-14.6%)
9. El Salvador	\$156.0	\$166.3(+6.6%)
10. Tunisia	\$91.0	\$141.6(+55.7%)

Source: Chicago Sun-Times

Zimbabwe: Two years free

Robert Mugabe's regime has now been in power for more than two years. Alex Callinicos who has recently visited Zimbabwe reports on what it has done.

'What is happening in Zimbabwe today proves that Trotsky was wrong', a young intellectual of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) told me during the independence elections of February 1980.

What he meant was something like this. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution states that national liberation can only be achieved in colonial and semi-colonial countries under the leadership of the urban working class, which, drawing the peasantry along behind it, would initiate a transition to socialism. Yet in Zimbabwe it was ZANU-PF, a nationalist movement dominated by middle-class intellectuals, which liberated the country after seven years of guerilla warfare in the countryside among the peasants, and then won a landslide victory in the elections on a programme of socialism and 'people's power'.

Returning there nearly two and a half years after independence, the changes are obvious. The most visible aspects of racial discrimination have been abolished, so that it is difficult to believe that only five years ago housing, education, and farming land were segregated, and blacks denied access to all but the most menial jobs. Such reforms would, according to ZANU-PF's theoreticians, represent only the 'national-democratic' stages of the revolution — the establishment of equal citizenship rights for all Zimbabweans.

There is little evidence, however, that Zimbabwe has entered the second, socialist stage. Zimbabwe possesses one of the most advanced and sophisticated economies in Africa, generating more manufacturing output *per capita* than any other country except South Africa. Control of the economy is still in the hands of the South African and British multinational companies who ran it before independence. It is true, that African businessmen are now investing in sectors from which they were excluded till recently on racial grounds, but they are still concentrated primarily in the sphere of circulation rather than of production — owning buses and stores rather than factories and mines.

The same pattern is to be found when it comes to the crucial issue of land. 5,700 white 'commercial farmers' account for 85 per cent of agricultural output and 68 per cent of Zimbabwe's export earnings. Before independence they owned as much land as 780,000 black peasant families in the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs). The peasants' desire for land provided the fuel for the war of liberation. The government is pledged to

buying out over 60 per cent of the commercial farmers' land and resettling 162,000 black families on it. Many people doubt whether this will ever happen. Only 9,000 families have been resettled so far, and the cost of carrying out the full programme — Z\$480 million — seems beyond the government's means without foreign aid, which is not likely to be forthcoming.

Even if it were implemented, the communal areas (as the TTLs are now known) can only support 325,000 families — half the number likely to be living there after resettlement.

This is not to suggest that the government has done nothing for workers and peasants since independence. On the contrary, the real income of those in employment has risen sharply. In January, the minimum wage for industrial workers was increased from Z\$30 to Z\$50. However, unemployment is clearly very high, despite the impossibility of collecting reliable figures, and has been made worse by the effects of the world recession, which has cut demand for Zimbabwe's mineral and agricultural exports. The real growth rate, an astonishing 13.5 per cent a year in 1980-81, has fallen this year to an estimated five per cent — very respectable by our standards, but too low in a country whose population nearly doubles every 25 years.

Sackings and strikes

But even where the government has imposed restrictions on the power of capital, it has done so from above, bureaucratically, and in a manner that enhances, not working people, but the state apparatus. A good example was an astonishing measure taken in December 1981, when regulations were issued forbidding any retrenchment, lay-off or dismissal of workers not approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Services. Obviously, this represents a major inroad into management's right to manage. However, its effect has been to increase the power of the state bureaucracy, rather than to strengthen workers' organization.

This analysis is confirmed by the government's savage treatment of strikes. In October 1981 first teachers and then nurses went on strike for higher pay. The teachers went back after being threatened with instant dismissal. Dzingai Mutumbuka, the Minister of Education and Culture, sacked an unofficial delegation of rank-and-file teachers on the spot. The nurses came out after 500 of them were arrested at a rally outside government offices in Harare but went back to work after the army was used as scabs. Mugabe attacked the teachers and nurses for not striking under the Smith regime. 'Who suffered most in this country? Was it the nurses and teachers or the peasants who lost their cattle and fields and had their homes burned or even got killed

for supporting the liberation struggle?'

In January 243 striking railway engineers were arrested for contravening the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act introduced by the Rhodesian Front. A few days later Mugabe made a speech promising to hand over industry to the workers. In March nearly 1,000 bus-drivers were arrested for going on strike, many of them losing their jobs into the bargain. Busdrivers were the most militant group of workers under white rule. A few days later, the salaries of deputy ministers, senators and MPs had increased by as much as 21 per cent, despite a government ban on pay increases of over five per cent for high earners.

The most obvious beneficiary of independence have been the middle class blacks, many educated abroad, most belonging to ZANU-PF who have poured into highly-paid state jobs. Political patronage has become an increasingly striking feature of Mugabe's government. There are now 30 cabinet ministers, and 24 deputy ministers (Smith had a dozen or so). Since there are 57 ZANU-PF members of parliament, those that do not have government jobs must feel very lonely. The expansion of ministries has necessarily been accompanied by a proliferation of senior civil service posts, which, along with the early retirement of many white officials, has created many openings for supporters of the ruling party. If you sit in the bars of what were once exclusively white hotels in Zimbabwe's cities, you will see this new elite entering with great zest into the pleasures that were once reserved for the settler minority. Now houses in the best suburbs, new cars, top-paying jobs are no longer the preserve of whites.

This process is comparatively easy to understand. Under the Lancaster House agreement of December 1979, ZANU-PF agreed to seek power peacefully, within the framework of a parliamentary constitution. This strategy brought control of the government, but economic power remains in the hands of settler and multi-national capital. The only lever ZANU-PF possesses is the state apparatus, and therefore the government seeks to increase its power over all sectors of society, and so counterbalance the economic weakness of the African bourgeoisie. To mobilize the mass of workers and peasants against private capital might unleash a process outside the party's control, and would threaten the interests of the small businessmen who make up an important component of ZANU-PF's base.

There are undoubtedly some members of the government who would like to pursue a pro-Western Kenyan-style strategy, throwing the economy open to foreign capital, for example, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Bernard Chidzero, who has just introduced a highly conservative budget raising sales tax to pre-independence levels. But such a course is resisted by other ministers, both because it would undermine the power of the state, and because of the social conflict that an openly neo-colonial solution would produce, as recent events in Kenya show. Consequently the government has fudged major economic-policy decisions. This is one major reason why there has been hardly any

foreign investment since independence. One major project, by Heinz, has been hanging fire for some time while the company and the government haggle over the terms.

So Zimbabwe seems to be headed towards a hybrid economy, in which foreign and state capital, settler and African capital uneasily co-exist. A natural accompaniment of this process elsewhere in Africa has been the formation of a one-party state to provide a framework within which the different splinters of the local ruling class can haggle over the spoils while remaining sufficiently united to crush any challenge from below. Such an outcome has been impeded in Zimbabwe by the bitter differences between ZANU-PF and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Mugabe and the ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo, formed the Patriotic Front alliance during the war of liberation, but there was never much love lost between them, and the two parties ran separately in the 1980 elections, when ZANU-PF won 57 seats and ZAPU 20. The distribution of seats followed ethnic lines: Mugabe swept the board among the Shona people, who make up nearly 80 per cent of the population, while Nkomo's support was rock solid in the two provinces of Matabeleland, in south-western Zimbabwe, where the minority Ndebele and Kalanga groups live.

Although Nkomo joined Mugabe's government, difficulties immediately arose. There were a variety of sources. One was ZANU-PF's evident desire to create a one-party state. Another was the question of the army. During the war, ZAPU built up a well-trained and armed military wing, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). After independence the two forces ZIPRA and ZANLA were merged under British supervision to form the new Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). However, twice there was serious fighting between ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA elements in November 1980 and February 1981. On the second, much more serious occasion ex-ZIPRA mutineers in Bulawayo were only put down by the use of the white-officered Zimbabwe African Rifles inherited from the Smith regime.

Arms cache

Finally, the coalition government effectively fell apart in February 1982, when massive arms caches were discovered on farms owned by Nitram, a ZAPU-controlled company. Mugabe sacked Nkomo and two other ZAPU ministers. Subsequently a number of senior ex-ZIPRA commanders were arrested and charged with treason. Various accusations have been made by the government - that Nkomo was plotting a coup with Smith, the former Rhodesian Commander of Combined Operations, General Peter Walls, and the South Africans.

There are many questions that could be asked about the arms cache affair. For example, how much did Mugabe and his advisors know in advance about the cache? Had they been aware of their existence for some time, waiting for the most convenient moment to break with ZAPU? Again, who



Young Zimbabwe stepping forward to socialism?

in ZAPU were in on the caches. Some of them claim that Nkomo, and other senior ZAPU members were unaware of the caches, which were created by more junior, and 'irresponsible' elements. But it seems doubtful that they could have been ignorant of arms dumps on the scale discovered by government.

Whatever the truth about this murky affair, there can be no doubt of its effects. Ex-ZIPRA fighters reacted to Nkomo's sacking by taking up arms against the government. Parts of Matabeleland are now in much the same condition as they were during the war as a result of the actions of these 'dissidents', and of the government response. For one of the most alarming and depressing recent developments has been the increasing use by Mugabe of repressive measures first taken by the Smith regime.

There is for example, the apparently irresistible rise of the Central Intelligence Organization, created by Smith and directly responsible to the Prime Minister. The CIO still contains many white officers inherited from the old regime. Under the supervision of Emmerson Munangagwa, Mugabe's very influential Minister of State for Security, a weird symbiosis has taken place between ZANLA's security and intelligence service and the CIO, which has become, as a result, a powerful and feared organisation. Preventive detention without trial, introduced under the Rhodesian Front, continues. One estimate is that there are 400 political detainees. There are many stories of ex-ZIPRA men picked up at roadblocks and beaten up. A new emergency regulation, modelled on a wartime measure against the guerillas, indemnifies members of the security forces for actions done 'in good faith'. Since the kidnapping in July of six white tourists not far from ZIPRA's old headquarters at the Gwaii River Mine, curfews have been introduced in large parts of Matabeleland.

Cheerfully fanning the flame is the

apartheid regime in South Africa. Prime Minister P.W. Botha and his generals have adopted a policy of destabilizing neighbouring countries. Such as the destruction of a quarter of the Air Force in a raid on Thornhill air base in Gweru, and an encounter between Zimbabwean and South African forces in the extreme south of the country near Mozambique which left three of the latter (all ex-members of the Rhodesia Light Infantry or the Selous Scouts) dead. There have also been reports of blacks, almost certainly in South African pay, infiltrating parts of Matabeleland from Botswana and intimidating local villagers.

If a state of insurgency does develop in Matabeleland, as seems only too likely, Pretoria will do everything in its power to exploit the situation.

The South African threat underlines the fact that Zimbabwe cannot enjoy meaningful independence as long as the apartheid regime exists. But ZANU-PF's entire strategy, like that of other Third World national liberation movements, has been focussed upon building socialism within national limits. Trotsky's strategy of international workers' revolution would seem much more realistic. It would involve building links between Zimbabwean workers and their counterparts in South Africa. As it is, ZANU-PF seems intent on crushing independent workers' organisation.

There are signs that some Zimbabweans are drawing the lessons of Mugabe's failure to deliver socialism. An anonymous pamphlet distributed during the celebrations of the second anniversary of independence denounced Zvobgo and other senior ZANU-PF ministers as 'CIA boys', and opposed attempts to divide Zimbabwean workers and peasants against each other. This could represent the beginnings of a new socialist movement. Almost certainly it would suffer from the attentions of the CIO, but it would be the only hope of genuine people's power in Zimbabwe.

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New flowers bloom

Mike Bradley surveys the workers dissident movement in China.

The Chinese State Council has recently announced the introduction of 'Regulations concerning rewards and penalties for workers in enterprises'. The implementation of the new regulations is to coincide with the deletion of the right to strike from China's constitution. These measures are the latest in a prolonged attack on the working class by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The attack was launched in earnest during April 1981 when 25 leading members of China's democracy movement and an unknown number of other militants were arrested and imprisoned without trial.

The new regulations give leading CCP cadres in individual enterprises the power to penalise or dismiss workers for offences such as late arrival, absenteeism, damage to capital equipment. The object is to use strict labour discipline reinforced by the threat of unemployment to force workers to increase production and efficiency. The ability of cadres and the company to dismiss workers without compensation for offences like absenteeism will also serve to trim down the size of the workforce. Abolition of the right to strike is designed to ensure that no effective fightback to the measures is possible.

The story has a certain ring of familiarity for workers in this country. Not surprisingly, the response of the British ruling class to the prevailing world economic crisis is being echoed by its counterpart in the 'People's Republic'. The blame for the crisis is loaded squarely onto the shoulders of workers who are then instructed to increase productivity and suffer massive falls in real wages in order to prop up falling rates of profit. In China, as inflation soars unchecked, the average money wages of workers in the whole country increased by 1.3% last year, according to official figures.

Until April of last year the dissidents of China's democracy movement were beginning to provide some sort of focus for opposition to the ruling Deng Xiaoping faction of the CCP. The democracy movement emerged in 1978 when a period of 'liberal-

isation' following Deng Xiaoping's rehabilitation into the party leadership provided the opportunity for a large number of unofficial publications to spring up throughout China. The somewhat disparate movement was drawn together by the formation of the National Federation of Unofficial Publications which published a magazine entitled *Zeren* (Duty).

The movement divided at an early stage into a liberal and marxist wing, and it was the development of the marxist wing which gave the democracy movement a character qualitatively different from the dissident movement in the Soviet Union. Unlike the dissident movement in the USSR which has been composed largely of intellectuals, China's democracy movement claims a membership consisting almost entirely of young working class activists employed in state owned enterprises. Only a minority of dissidents are students and various cultural non-conformists. A very high proportion of the activists see themselves as representatives of a revolutionary marxist tradition and one of their theoreticians, Wang Xizhe, had developed a critique of the 'privileged bureaucratic class' in China which clearly reveals some trotskyst influence. (A sample of his work translated into English can be found in *New Left Review* 121).

Factional struggles

The leading figures of the democracy movement, such as Wang Xizhe, Wei Jingsheng and a good number of others first entered the struggle against the bureaucracy as Red Guards during the initial period of the Cultural Revolution. This opposition was orchestrated by Mao Zedong essentially to win a factional struggle within the party leadership and was repressed by Mao, his 'close comrade in arms', Lin Biao, and the army the minute production came under threat.

But it did provide a grounding for many activists in the rudiments of organised opposition to the bureaucracy and the state. In fact the latest bouts of repression are nothing new to these militants who have continuously suffered at the hands of the various CCP factions over a sixteen year period.

The simmering discontent which was ever

present during the period of rule by Mao and the Gang of Four in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution spilt over onto the streets of Beijing in April 1976. Tens of thousands of Chinese workers paying tribute to the late Zhou Enlai who had died in January of that year, became involved in riots in Tienanmen square. Cars were turned over and set fire to and attacks were launched on official buildings.

The demonstration of respect for Zhou Enlai carried an implicit criticism of Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, and the Gang of Four whose rise Zhou had opposed. As the riots died out in the evening and only 3,000 hard core demonstrators remained, 10,000 police and militia attacked with clubs and batons. Many workers died and hundreds were injured. There followed a massive purge and a series of arrests carried out throughout Beijing.

However, only six months later following the death of Mao, the Deng faction was able to use the mass opposition to Jiang Qing as a lever to unseat the Maoists from power and promote Hua Guofeng, to the position of Chairman instead of Jiang Qing. By 1978 Deng Xiaoping himself, who had been held responsible for the Tienanmen riots, had forced his way back into the party leadership following a long campaign by the reform group within the party. His rehabilitation was accompanied by a limited liberalisation. Many political prisoners including a number of trotskysts were released from prison. But Deng took little time in establishing boundaries beyond which the liberalisation was to come to an abrupt halt.

At this juncture the marxists within the democracy movement began to differentiate themselves from the reform group which had developed since Tienanmen, by turning their activity towards widening their base amongst the working class. Their agitation was concentrated into two areas. Firstly they organised around the underprivileged sections of the industrial workforce who were taking action against the state. In a Taiyuan steelworks democracy movement activists were involved in a strike by single workers (workers who were forced to live away from home and paid below average wages) which developed from an economic strike over conditions and wages to one demanding the overthrow of the 'privileged bureaucratic class'.

Secondly, they organised in Shanghai among city youths who had returned from work amongst the peasants as part of the Gang of Four's *xiafang* (sending down) programme. The declared intention of this policy was to eliminate the contradictions

Days of Hope

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The Chinese Communist Party's 11th National Congress in 1977 and Deng Xiaoping makes his comeback

between town and countryside and between the party and the masses. However it had an added advantage of reducing urban unemployment and dispersing a potentially volatile section of the working class amongst the peasantry. With the 1978 liberalisation thousands of these youths streamed back to the cities, homeless and unemployed. It has been estimated that there were as many as 10,000 sleeping on the streets of Shanghai. The democracy movement was able to make definite gains among these unemployed workers by organising a number of demonstrations which were sometimes accompanied by outbreaks of violence.

During 1980 following the formation of the National Federation of Unofficial Publications, it appeared possible for the democracy movement to widen its base amongst the working class to a significant degree. Democracy movement activists standing for elections won considerable support within certain factories. Fu Shenqui, editor of *Renminzhi Sheng* (Voice of the People), stood in a Shanghai engineering factory and headed the poll at the first count. In Changsha a dissident student collected large amounts of money from workers in order to fund his election campaign. In Wuhan, oppositionists even managed to lead a strike.

During this period of limited upturn events in Poland had some influence on the movement. Initially the Chinese press faithfully reported the growth of Solidarity, happy to support any movement which threatened the domination of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Fairly soon, however, articles began to appear in the official press in Wuhan and Beijing, two major industrial areas, condemning workers for trying to organise their own Polish-style free trade unions. It was also reported that workers in Shanghai and Xian had even gone on strike in support of their

demands.

The Chinese working class were quicker than the bureaucracy to understand the significance of the growth of Solidarity for the class struggle in China. However, the state was able to act with alarming speed to eliminate the opposition, once it became aware of the danger.

The rise of a popular movement in opposition to the Maoist leadership and the subsequent developments within the democracy movement had proved useful to Deng Xiaoping in the early stages. But as soon as the overthrow of the Gang of Four had been consolidated Deng began to look for ways to bring the opposition into line.

Leaders clamp down

As early as 29 March 1979 Wei Jingsheng, a Beijing electrician and leading member of the democracy movement liberal wing, was arrested for 'divulging military information to foreigners and for counter revolutionary activity'. His arrest followed the publication of an article entitled 'Democracy or a new dictatorship' in the journal *Tansuo* (Exploration) which was heavily critical of the current regime. Wei was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

Throughout 1980 the party leadership made selective attacks on the dissident movement but it was not until the beginning of 1981 that Deng felt strong enough to embark upon a thoroughgoing assault on the opposition. The trial of the Gang of Four in December 1980 provided proof that the factional struggle within the CCP has been resolved in favour of Deng Xiaoping and that he no longer had anything to fear from the Maoist 'old guard'. Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao were given suspended death sentences while the other defendants were given long prison sentences. The trial marked a return to 'class justice' for the

remaining enemies of the state and soon a series of extra-legal measures were adopted to eliminate the democracy movement activists.

The combination of unity within the party leadership and the need to move swiftly in the light of the Polish crisis prompted the most recent bout of repression. The first move which was taken was the banning of all unofficial publications, a move that was followed by the publication of 'Document No. 9' by the Central Committee which gave clear guidelines as to how the attacks were to be carried out. The following extract from 'Document No. 9' gives an idea of the extent to which the leadership was prepared to go to wipe out the opposition:

'At once all activities of illegal organisations and publications; all elements who have committed crimes by words or deeds are to be arrested.

Investigations are to be conducted in all units. All people in the units who have joined these organisations, or supplied them with materials or instruments, or supported these movements, or read these publications are to be under investigation. Information and materials are to be collected and progressively reported to the superiors.'

On 10 April 1981 25 leading democracy movement activists including the editors of a number of unofficial publications were arrested along with an unknown number of other militants. The dissidents were imprisoned without trial and the majority of them remain incarcerated awaiting sentence. On 28 May Wang Zizhe was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment and four and a half years deprivation of political rights afterwards. The next day He Qiu editor of *Zeren* was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment having been found guilty of the same charges of 'counter revolutionary agitation and propaganda', 'sabotage of the implementation of laws and decrees' and 'plotting a counter revolutionary clique'.

As a direct result of this purge the democracy movement has been forced underground, but there are signs the movement is not dead. By November 1981 *Zeren*, the organ of the National Federation of Unofficial Publications, had begun to reappear. Although the Communist party has succeeded in smashing the movement's leadership the vast majority of militants remain in their workplaces and are continuing in their propaganda work.

The fact that the democracy movement in China has developed out of the experience of the working class in its struggle against the state gives a firm basis for the belief that the current setback is temporary. As the economic and political crisis in China intensifies, so the contradictions which spawned the democracy movement will intensify and we can expect to see a resurgence of the workers opposition to the repressive regime of the CCP.

A useful selection of writings from the democracy movement in China, can be found in Wild Lillies and Poisonous Weeds, edited by G Benton (Pluto), which is a Bookmarx Club choice this quarter.

Ever decreasing circles

The advent of Eurocommunism led to hopes in some quarters of renewal inside the Communist Parties of Europe. But, as **Ian Birchall** reports, the long decline continues.

Crises of conscience aren't what they used to be. In 1956, when Russian tanks smashed the Hungarian workers' councils, tens of thousands of workers and intellectuals resigned from, or were expelled by, Communist Parties all round the world. The debates and discussions gave birth to a whole new wave of socialist thought. In 1968, when Russian troops invaded Czechoslovakia, Communist Parties in many different countries publicly denounced the Russian action, in some cases making their first open criticism of Russia since the twenties.

Jaruzelski's *coup* in Poland and the smashing of Solidarity produced no such upsurge. The ritual denunciations, and the equally ritual but more muted defences, produced nothing so much as an overwhelming sense of tedium and a feeling that we had all been here before.

The most noticed of the damp squibs was the resolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which has now been translated into English, along with a number of related documents (Enrico Berlinguer, *After Poland*, Spokesman, £2.25).

It is not a matter of any great surprise that *Pravda* described some of the book's arguments as 'sacrilegious'; it tells us more about the dogmatic quality of Russian ideology than about the actual contents of the book. And when Eric Heffer tells us that the PCI's resolution 'is of the greatest importance to all socialists in Europe and the world', we learn something of the intellectual standards of the Labour Left.

The problem with the book is not refuting the arguments, but rather discovering what the arguments are in the first place. Much of the discussion is conducted on such a level of abstraction that it is virtually impossible to dissent - 'freedom' and 'democracy' are Good Things, 'dogmatism' is a Bad One.

One of the main claims of the resolution and Berlinguer's commentary on it is that 'we have entered a third phase and are now living in it'. The historical analysis lying behind the concept of the 'third phase' is as follows:

'We have seen in the course of history the limitations met in the phase of social democracy and the limitations in the socialism to which the October Revolution gave rise.'

Now the claim to reject both Stalinism and Social Democracy is an attractive one, and it might seem churlish to refuse to welcome Berlinguer if he's saying what some of us have been saying for a long time.

Unfortunately the theory of the 'third phase' won't stand up to any serious examination. The Second International was based on the mass working-class organisations - parties, trade unions, newspapers, cultural associations - that grew up before 1914. These were a magnificent achievement of working-class self-organisation; they were also disastrously flawed, as was shown in 1914, when the involvement of the labour movement in the state machine led to large sections of the working class going over to support for the imperialist war. Social Democracy was not just an idea - it had a very real material base in a particular phase of working-class development.



Enrico Berlinguer—little to offer

The October Revolution was based on a new and different form of working-class organisation - soviets or workers' councils. The spread of soviets to Hungary, Germany and Italy gave the Third International a brief but very real material basis. Stalinism was not the product of the October Revolution but its negation; it was founded on the destruction of what was left of the soviets; and wherever soviets reappeared - Spain in the thirties, Hungary in the fifties - Stalinism was quick to strangle them.

A third phase, then, can scarcely be ushered in by a resolution of a Central Committee - it requires a material base in a new form of working-class organisation. But Berlinguer and the PCI have little to offer in the way of explaining what this new form might be; the best they can offer is:

'There exist, and there are developing, movements, associations, organisations, groups, particularly of women, youths and intellectual workers, that are expressing in hundreds of ways outside working class parties also and beyond the traditional forms of politics, demands that are being pressed, aspirations, willpower that

collides and enters into conflict with economic mechanisms, with the social set up, and with contemporary capitalism's cultural output. All this demands a different kind of society, a better society than the capitalism we have.'

The PCI resolution has been hailed as marking the most radical critique yet of Russian-style societies emanating from an orthodox Communist Party. Yet in fact the resolution is remarkably vague in its analysis of Russian and Eastern European society. It declares that 'this phase of socialist development (which began with the October Revolution) has exhausted its driving force'. And it explains the repeated crises in Eastern Europe by the fact that 'conformity to the Soviet model constituted, essentially, for Poland as for Hungary, and other countries, a big mistake destined to make for serious repercussions during the following years.'

These are bold words; yet almost immediately they are qualified:

'Through hard times, heroism, immense sacrifices, and though weighed down by the tragedies and degeneration of the Stalinist period, the USSR got herself free from the terrible backwardness of the pre-revolutionary epoch; it has become a great industrial power, was capable of resisting the nazi/fascist aggression and decisively contributing to its defeat and so opening a new road for the peoples of Europe and the world. The October Revolution has broken the unchallenged domination of capitalism and imperialism, has contributed to the birth of communist parties all over the world, has given strength to their struggle for economic and political emancipation and the struggle of revolutionary movements, for freedom and independence in ex-colonial countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The gains that flowed from the October Revolution for the working class and popular masses in many countries and the changes that it brought in the world balance in favour of the socialist cause were and are important. The CPI doesn't underrate the role that the USSR has played on a world scale. This role sometimes coincides with the interests of those countries and peoples which are fighting reactionary regimes and imperialism for liberation and national independence, some other times it clashes with these interests or even violates them openly as it happened with the military intervention in Afghanistan.'

What is striking about this passage is not so much the fact that every sentence of it is open to challenge, as that the whole thing represents a skilful exercise in ducking the key question: what class interests does the Russian state actually represent? The PCI's reply to *Pravda* insisted that 'we are not overlooking the many positive features of society in the socialist oriented countries.' This neat evasion is a declaration that if Russia does something popular the PCI will bask in its reflected glory, but if it does something unpopular the PCI will drop all responsibility like a hot potato.

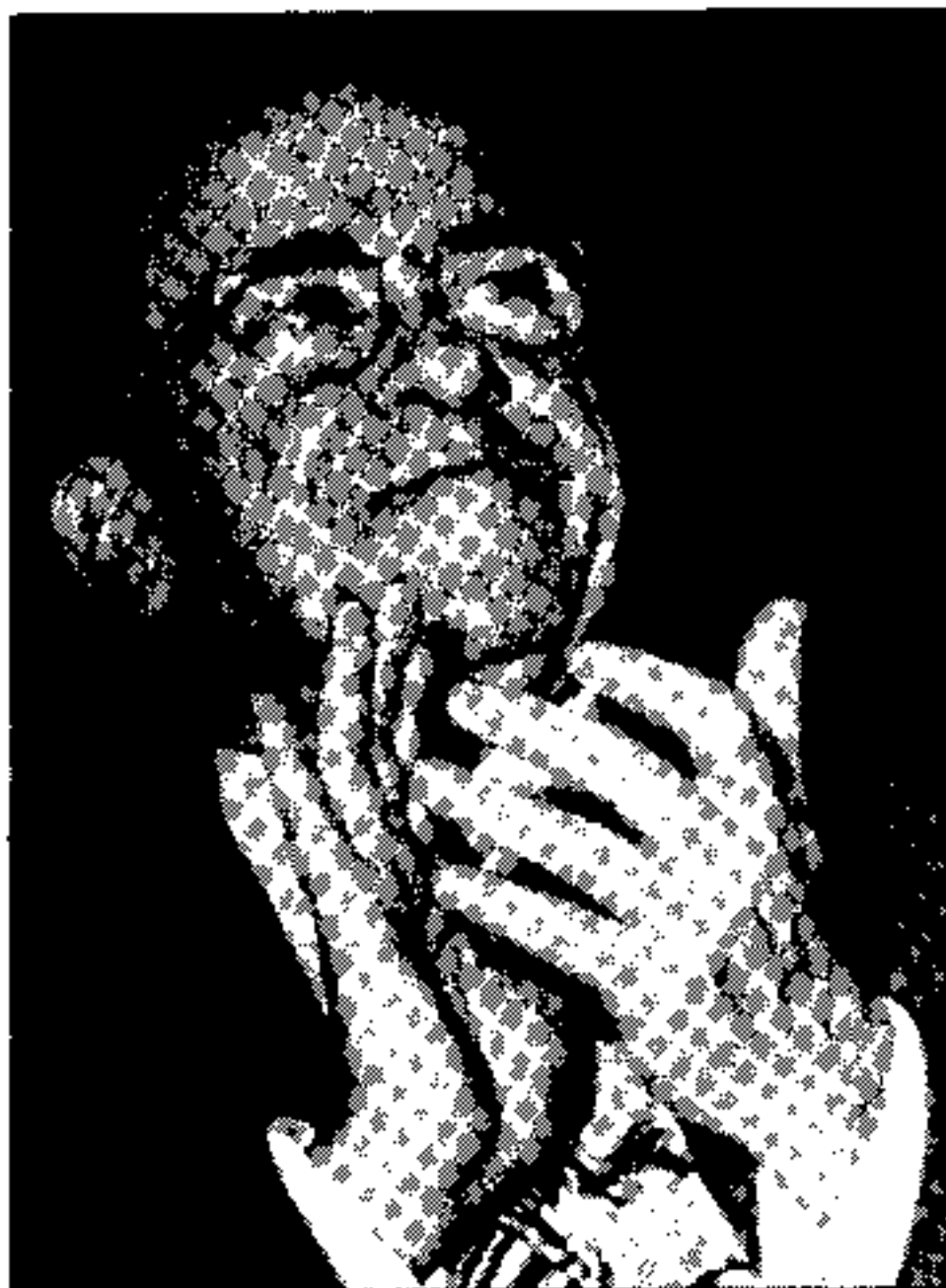
Rather more significant are the strategic conclusions that the PCI draws from its analysis of the 'third phase':

'The PCI confirms that it believes the idea

of a separate communist movement (homogenous and separate from the bulk of the international working class movement, that is from socialist, progressive and liberation movements) is now outmoded and no longer valid.'

A naive reader might take this as an announcement that the PCI was seeking immediate unity talks with Signor Craxi's Socialist Party. On the contrary, the theory of the 'third phase' is inspired precisely by the PCI's anxiety at the fact that the Socialist Party is threatening to erode its support and electoral base. The new line is not so much a response to the Polish events as an attempt to forestall Craxi's attacks on the PCI as being undemocratic and pro-Russian.

Hence the PCI's concern to establish links with parties in other European countries, in order to claim some of the credit for their achievements, and to prevent Craxi putting himself forward as the authentic Italian equivalent of Mitterrand or Helmut Schmidt. Thus the PCI has boasted of its links with



Carillo kept his grip on the party apparatus at a heavy price to the membership

the German SPD (despite the fact that in SPD-ruled West Germany last year a Post Office clerk with thirty years service was dismissed purely for being a Communist Party member). Since Mitterrand's victory last year Craxi and Berlinguer have both been keen to meet him, and in March Berlinguer met the leaders of the French Socialist Party. The meeting was claimed by both parties as 'positive' and showing 'broad agreement' though nothing concrete came of it. By contrast the PCI's meeting with the French CP in May seems to have been a pure formality.

If any readers are beginning to feel that we have been here before, the answer is that we have. In November 1961 the PCI Central Committee held a major debate on what was then called 'polycentrism' (i.e. independence from Russia), the origins of Stalinism and inner-party democracy. This debate too was hailed by British centrists as of great significance and a lengthy transcript appeared in *New Left Review* 13/14. The Spokesman book gives extracts from the January 1982 PCI Central Committee meeting. Of eight contributions printed, five

names (Cossutta, Ingrao, Garavini, Napolitano, Pajetta) also appeared in the 1961 debate.

Some years ago, when an Anglican bishop wrote a book to show that Christians didn't need to believe in God, Michael Frayn described the operation as 'keeping the old firm in business marketing a totally new product'. The description would equally well fit the PCI. An old leadership clique has adopted a new line, but little else has changed. There has been virtually no rank-and-file participation in the elaboration of the new line, and the pro-Russian minority in the PCI are now finding themselves on the receiving end of Stalinist methods. Thus *Unita* has denounced the pro-Russians, referring to 'the activity of a small group preparing initiatives which are clearly contrary to the statutes and the moral and political rules which are the inalienable patrimony of a party like ours.' The pro-Russians have launched their own journal *Interstamp* - and the PCI weekly *Rinascita* has refused to carry an advertisement for it.

In the last resort the new line of the PCI owes more to the internal situation in Italy than to events in Poland. For most of the seventies the line of the PCI was the 'historic compromise' with the Christian Democrats. After 1976 this left the PCI in a position of supporting a government over whose policies it had no control, in the vague hope that it would be rewarded by the offer of seats in the government at a later date. This led to the PCI supporting austerity programmes, calling for cuts in public spending and declaring the need to control wages. Eventually the PCI abandoned the 'historic compromise' in favour of the 'democratic alternative', which might follow the pattern of the French Union of the Left.

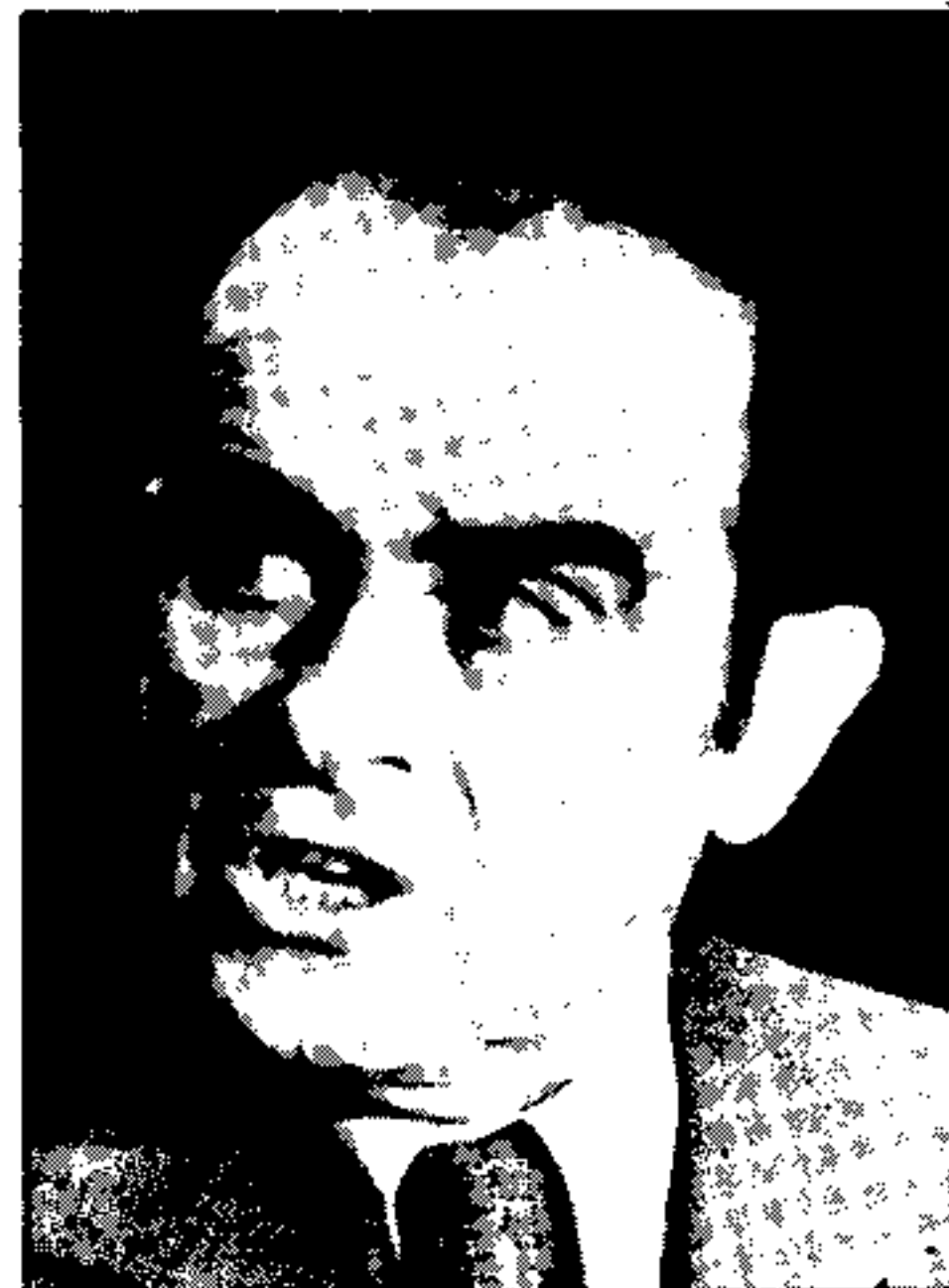
But it was precisely the Union of the Left which enabled Mitterrand to overtake and eventually subordinate the French Communist Party. The PCI is now haunted by the threat that Craxi might emulate Mitterrand. The CPI leaders have undoubtedly learnt the disastrous lessons of the French CP's 'left turn', when a return to a pro-Moscow line accelerated its isolation. Yet the alternative is also fraught with dangers; for the more the PCI comes to resemble a social-democratic party, the less reason its supporters will see for backing it rather than Craxi. Hence all the rhetorical flourishes about the 'third phase'; yet a third phase without any real intellectual or social content is unlikely to do the job.

The other major 'Eurocommunist' CPs are suffering problems just as grave as those of the PCI. The Spanish CP (PCE) lost one third of its membership between 1978 and 1981. Santiago Carrillo has kept his grip on the party apparatus, but at the price of heavy losses on both left and right. There has been a substantial pro-Russian split from the quasi-autonomous Catalan CP; the Basque CP has broken with Carrillo to fuse with a Basque nationalist party; after setbacks in the Andalusian elections Marcello Camacho - a well-known leader of the Workers Commissions and a representative of the left in the Party - has resigned from the PCE leadership; and pro-Russian journals are circulating freely in Spain. While Carrillo has not gone so far in denouncing the

October Revolution his line is substantially the same as Berlinguer's; he has proclaimed the 'definitive death' of any 'organisation of the revolutionary movement centred on the USSR'. Yet while the debates about Poland and the Russian model have been to the fore in the PCE, the real cause of the Party's crisis is its failure to take advantage of the post-Franco period and the consequent electoral rise of the Socialist Party.

The French CP (PCF) is in equally deep crisis. The cantonal elections in March showed no sign of any electoral recovery from last year's severe losses to the Socialist Party. The PCF leader Marchais chose his words carefully on the Polish question; he regretted the turn of events but did not condemn, and stressed his deep emotions about the whole matter. But this line only aggravated the internal problems of the PCF, with many dissident members and ex-members calling for demonstrations of support for Solidarity.

But if the PCF has many dissidents, this



Georges Marchais, line has only aggravated the internal problems of the French CP.

does not imply an evolution to the left; on the contrary the main force of attraction is still Mitterrand's Socialist Party. One of the best-known excluded PCF members (and critics of the Polish line) Henri Fiszbin recently wrote an article in *Le Monde* criticising the PCF for its (albeit lukewarm) opposition to Mitterrand's wage-freeze.

The fact that the PCF is trapped in government has led to other conflicts; for example Fiterman, one of the PCF ministers, has publicly criticised *L'Humanité* for supporting Argentina over the Falklands.

The debate on Poland, then, is only a symptom of a much deeper crisis in the Eurocommunist CPs. The death-agony of Eurocommunism will be prolonged and unpleasant; but the disease is incurable. In itself this is no cause for rejoicing. There can be scarcely any genuine rank-and-file revolutionaries left in the PCI, the PCE or the PCF; so there will be no flood of recruits to the revolutionary left. The best we can hope from the slow demise of the remnants of the stalinised Comintern is that it will clear the ground on which we have to build afresh.



These colonists were intended to provide a backbone of loyal subjects among a native population seen as essentially disloyal and treacherous.

'The wild Irish,' wrote one William Thomas in Mary's reign, 'as unreasonable beasts, lived without any knowledge of God or good manners . . . hereof it followed that because their savage and idle life could not be satisfied with the natural fruit of the only unlaboured earth,' they invaded English land in Ireland.

Under Mary's Protestant sister Elizabeth, bitter rebellions of both the native and Anglo-Irish in Munster and Ulster were followed by massive land confiscations and bigger colonisation schemes.

'To inhabit and reform so barbarous a nation as that . . .,' wrote an advocate of colonisation in 1572, 'and to bring them to the knowledge and law, were both a godly and commendable deed, and sufficient work for our age.'

The Irish population suffered terribly from wars and famines in the reign of Elizabeth: misfortunes they shared with much of Europe at the time. The unique feature of this Irish 'mortality crisis' was that the English saw it as evidence of the savagery of the Irish.

By the early seventeenth century, they described the Irish as a people without history: the only progressive thing they could do was to disappear – if not physically, then by complete absorption into English 'civilisation'.

'Now civility cannot possibly be planted among them, but by this mixed plantation of civil men . . . for if they themselves were suffered to possess the whole country . . . they would never (to the end of the world) build houses, make townships or villages, or improve the land as it ought to be . . .' wrote an English official in Ireland.

Englishmen believed imperialism to be progressive, from the ancient Romans onwards: 'Had not this violence and this injury been offered to us by the Romans . . . we might yet have lived overgrown satyrs, rude and untutored, wandering in the woods . . .'

At first, land was confiscated officially as a punishment for acts of rebellion, but by the time of King Charles I it was being taken simply on the grounds that it was held by native Irish (Brehon) law rather than by 'civilised' English law.

In their efforts to colonise Ireland, however, English governments came up against a major obstacle. It was not English landowners, who were always happy to acquire titles and rents in Ireland; nor was it English merchants, who saw opportunities for profit in Irish trade. It was English working people, who, even when poverty-stricken at home, were reluctant to provide the backbone of 'civil men' in a strange land of evil reputation.

Only in eastern Ulster was the plantation successful in attracting colonists, for the poor and oppressed of south-west Scotland were less reluctant to move to an area with which they had many traditional links. The colonisation of this area was complete before 1640.

But the takeover of County Coleraine in western Ulster by London merchants was a

Planting the Orange seed

Norah Carlin looks at the ways in which the British ruling class colonised Ireland, and how the ancestors of the modern Protestant working class were 'planted' amid a hostile Catholic population.

The English colonisation of Ireland is one of those old running sores of history that still spread their infection. In the nineteenth century, both the Irish Catholic clergy and the Protestants of Ulster explained this history as a conflict between Catholic and Protestant, going back to the Reformation, when Henry VIII broke the Pope's hold over England but not over Ireland. Religious

differences often made the conflict more bitter in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the real turning point was not the Reformation: it was the decision to 'plant' Ireland with English settlers.

On the one hand, it was Henry VIII's Catholic father, Henry VII, who initiated the attempt to convert Ireland from loose feudal dependency (it had belonged to the English crown since 1171) to absolutist rule. And on the other, it was his Catholic daughter 'Bloody' Mary – better known for burning Protestants in England – who inaugurated the policy of colonisation.

Under Mary, land in Leix and Offaly (renamed King's County and Queen's County after Mary and her husband, King Philip of Spain) was set aside for grants to English farmers, rather than to English nobles as had previously been the practice.



crushed at Burford in May, 1649.

In the end, only a small proportion of the English soldiers stayed on to colonise Ireland. Many soldiers, and the smaller investors in the Adventure, sold out their shares to larger speculators. The main result of Cromwell's rule was to increase the amount of Irish land in the hands of English landlords (from 41% in 1640 to 78% by 1688). The Irish were not transported or exterminated but reduced to poor tenants and labourers, in which condition their grinding poverty for the next two centuries served to feed the myth of Irish inferiority.

Henry Cromwell ruled Ireland on behalf of his father from 1655 to 1658. Irish guerrilla resistance continued, and among the tactics adopted by Henry was the removal of a whole village to 'secure' sites away from forest and mountain areas - ancestors of the modern fortified hamlet.

Tens of thousands of Irishmen were transported to Barbados to work the new sugar plantations as bondservants alongside African slaves. Many died of overwork and malnutrition, many escaped (to join the buccaneers in the Caribbean if they were lucky), some survived years of bondage to become planters themselves. But some continued their resistance, and joined the African slaves of Barbados in rebellion in 1656.

Irish men were transported officially for acts of rebellion or insubordination: Irish women were transported simply because they were Irish and women. England needed them, as wives for Barbados planters.

'Touching the young women,' wrote Henry Cromwell, 'although we must use force in taking them up, yet it being so much for their own good and likely to be of so great advantage to the public...';

The English colonisation of Ireland was not just another religious war in an age of religious wars. It was a trial run for British imperialism and the racism with which it was implemented all over the world.

The seventeenth century gutter press's view of so-called 'Papist atrocities' against Protestant settlers.

failure as colonisation. The shrewd merchants relied for their profits on rents from Irish tenants and the tolls of the port of Derry, and the 'Londonderry' charter was withdrawn for their failure to import colonists.

The Irish were not transported or exterminated but reduced to poor tenants and labourers, in which condition their grinding poverty for the next two centuries served to feed the myth of Irish inferiority.

Ninety years of colonisation, war, famine and absolutist rule produced the great Irish rising of 1641, and the rising produced civil war and revolution in England as a side effect. King and Parliament took up arms against each other because neither would trust the other with the power of the sword to put the rising down.

The rising was also the signal for a flood of atrocity stories, the same stories still seen on Loyalist banners and murals every July. They show the rebels as Rome-loving fanatics and the colonists as slaughtered saints, singing hymns and clutching bibles as they die dreadful deaths.

But the atrocity stories were released before any of the facts could have been known to the authors, and they claimed a number of deaths greater than the Protestant population of Ireland at the time. They helped to persuade English Protestants to invest in the Irish Adventure, a joint-stock

fund to provide an army of conquest, with returns in Irish land.

The reconquest was not completed until 1649, by Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell's massacres of the people of Drogheda and Wexford are justly infamous: perhaps at Drogheda he was acting in accordance with the rules of war, but the rules of war in the seventeenth century were barbaric.

When Cromwell came to power in England as Lord Protector (1653), he set about carrying out a 'final solution' for Ireland which was the logical conclusion of a century of English policy, despite the exceptionally fanatical anti-Catholic spirit in which it was passed. All the Irish were to be transplanted from the provinces of Leinster, Munster and Ulster to the fourth province, Connaught, and replaced by English colonists.

The fact that the plan failed should not obscure the seriousness of the intention. Cromwell may not have driven all the Irish 'to Hell or Connaught', but thousands did make the bitter trek westwards between 1653 and 1655, and 70% of the cultivable land of Connaught was earmarked as reservation land.

Cromwell's solution to the problem of finding English colonists was simple: the soldiers of the English army would be paid only in Irish land, and so forced to settle.

At the close of the Civil War in England, the soldiers of the New Model Army had firmly resisted conscription for Ireland, and their resistance was stiffened by the spread of Leveller ideas among them. The Levellers, a radical revolutionary party in England, argued that the English had no right to take Irish land, that rebellion in such circumstances was justified, and that the 'liberty' the English proposed to enforce on Ireland was simply another form of tyranny. But Leveller resistance in the army was smashed, and the last mutiny of Irish-bound soldiers

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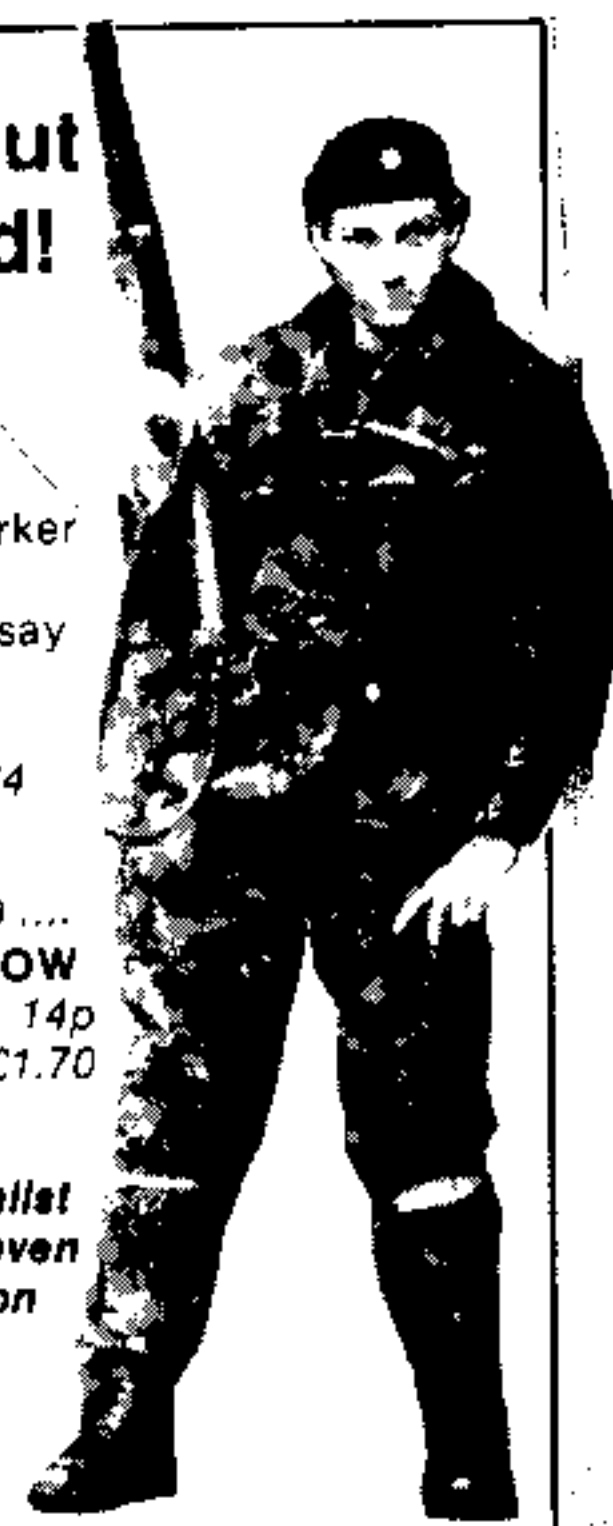
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The Russian Bourgeoisie

Is there a ruling class in Russia? Mike Haynes argues that the answer we give to this question also affects how we understand class in the West.

'But what will happen, Leonid, if the Reds come back?' Brezhnev's mother asked him after seeing the fabulous wealth and lifestyle he has. Or so at least runs an old Russian joke. Today, few socialists would dispute the existence of huge inequalities in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But many still draw back at the idea that these reflect the existence of a ruling class in each of these societies.

What is at stake here is not so much a dispute about the evidence. The real question is how should we interpret it? Most socialists today admit that the working class has no control in any of these societies. The message of the Polish events has come through loud and clear and only the wilfully deaf ignore it. Similarly most socialists will also admit that alongside this lack of working class control there has grown up immense inequality with large sections of the working class living in real poverty while the privileged live in luxury. But they then argue that one vital ingredient is missing that is necessary to turn those members of the *privilegentsia* into a ruling class. This ingredient is private property. It is the state that owns property and therefore, their argument runs, 'since property is not privately owned, since it cannot be passed on to one's children, there can be no ruling class.'

This argument is not simply wrong. It is dangerously wrong and to see this we have only to apply it to the west. Do this and you quickly arrive at some ridiculous conclusions which if they are followed can only lead to the argument that capitalism has faded away or is in the process of fading away.

Some years ago an American marxist carefully tried to define the American ruling class. Using property ownership as his basis he charted the wealthiest individuals and families to establish just who was in the ruling class. He found that the largest single group of wealthy property owners in his ruling class were the local property owners, the family that owned the largest department store in Deluth, the man who owned the second largest bank in Memphis, the family whose wealth was built on their ownership of the lettuce fields in the Salinas valley.

These were and are certainly important people. Locally they hold immense power. But is this really where the heart of the American ruling class is to be found? If property is the basis it would seem so. But as one critic put it 'owning half of downtown Wichita doesn't usually gain you a dinner invitation from the White House!'

And that is the point. If we want to understand the heart of the American or the

British or any other ruling class we have to look at those who control the productive centre of American or British capital. But here the ownership of property is not the central issue. What is important is control. The chairmen of some of the world's largest companies don't even make the millionaire list. When their company is part of a nationalised industry the chances are they can have no shares in it at all. What use then is an idea of 'the ruling class' that leads us on the one hand to believe that capitalism can be understood in terms of the antics portrayed in *Dallas* or *Dynasty* and, on the other hand, to deny when we look at the heads of nationalised industries that we have capitalists at all? Yet it is just this idea of the ruling class that socialists defend when they deny that one exists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. 'No private property – no ruling class!'

The mistake they make is to see capital as a thing that people possess. That is how capital is seen in legal terms and capitalism therefore becomes a system based upon some legally defined conception of private property. But if this is the way to understand capitalism then we would all need to become lawyers. Of course we do not and the reason is that marxism has always been concerned to pierce this veil of surface relations. Unfortunately when it comes to applying a marxist analysis to Eastern Europe socialists seem to want to put on dark glasses.

Accumulate, Accumulate!

Marx's argument was not that people possess capital but that it is capital that possess people. Capital is a relationship which works through people. It is out of this social relationship that classes are created. Private property in the narrow legal sense is one form of this relationship. Historically it has been a very important expression of it but it has never been the whole of it. Capital and capitalism cannot be tied down to any one set of forms because it is itself constantly changing.

What we have to focus on is the essence of the relationship of capital and class that works through people. That essence is control. It is the control of capital that links Sir Michael Edwards in the state owned BL to the chairman of the privately owned ICI and to the current manager of British state capital, Margaret Thatcher. It is this same control of Soviet state capital – the USSR Ltd – that binds together the Soviet ruling class and the ruling class of the other Eastern European societies. There too the leadership controls in the sense that it acts as the agent of capital as a relation. It acts as the agent of the drive of the system as a whole to compete and accumulate.

Perhaps the most famous passage in Marx's *Capital* is that where he describes the drive of capitalism. 'Accumulate, accumulate! That is the Moses and the Prophets!' It

is a sentence that has been quoted many times but what Marx meant by it is still misunderstood. This drive to accumulate does not come out of the head of the capitalist. Nor does it spring from property itself. There is nothing in the mere ownership of land, capital or shares that forces their owners to act as capitalists. It is only when these are part of a competitive capitalist system that the drive to accumulate becomes an imperative. It is capitalism as a totality that creates capitalists and imprisons them so that the drive of the system to expand is experienced as an external force – grow or perish in the race to accumulate. Only secondarily is this external force internalised to reappear as an ideological imperative in the psyche of capitalist society. Without an understanding of this it is impossible to analyse what drives every capitalist be they landowner, industrialist, civil servant, archbishop or pope.

If we want to understand Eastern Europe then we have to ask if this totality of capitalist relations exists there too, binding together those who control and forcing them to drive the system forward. We do not have to search far for the answer. In 1917 the Bolsheviks set out to change the world. When the revolution was lost the Soviet state accommodated itself to the old world. Today it lives by its terms as it has lived by its terms for the last half century or more. It competes to defend itself, to accumulate and in so doing it drives itself forward. The same applies in Eastern Europe. This pressure to accumulate exists most visibly through the military competition that has always been a central part of capitalist competition. But it is re-inforced by a growing network of trade and credit ties. It is this pressure that forces the leaderships in these societies to accumulate and exploit and through that accumulation and exploitation to define themselves as ruling classes.

This mechanism is not unique. The degree of state capitalism in the East is certainly greater than in the rest of the world but it is only a matter of degree. Moreover the extent of state capitalism has been an ever growing part of the capitalist system since its outset.

Of course these Eastern European societies are relatively backward and this affects the way in which their ruling classes have to act. The Soviet Union's output is only some 60 per cent that of the USA and only some 30 per cent that of NATO. Yet it must match them and carry a larger burden in the Warsaw Pact. This forces the Soviet ruling class to drive down the level of consumption as it acts as the agent of competition and accumulation. Today it invests some 30 per cent of output and spends a further 10 per cent on arms. The result is that the share of consumption in the Soviet Union is one of the lowest in the world. Moreover the investment is still being forced into the most vital areas of competition. The Soviet ruling class cannot afford to redirect it. Many years ago Krushchev criticised what he called 'steel blinkers'. Today the rulers of the Soviet Union still wear those blinkers and they will have to wear them so long as they continue to exist; for they are part and parcel of the system that gives them



life and that they defend.

In this process of acting as the agent of accumulation there is a substantial creaming off of the surplus for the ruling class itself. This, it must be stressed, is a consequence of the class relation – not its essence. But it is this which creates the most obvious manifestations of class to which we all relate – the inequalities in life and death, the conspicuous display of wealth and so on.

The precise contours that these take vary from society to society throughout the world and not just in Eastern Europe. But it is equally clear that taking Eastern Europe as a whole there is nothing particularly unique in the contours we find there. In the Soviet Union, for instance, the degree of income inequality is now recognised to be much the same as that in countries like Britain or Sweden. Moreover, everywhere the unequal distribution is re-inforced by the privileged special rations, special access to scarce goods like cars, dachas – holiday cottages in the country, trips abroad and a host more things.

This is an accepted way of life in the Soviet Union, legal and respectable and expected. Alongside it there is also a grey twilight world of corruption. Despite campaigns against this it continues to flourish because it is needed by the state. Occasionally some idea of its dimensions emerges. Earlier this year infighting amongst the top leadership led to the exposure of some of its more colourful beneficiaries. These included the Head of the Moscow State Circus whose home was found to contain more than \$1 million of diamonds and some \$300,000 of foreign currency. Another was an opera singer and friend of Brezhnev's daughter who was known as 'Boris the Gypsy'. He enjoyed a substantial antiques collection and driving around Moscow in his gold Mercedes. Exposure this high up is rare. It is

a product of internal conflict in the ruling class and the occasional need to indicate to the masses that all is really well 'at the top'. In normal times as during the years the Brezhnev family welcomed Boris's friendship, the whole thing is accepted without question.

What we are dealing with then is a ruling class that is different in degree from that in the west but similar in kind. This is why to deny the term ruling class there leads to such catastrophic conclusions about the nature of our own ruling class. It would mean that we would not be able to understand the role of nationalised industries, the role of the state, the role of the manager, the financial control of British industry through pension funds and so on.

But to deal with class in these terms is to only tell half the story. Objective class structures do not automatically determine the reality of class and class consciousness.

Capitalist brothers

Classes are formed in action constantly being created, broken down and recreated in struggle. They are not puppets of the relations of production, they cannot be simply deduced from theory or from an isolated analysis of exploitation and accumulation. The class practice and class consciousness of a class – whether it be working class or ruling class – can only be understood as it happens in action, in conflict.

If we look at Eastern Europe in these terms what is apparent is the way in which the state has managed historically to atomise struggle. It has reduced it to an individual level. This affects both the ruling class and the working class. Neither has been forced to sharply define themselves because the struggle necessary to that self-definition, to

class consciousness has not been allowed out in the open.

This is why the example of Poland is so important for at last the covers have been thrown off. But the Polish events do more than just illuminate class in Poland – they illuminate it on a world scale. Earlier we spoke of the Eastern European ruling classes. This was deliberate – there is no single ruling class. Each state has its own, linked at one level but divided at another. Marx described capitalists as 'hostile brothers'. They are hostile in the sense that their relations are built upon competition. That certainly exists in Eastern Europe. Despite all of the talk of the unity of the bloc there is less integration between states than in the much divided EEC.

But capitalists are brothers also in the sense that threatened by a class that wants to pull the system down they draw together to save one another. They recognise implicitly that their unity is strength in the face of a common enemy. The crisis in Poland has isolated the Polish ruling class and thrown it back on its last resources. It now depends for its survival on its army and the tolerant support of its erstwhile brothers. And here we see in action the contours of the ruling class not just in Poland but on a world level. Its brothers inhabit not just the capitals of Eastern Europe. They can be found throughout the trading, financial and industrial centres of the world whenever economic activity is locked into Poland. They can be found too in the governments of the west and in the Vatican where formal 'opposition' is tempered by a recognition that repression is a lesser evil than revolution. Ultimately the ruling class is tied together on a world scale by the fear that rocking the Polish boat will cause a mutiny in the rest of the increasingly waterlogged fleet.



The myth of Mahatma

As CND rediscovers non-violent civil disobedience **Barry Paiver** takes a critical look at its present saint – Mahatma Gandhi.

Advocates of non-violent civil disobedience always cite one 'success story' for the strategy – India. The argument goes like this. Civil disobedience, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, gained India its independence from Britain without the use of violence. Not only that, but it did so in a way that was morally uplifting to the participants.

Now these are large claims. To substantiate them it is necessary to measure them against the reality of the anti-British struggle and independent India.

Gandhi led three national civil disobedience campaigns – the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33, and the Quit India Movement of 1942. All of them involved huge numbers of people, who courted arrest by breaking various colonial laws. Each movement ended with tens of

thousands of people in jail and no concessions from the British.

Each of these campaigns was followed by a downturn in the anti-British struggle. A turn from mass struggle to participation in British-established assemblies, and a growth of right-wing religious communal organisations in the wake of the defeat.

So why did the British leave at all, if they had the measure of Gandhi and the Indian nationalists?

Firstly, the positive reasons for British rule vanished. The economic basis of the Indian empire was the hard currency surpluses earned by the export of commercial crops to other industrial countries. These surpluses were then transferred to London to support the pound. The Depression cut the prices of these crops in half and the surpluses vanished, never to return. For the British state (as opposed to individual companies) this turned India into an economic liability.

India's other imperial role was the military foundation of the empire east of Suez. In both world wars the Indian army fought for the British in the Middle East. But in 1942 the Japanese smashed British power in

the East. The British were only saved by American victories in the Pacific. India's military role vanished. So, by 1945 there were no positive reasons for maintaining imperial rule.

But there were pressing reasons for withdrawal. The end of the war produced an upsurge of anti-British feeling, much of it outside the control of Gandhi's Congress Party. In the Autumn of 1945 officers of the Indian National Army who had fought with the Japanese were put on trial. They got so much support that the Congress leaders were compelled to help their defence. In April 1946 units of the Indian navy mutinied in Bombay and Indian soldiers refused to fire on them. The authorities had to rely on the Congress leadership to break the mutiny, by refusing to give it support.

The mutiny was supported by mass strikes: The only reason British rule was not under greater pressure was due to the trade union movement being dominated either by the Congress or by the Community Party of India (CPI) which saw itself as the 'loyal opposition' to the Congress. This combination meant that workers, in general, acted as auxiliaries of the nationalists, rather than in their own class interests. Nevertheless the British had enough experience of working class actions, (such as the great railways strike of 1928) to realise that working class struggles would create increasing problems for their rule. They had also been getting a lot of trouble from militant CPI-led peasant struggles since the early 1940s.

But the dominant issue in India after 1945 was religious communalism. The Muslim League, wanted to partition India to create a state of Muslims (Pakistan) and gained overwhelming support in Muslim majority areas after 1945. This enabled them to disrupt the traditional government in order to get their way, and this in turn sparked off a series of communal riots in which thousands died and public order collapsed in several areas. Once they had decided to leave the British had no desire to hold the ring in those circumstances, in the end they practically ran away. Independence eventually came in chaos, communal massacres, and a partition which satisfied no-one and which has produced three wars between India and Pakistan. It was all a far cry from the ideal of peaceful civil disobedience.

That was the practical result of peaceful civil disobedience in the independence struggle. But there are other claims for it. One of these is that it is a highly principled, even saintly, method of struggle. Alas, the circumstances in which it became the policy of the Congress were rather less than saintly. By 1919 the Indian bourgeoisie had decided that they wanted independence. However, the British showed little sign of going, and were quite impervious to the traditional type of nationalist propaganda campaign.

But the British were nervous about mass action. At Amritsar in the Punjab in 1919 General Dyer ordered the machine-gunning of a crowd in a stadium, killing over three hundred people and injuring another thousand. However mass action posed problems for Indian capitalists, who had the example of the Bolshevik Revolution right

before their eyes. They wanted a form of struggle that involved mass action to put the British under as much pressure as possible, but which had to be so passive as to prevent it moving over from anti-imperialist struggle to class struggle.

Gandhi solved their problem. He had developed his method of civil disobedience during twenty years in South Africa. After returning to India in 1915 he added to his reputation by organising several local rural civil disobedience campaigns on tax issues. For the capitalists he had several unique qualities. He had an established reputation from his years in South Africa, and was acceptable to nationalists. Unlike other leaders, his influence was not limited to a particular region.

His policy of civil disobedience, based on Hindu theology, was aimed specifically against the British. Amongst Indians he preached the unity of all classes, the rich to be 'trustees' for the poor. All this enabled him to create an alliance between industrial capitalists and rich peasants, whose ambitions were blocked by rent-receiving landowners who were, in general, pro-British.

Once they understood what he was about, Indian capitalists became Gandhi's best supporters and gave him millions of rupees over a period of twenty-five years. The rich peasants and other petit bourgeois groups supplied him with a national base of activists which enabled him to dominate the

Congress until the final days of 1947. By then he had formed the ruling class coalition which was to rule independent India, a Congress party which had the support of millions of workers and peasants. No wonder the British found it a suitable vehicle to transfer their imperial power to. The Congress leaders, Gandhians to a man and occasional woman, simply moved behind the desks of the departing British.

Atomic bomb

There is one last claim made for Gandhian civil disobedience – the moral effect it was supposed to have on those who practised it. In fact, Gandhi's insistence on using Hindu theology to provide the ideological basis for civil disobedience was disastrous. It gave legitimacy to the caste system, for though Gandhi verbally opposed caste oppression, he refused to oppose caste itself. Since oppression is inherent in caste, all this attitude did was to assist the entrenchment of castism inside the Congress itself, and alienated a large section of untouchables from the anti-British struggle. After independence this meant that though caste and caste practices were legally abolished, they continue to be practised, notably by members of the government.

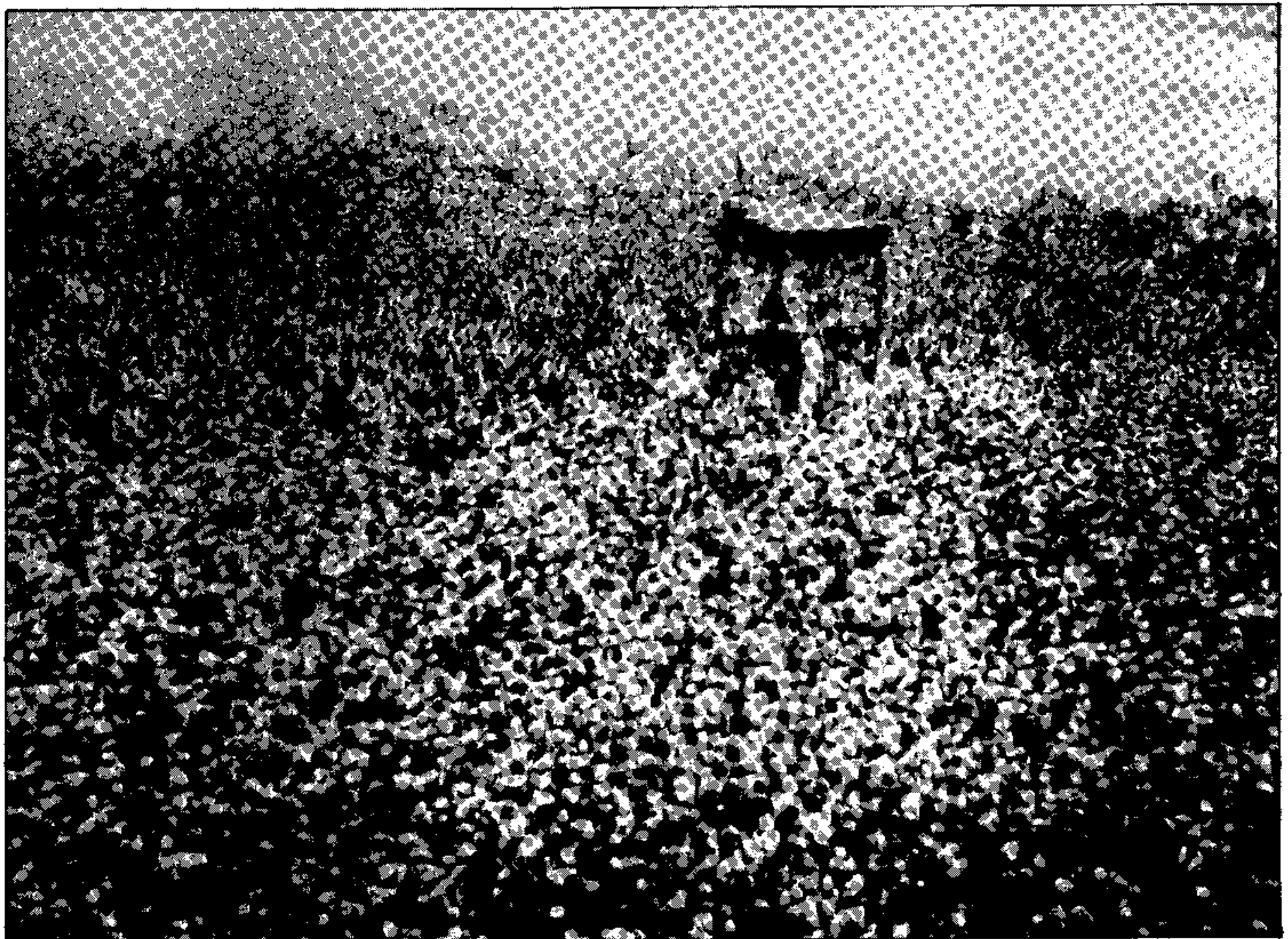
Gandhi's Hindu chauvinism fed the chauvinism of Muslim communalists, as it gave them ammunition to urge that the

Congress was just a Hindu party, hostile to Muslims. On the other hand, Gandhi's ideology provided an umbrella for the growth of right-wing and neo-fascist organisations based on Hindu communalism, who specialised in organising pogroms of Muslims. By imposing civil disobedience and Hindu ideology onto the Congress, Gandhi bears a heavy responsibility for partition and the massacres that accompanied it, when literally millions of people were killed during the 'transfer' of populations after partition.

Almost everyone who has ruled India since 1947 has paid lip-service to Gandhi. You find Gandhians everywhere in the government, the police, the civil service, in politics. For long periods of time there have been Gandhian ministers in charge of the police, who shoot hundreds of demonstrators each year, and who murder socialists in cold blood as a matter of routine.

When the Indian atomic bomb was exploded in 1974 there was a Gandhian Defence Minister, doubtless making sure that it was a non-violent bomb. Radiation levels in nuclear power stations were tested by paying untouchables 60p each to go into the central core area, after which they were tested. They must now be non-violently dying from leukemia.

In every government office, every bosses' mansion, in every police station, a portrait of the Mahatma beams down, on the faithful, practising what he preached.





Miserable faces on Wall Street as old friends no longer toe the line.

Trade wars

In the past few months major rows have broken out between America and the EEC over trade. In the 1930s trade wars added to the slump and helped create the 2nd World War. Are the 1980s going the same way as the 30s? Pete Green investigates.

Since last December, the Americans have tried to use the crushing of Solidarity in Poland as an excuse to pull their NATO allies into line and step up the economic and military pressure on the USSR. But West European (and West German in particular) bankers and industrialists have built up extensive and profitable economic connections with the Eastern bloc. These they will not abandon lightly — especially while Reagan, pressured by American farmers, excludes grain exports to Russia from his sanctions.

The conflict came to a head over exports of equipment worth several billion dollars

for the Siberian pipeline, planned to supply natural gas from Russia to Western Europe. In June the United States announced a ban on all deals, affecting not just American companies but all firms using licensed American technology.

This amounted to the US telling European firms they could not fulfil contracts they'd already signed. It infuriated the European governments. In West Germany Schmidt insisted that the deal would go ahead and that they would not accept a trade war with the Soviet Union. Even Reagan's closest allies in cold-war rhetoric, the Tories, have ordered British firms involved, such as John Brown's, not to obey the ban.

Reagan's unilateral action over the pipeline seems to have backfired. The US economy is no longer so dominant that the Americans can get away with throwing their weight about like that. Indeed it's the weakening of the economic competitiveness of the United States, relative to its West German and Japanese rivals, that underlies the growing tensions within the Western Alliance.

One expression of that relative weakness is the arms race, the drive to reassert

American military power, and protect the enormous overseas assets of American capital. But there's a major contradiction here which the American ruling-class has been reluctant to face up to.

Heavy defence spending has imposed enormous strains on the American economy. To ease those strains the Americans want their European and Japanese allies to boost their arms spending and bear a greater share of the costs. But the slump has also pushed the Reagan regime towards a protectionist stance, hitting exports from Europe and Japan and undermining the very foundations of the Western alliance. That's why the second major row, over steel imports into the US, is even more serious in its implications.

The American steel industry is certainly in a bad way. In 1981 production fell by a third and 85,000 workers were laid off or put on short-time. For most of 1982 only half of the steel-making capacity has been in use. But this is more to do with the slump in the American economy than imported steel.

Imports from all sources took only 20% of the American market in 1981. Imports from the EEC took just 6.4%. But those figures do represent a rising share in a falling market. The American steel companies are suffering from years of underinvestment and low productivity. Their overseas markets are being squeezed by both the Japanese and new producers in the Third World.

For the weaker steel companies hanging onto marginal shares of their domestic market has become a matter of survival. But the same applies to the European producers, all of whom, except in West Germany, are only alive because the State has stepped in to take them over or prop them up. As the slump continues the competition is becoming savage.

Neither in Europe nor in the United States will import controls stop the haemorrhage of jobs in the steel industry — although campaigns against imports have proved very effective in diverting workers and excusing union leaders unwilling to fight. But controls will enable the US steel firms to push up prices and profits whilst they continue to modernise their plant and sack workers. Or like US Steel, the firm which has led the campaign for import controls, spend \$6.4 billion dollars buying Marathon Oil and move away from steel altogether.

The steel corporations have rejected a European offer to restrict exports to a mere 5.75% of the market. They are pressing ahead with court cases to produce more severe restrictions than those proposed in June. But what makes sense for the individual steel corporation could have unpleasant repercussions for American exporters and the system as a whole.

The American case for controlling steel imports rests on the quite correct assertion that the European producers are heavily subsidised by their Governments. But, as the EEC has pointed out American ex-

porters receive special tax advantages and have long benefited from lower energy costs.

The truth is once you start controlling imports on the grounds of subsidies or Government support you've already well on the way towards a major trade war. There is no Government in the world which isn't trying to subsidise exports, or bail out its major industrial loss-makers.

The steel conflict is only the most prominent of several long simmering trade disputes between the US and the EEC which are on the point of boiling over. The Americans are particularly angry about the subsidised export of the Common Market's food mountains, cutting into their Third World markets. They've just imposed import quotas on EEC sugar. On the other side, US exports of manmade textiles and soyabeans to Europe are in the frontline for retaliatory action.

The EEC's presentation of itself as the injured partner rings rather hollow in the light of its own moves against textile imports from the Third World. In the latest round of negotiations on the multifibre agreement, the EEC (with Britain being one of the hardliners) has threatened to impose unilateral import curbs if Hong Kong, South Korea and ten other exporters refuse to accept new restrictions.

The Common Market is at heart just a glorified protection market, propping up the prices and profits of European farmers, textile companies and steel firms. Not that that's prevented its members falling out among themselves – as the lamb and turkey wars between Britain and France in the last year have illustrated.

But in both Europe and America the most feared competitor of all remains Japan. Complaints about Japan's network of informal control or its cheap wages have long ceased to have any justification. The harsh reality is that after years of high investment Japanese industry is just that much more productive. But, as in Europe and the States, Japan retains a heavily protected agricultural sector (its right-wing governments remain dependent upon rural voters). That could soon provide the excuse for a major clampdown on Japanese exports.

In the last few years both the Americans and the EEC have reached voluntary agreements to restrict imports of Japanese cars, televisions and steel. (The agreements had unexpected effects. In Britain, for example, the exclusion of Japanese imports has helped not British Leyland but imports by Ford, Renault and Volkswagen. The Japanese have turned to markets in the Middle East and Latin America, hurting European and American exports to those areas instead.)

The Americans have so far resisted European pressure to change the rules of GATT (the international trade body) and openly allow discriminatory controls aimed at a particular country, i.e. Japan. But that could soon change with growing US fears over Japanese exports of machine tools and silicon chips.

In the United States Congress, despite opposition from the Reagan administration,

a Reciprocity Trading Bill has been introduced. That would ensure automatic retaliation against imports of any country which was not completely open to American exports. It is clearly aimed against Japan. As the Financial Times observed, its supporters are

... those who argue that the US and Japan are really engaged in a no-holds barred struggle for economic survival and ought to have no illusions to the contrary. . . The problem with reciprocity is that while it is a weapon wielded in the name of free trade its results may well be quite the opposite – the break-up of world trade into a large number of bilateral trade-offs between countries.'

That sort of disintegration of the world's trading system would be disastrous for jobs.

Once a trade war starts to escalate it acquires a momentum of its own. With each country seeking to cut the exports of everybody else the overall effect can only be to lower the level of world trade (already falling slightly – by 1% in 1981), deepen the slump and add to unemployment. There are few innocents in such a game least of all amongst the world's major imperialist powers. Socialists should no more take sides in such disputes, regardless of petty arguments about who fired the first shot, than they should line up with their own bosses in the bloodier sorts of war. The blind, nationalistic logic is the same in both.

Quotas and tariffs

Some of the more sophisticated defenders of import controls will point to those occasions in the history of world capitalism when certain countries have grown rapidly, behind a defensive screen of controls – the United States and Germany in the late 19th Century, or Japan in the 1950s. But those controls were directed against the overwhelmingly dominant economies of the time, Britain and the USA respectively. In both periods the major economic power was willing to continue to defend free trade because it did so well out of it in the world as a whole.

Controls imposed in a period when the system is expanding are rather different from controls introduced at a time of stagnant markets and bitter competition. The relevant comparison today is not with Japan in the 1950s but the world in the 1930s.

Following the introduction of tariffs in America in 1930, the next two years saw the erection of a whole series of import restrictions, quotas and tariffs throughout Europe (quotas impose strict limits on the volume of imports of a particular commodity; tariffs are a tax levied by governments to push up the price of imports). In 1932 Britain abandoned its commitment to free trade for Imperial Preference imposing tariffs around the Empire as a whole – a central plank of Tory policy at that time.

The 1930s in other words saw a general disintegration of world trade and a retreat into trading blocs. Britain and France both formed blocs based on their still extensive colonial possessions. Germany under the Nazis sought to carve out its own bloc in

Central Europe. The Japanese launched their expansion in Asia designed to secure their own empire and supplies of raw materials. Stalin's Russia was already set on its costly (in terms of human lives and intense exploitation) drive to build up a self-sufficient state capitalism in the face of a hostile world.

What does need emphasising is the economic consequences of the trade war. As one economic historian summed it up:

'These trade restrictions were intended to dampen the impact of recession in each country, but because they were used by all countries, they did not have the intended effect. They simply accentuated the problem by producing a vicious circle of mutual immiseration. As a result of these policies which were piled on top of a weak demand situation, financial instability and falling prices, there was a drastic fall in world trade from 1929 to 1933. The volume of West European exports fell 40% and although there was some recovery thereafter, the 1937 European export level was more than a fifth lower than in 1929 and 13% lower than in 1913.' (A. Maddison in *Fontana Economic History of Europe* Vol. 5 (2))

The parallels between that situation and the 1980s are indeed uncomfortably close. It remains true that the rapid growth of world trade in the postwar era has produced a high degree of integration. All of them are far more dependent upon trade with each other than they were in the 1920s. That in turn means that there are powerful forces within each ruling-class with a strong commitment to free trade. The large multinationals in particular are anxious to retain their freedom to move money and goods at will, and are capable of evading many of the controls which do exist.

That however is only one side of the picture. The integration has not gone so far that national capitals with distinct interests are no longer identifiable. Where the integration is at its highest, in Western Europe, the EEC has begun to act as representative of a single trading bloc vis a vis the Americans and the Japanese. The unity is a precarious one with many internal fissures. But the possibility of a division of the Western alliance into three major trading blocs (with a fourth in Eastern Europe), fighting it out for markets in the rest of the world, is certainly there.

For the moment it needs to be emphasised (especially given the more blinkered and ossified versions of Lenin's '*Imperialism*' current in some sections of the left) that the major 'inter-imperialist rivalry' remains that between the USA and the USSR. The guns and bombs on the western side are still all pointing in the same direction, and are going to remain so for the foreseeable future.

But the outbreak of a major three-sided trade war between the USA, the EEC and Japan, would not only have serious economic consequences, deepening and protracting the world slump, it would also seriously disrupt the Western alliance which has dominated so much of the globe for so long. The instability that would create would also expand the opportunities for revolutionary socialists.

Throwing up your rights

Workers are facing a new challenge to their established rights at work as a result of new Government rules on the certification of sickness absence and the introduction of a new system of state sick pay from next April. A number of disputes have already taken place over these issues and sick pay will be a hot issue over the coming months. **Keith Brown** looks at these new developments, what they mean for workplace organisation and why workers should be on their guard.

If anyone had said two years ago that sick pay and absence rules would become a central issue on the shopfloor, most trade unionists would have laughed. But recent disputes at companies like Plessey and Metal Box have demonstrated that these issues are currently very important. Why is this?

Two important changes are in the process of happening. These are the ending of doctors' sick notes for illnesses of less than seven days duration from 14 June this year, and the replacement of the DHSS sickness benefit scheme, set up in 1948, by a new system of employers' statutory sick pay in April 1983. From next April most workers will no longer be able to claim state sickness benefit from the DHSS for the first eight weeks' sickness in a tax year. Instead their employer will have to pay them a flat-rate payment depending on their earnings level.

Both these changes have been forced on reluctant employers by the Government. The ending of doctors' sick notes for short-term illnesses is the result of a long campaign by the doctors' organisation, the British Medical Association, who used the power of their 'closed shop' to demand a change. The

doctors have long complained that their duty to fill in sick notes so that patients could claim DHSS benefit was a waste of their time and that of their patients, who in many cases could treat themselves and didn't need to see a doctor.

The Tories agreed to change the rules so that sick notes from doctors were only required after the first seven days' sickness for state benefit purposes. The problem for employers was that many used the doctors' sick note as proof of the genuineness of sickness for their own company sick pay schemes. So employers were forced to make changes too.

The introduction of employers' statutory sick pay (known as SSP) from next April has been fought strongly by employers and they have managed to water down considerably the original proposals.

In comparison the TUC's campaign against the new law (the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982) was pathetic. There was no attempt to involve affiliated unions in a campaign and most rank and file trade unionists are still in the dark about the impending changes. The TUC failed to organise any opposition to the Bill but kept its action at the level of polite submissions to the Government. Only now that the Bill has become law are the unions gradually waking up and issuing advice to members. Yet this Act will, in practical terms, have a more immediate impact of trade unionists' day to day work than the Tebbit Employment Act.

Bosses may be reluctant to accept the Government's new law but have no doubt that many companies will take advantage of it. The ending of doctors' sick notes has forced employers to look at their existing controls over sickness absence and so-called 'malingering'. Without the protection of an independent view on the genuineness of sickness in the shape of a doctor's sick note, workers who are off work for short spells are now much more vulnerable to disciplinary action or dismissal, and to victimisation by employers.

Most firms have introduced systems of self-certification, along the lines of the new

claim form issued by the DHSS whereby workers certify their own reason for absence. While this sounds like an easier and more trusting sort of procedure, it is nothing of the sort. Bosses now have the ultimate say on whether they believe a worker or not, and whether sick pay is paid. Moreover, the new systems often give supervisors the job of counter-signing the self-certificate at a face to face interview on the worker's return to work. This move gives shop floor management even more control. Of course, self-certification in itself need not necessarily be a retrograde step if workers can control the system, but if management are allowed to impose new, tighter rules it can be a disaster.

For example, a document issued by BL management at the Birmingham Land Rover plant to supervisors contains the following gems:

You should always gather any information that will be helpful to you as a supervisor;

Shorter periods of absence will probably need you to find out more about the reason for absence;

Satisfy yourself regarding the reason for absence given;

If you think the true reason for absence has not been given... discuss the matter with your superintendent;

Seek to establish any information that will be of use to you operationally... whether the employee will be fit enough to work overtime;

Do not fail to register any concerns you have over unsatisfactory aspects of behaviour;

In the words of a TGWU senior shop steward at Land Rover, 'before the new scheme we could be absent for three days without providing any medical documentation but now we have to provide a certificate if we are away for one day—so we have already been robbed of an important right'.

The start of self-certification caught many bosses with their trousers down and many undoubtedly feared that it would increase absenteeism, but various employers' associations and consultancies were quick to reassure them that it could work. The experience of those companies already operating such systems showed that in virtually all cases, absence rates had been cut. A survey by MPA Ltd found that, among manual workers, the average absence rate for those companies with self-certification was 3.7 per cent compared to 4.9 for those without.

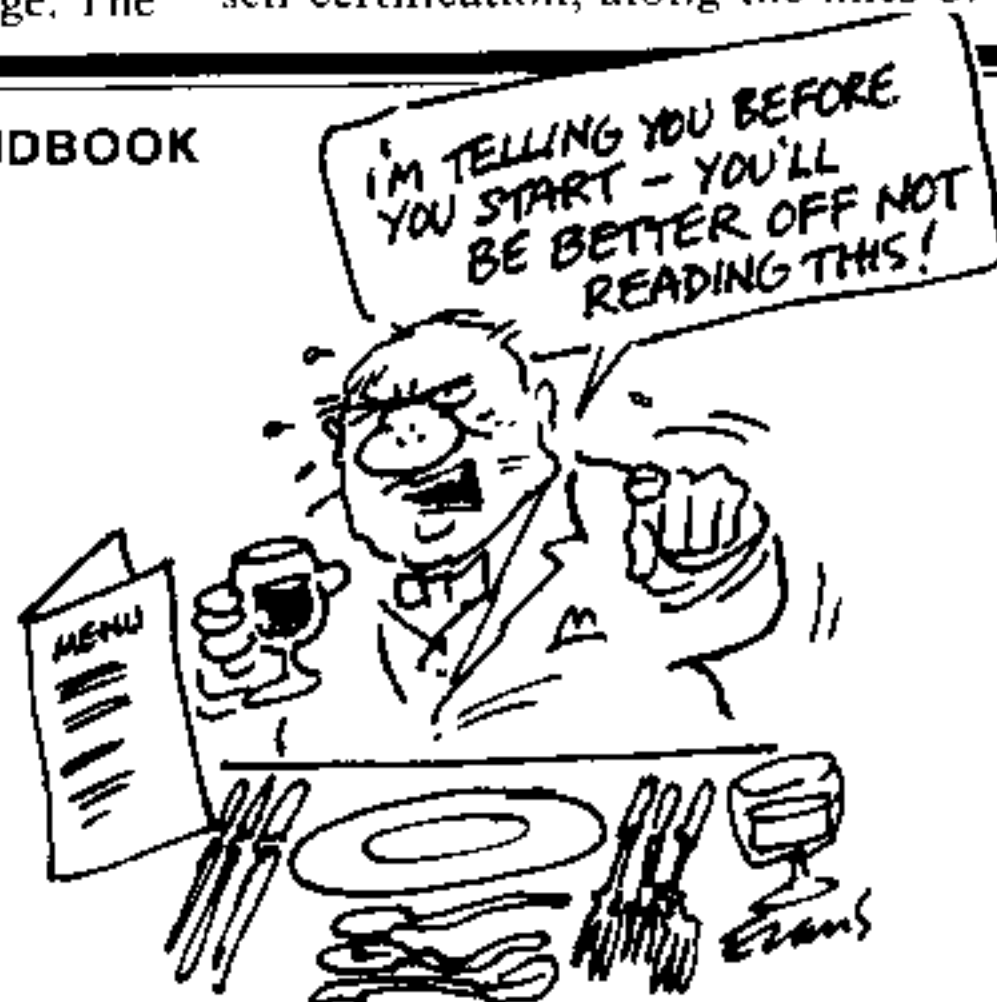
Self-certification is not the only method of tightening up for employers. The BMA's ethical committee was so disturbed by employers' attempts to get confidential medical records in order to sack employees that it has issued a strong warning to workers to beware of signing away their rights to confidentiality. Dr Dawson of the BMA commented that it was unreasonable 'to expect a GP who gathers information from a patient for health care to pass on that information for an employer to use for making judgements about a person's future employment'.

Another growing trend is for employers to have pre-employment medical checks for job applicants to screen out those with poor health records or high absence levels.

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The replacement of the current DHSS sickness benefit scheme by a new system of employers' statutory sick pay from next April will give employers even more powers to control absence. For the first eight weeks of sickness absence in a year, bosses will have the power to decide whether to pay out state sick pay or not, instead of the DHSS taking the decision. The employer will be able to get back all the money paid out as SSP from their monthly National Insurance stamp payments so they will not be losing out. For workers, on the other hand, it will not only cut the amount of sick pay received by them but also give employers the chance to harass workers with poor health records, or indeed any worker who goes sick. Trade union activists will have to be especially careful. It will also mean that many disabled workers or those with poor health records will find it even harder to find a job.

Getting trade unionists to take sick pay seriously can be difficult, but activists may find that this is an issue where support can be generated. When management at Plessey's Ilford plant suspended two workers who refused to fill in self-certificates: 800 workers from ten unions walked out for a week to demand their re-instatement. Management backed down and said they would not in future suspend any worker who refused to sign a self-certificate. At Metal Box ASTMS members are currently taking action at the Reading, London, Worcester and Carlisle plants in protest against changes in the rule for certifying absence.

Trade unionists will have to keep a sharp eye on what their management are planning to do from next April and go on the offensive now if they are to stop more rigid controls being imposed on them. Who knows, it may even be possible to use next April's change to make significant improvements in employers' sick pay schemes.

Unions at Alcan Kolls Ltd, Wembley, have agreed to police absence and sickness for the company. The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) of the Unions GUST, ALEW & EETPU agree.

The trade unions have agreed to the following scheme of selected reduced sick pay benefits in order to seek a reduction in the time lost through business absence. The scheme is based on an analysis of individual absence records presented by the company to the JNC twice per year; the scheme does not preclude the use of either the disciplinary procedure or the sickness and absence control procedure; the JNC will examine the individual records of all employees whose attendance does not meet the agreed criteria; during an examination members of the JNC will use such knowledge as is at their disposal in order to reach a unanimous decision on whether there is a case for the removal of sick pay entitlement for the first two days of any absence for a period of six months; by these means a list will be drawn up.

Crooks

The film and the musical of *Guys and Dolls* are now showing in London's West End. **Marta Wohrle** looks at the original stories, written by Damon Runyon in the '30s

When Damon Runyon first wrote his stories about the dubious underworld inhabitants of Broadway, he was already a well known journalist and sportswriter. Like his better remembered contemporary John Steinbeck, Runyon described the economic hardship of the depression and colourfully evoked a particular social group. In Steinbeck's case, displaced Oklahomans forced off their land and in Runyon's, New York's criminal class. But it is not just their subject, but their whole approach which is different.

Runyon is comic rather than tragic. He makes light of the hardships with wry and sardonic commentary. In fact, Runyon deliberately avoids the sort of passionate sentimentality that characterises Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*.

The stories were at first incidental to Runyon's journalism. He began with a hilarious short story of the crooks and gangsters that inhabit Broadway. He followed it with several others based on his experiences of New York racing and gambling. They were collected in *Guys and Dolls*, published in 1932.

All the stories are told by the same fictitious narrator in a unique and often mimicked language. The present tense and the first person is always used, coloured by bizarre metaphors and racy pace. The past tense is resolutely avoided and replaced very skilfully with the present. So, if you were to say "Did you hear what I said", a Runyon character would put it like this: "Do you hear what I say".

Rather than tell stories, Runyon evokes characters. Their names describe their 'line of business', Harry the Horse, Bookie Bob, Spanish John...

In a matter of a few sentences he succeeds in capturing their social context, their roles and their mannerisms. Here for example, he presents an inveterate follower-of-form and horse racing gambler:

'Then there is Hot Horse Herbie, who is called Hot Horse Herbie because he generally knows about some horse that is supposed to be hotter than a base-burner, a hot horse being a horse that is all heated up to win a horse race, although sometimes Hot Horse Herbie's hot horses turn out to be as cold as a landlord's heart.'

The frequent repetition of words in the same sentence, the deliberate avoidance of an alternative term, often laboured alliteration and almost outrageous metaphors, make Runyon's literary efforts unique. The style is light, even contrived, but it succeeds



in conveying an atmosphere of the surroundings.

There is obviously a tragic element, but it is skirted around with an impertinent air, that leaves the reader familiar with the hardships but noting that they aren't insurmountable. Above all there is a pervasive sense of optimism against incredible odds.

In a particular example involving the harassment of bookies' runners at the races, this becomes very clear:

'Now these are highly respected characters, and if you ask them what they do, they will tell you that they are turf advisors, a turf advisor being a party who advises the public about horse races, and their services are sometimes quite invaluable, even if the coppers at the race-tracks do say that turf advisors are nothing but touts, and are always jerking them around, and sometimes going so far as to bar them off the tracks altogether, which is a very grave injustice, as it deprives many worthy citizens of a chance to earn a livelihood.'

The narrator seems vaguely out of place. He is a nervous guy with an obsession with 'respectability', that is respectability within the criminal community. He rarely participates and his relationship with the other characters is a voyeuristic one. By distancing himself from the other participants he is able to observe each more intimately.

Runyon deliberately describes a social class without ever commenting on social class in general. Class divisions are seen entirely in terms of the hierarchy within the criminal class. Women are usually described as 'dolls' and are rarely central figures in the stories. The depression and prohibition are seen as creators of this harsh existence.

While not being the greatest political commentator of the century, Runyon is certainly one of the funniest. His characters and the language used to describe them are endlessly fascinating. The world they inhabit is rich and lively.

On Broadway and *From First to Last* (Picador, £1.95 each) make a virtually complete collection of stories. If anyone doesn't enjoy them, then they must be, in Runyon's language, such a guy as will never be moved by anything short of an earthquake.

A very British reformism

Chris Mullin, editor of *Tribune* and well-known figure on the Labour left has just published a political thriller, *A Very British Coup* (Hodder and Stoughton, £6.95). It tells the story of how a left Labour government elected in 1989 is subverted and brought down.

Pete Goodwin talked to him about his book.

What made you write the book?

I wanted to get a message across to the widest possible audience that the real threat to parliamentary democracy comes not from people like you and me, but from those who inhabit the darker recesses of Whitehall, the City of London, the offices of the newspaper barons. A political thriller seems the best way of doing it. When I have read standard best seller political thrillers it seemed that the right had all the best plots. We shouldn't let them get away with it. So I decided to write one from an opposite point of view.

I think you've been very successful. But that raises a question mark. You are associated with Bennite politics have written a novel about what is essentially a Bennite government getting into office with a massive majority and being absolutely screwed by the set-up. In writing the novel, did that make you think anything about your politics?

You want to know whether I would accept the *Socialist Worker* analysis that all left Labour governments are inevitably doomed – the apocalyptic view of fighting for change inside the system. I don't. I believe it's possible to have a different outcome to my government led by a Sheffield steelworker. He, as you know, is removed by extra- and anti-parliamentary forces. I believe that it is possible for such a regime to achieve change. But I think people ought to be aware of the difficulties and my aim has been to describe the difficulties as graphically as possible to reach as large a number of people as possible. So that people will be forewarned.

But you do present a damning case. From day one, despite having a few tricks up its sleeve, this left government is successively absorbed, eroded. You've obviously taken some of the examples from the Chilean experience.

Yes, and the experience of previous Labour governments, even though they did not threaten very much the control of power and wealth in this country. A sterling crisis, for example, traditionally accompanies the election of a Labour government. And there has always been talk of the need for coup

attempts, or the need to destabilise Labour governments.

But your book portrays the state machine exactly as Lenin presented it – an organ of the ruling class, not susceptible to democratic control. How do you think a left wing government could avoid the consequences which are spelt out in your book?

Well, one of the ways, I hope, is that public opinion would be sufficiently alerted in advance to prepare for some of the tricks that the establishment would play on such a left government. What you're really asking me is why aren't I a revolutionary? The reason I'm not is because if you seize power by force, as experience shows, you have to retain it by force. This is the experience of most societies in which this has happened. I've been in Vietnam, China and Kampuchea. While the revolutionary side there had no choice but to seize power by force, we actually do have that choice and I'm anxious that we exploit that choice before we start lapsing, or turning to revolution.

You've said it would be merely strength of public opinion forewarned...

No, it wouldn't just be the strength of public opinion, it would be the degree of organisation in the trade union and labour movement. What you have to do is create sufficient pressure, build a sufficiently strong and organised base, in the country, in the workplace, in the shipyards, have people who are sufficiently politically conscious, to sustain such a government in office. And indeed to put pressure on it should it show signs of wavering, or as it inevitably will, come up against the forces of the extra-parliamentary establishment.

One disappointing thing about your book is that the working class hardly appears in it at all. Why?

Well, they feature in two ways, I think. Actually, my prime minister is working class, a Sheffield steelworker. Which is an unusual feature and will make him unique among all British prime ministers.

Ramsay MacDonald?

Ramsay MacDonald, probably, yes. Secondly the working class appears in the form of a number of trade union leaders of no doubt impeccable working class credentials, right wing trade union officials, who come together to make life as difficult as possible for the government, in that case, by organising a work-to-rule in the power industry.

Let us take that case, which is one solid case where the working class does come into it. Presumably, what you are thinking about is the copper miners' strike in Allende's Chile. That gained a certain demagogic support from sections of the ruling class but it was a genuine dispute for higher wages, which I certainly would support. Most disputes that

a left wing Labour government would be faced with would not be the result of right wing manipulation, but would result from an expansion of working class consciousness, people wanting to do things to improve their own position. First of all, none of that is in your book, but secondly, you seem to be rather ambiguous about what attitude a left Labour government would take to that. You seem to be suggesting that your ideal left wing government would hold back such struggles.

Be specific, what kind of struggle? I don't believe it to be a test of revolutionaries to support every strike without question. It wouldn't be terribly revolutionary to support the copper miners' strike in Chile.

You think it would have been wrong to have supported the copper miners?

I don't know. I wasn't there and I don't know much about the arguments one way or the other. All I'm saying is that I can well see that there are strikes that are not necessarily very progressive. It's quite possible to see that if a number of trade union leaders got together to manipulate their members into calling a strike to bring down an essentially left wing government that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing.

But a far more likely result of a left labour government backed with mass enthusiasm would be the sort of situation you got in France in 1936 when the Popular Front was elected, with masses of workers trying to improve their wages. What would be your response to that?

I think increasing wages would be a priority – particularly if workers were poorly paid – but it wouldn't take precedence over providing, for example, jobs for those who don't have jobs or the removal of the American bases from this country. If you win a 50% wage increase that could actually be a very conservative and reactionary demand. I don't believe that wage militancy is necessarily progressive.

I find it difficult to see how a left Labour government would maintain active working class support. Because it can only win it, maintain and build upon it, by starting where workers are struggling. You are suggesting in quite a large number of cases you would restrain what workers are struggling for.

I think you have identified a genuine weakness in the strategy of Harry Perkins' government, and in my book. You have asked me whether I thought it was inevitable that such a government would be swept aside and my reply is that it probably would be so long as the parliamentary leadership neglects to provide itself with a mass base. That is a difficult and time consuming and wearying and often disappointing struggle, and may take many years to achieve. And I agree, it will not suddenly come about overnight because a left wing majority has been obtained in parliament.

How much do you see the Labour left doing that at the moment?

I think that is what we have started to do and it's a measure of the size of the task that progress has been fairly slight so far. For

example, this country until recently had been given over to non-political trade unionism. Trade unionism viewed solely in terms – I think this is where *you* make a mistake – of wage militancy. I would like to see us break out of that mental straight-jacket, and that's why in our campaign to democratise the Labour party over the last three or four years one of the first things we did was get down to trade union conferences and start holding fringe meetings, attracting large numbers of delegates in an environment where they couldn't be controlled by the union machine, and as a result of which many went back into their conferences the following day and voted through some very progressive things. For example, last year for the first time the TUC came out in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. That was only, I would argue, because of the mass organising we had started among trade unions, among their grass roots.

But that work is very much at the level of the union machine, isn't it? For instance, the example you give of the TUC carrying support for unilateral nuclear disarmament. That did come from pressure from union conferences. But in how many workplaces is there CND agitation?

I don't know, and though I don't place much store on opinion polls, it's clear that public opinion has shifted numerically, that between 40 and 55% of people are now in favour of the removal of the bomb and American bases.

But I would have said that our activity (the left's) over the last two or three years has been exactly what you would recommend. We are trying to make it uncomfortable for someone to sit in parliament representing a Labour constituency who does not support and indeed in many cases opposes party policy. We are trying, and this is a much longer strategy, to make it uncomfortable for trade union leaders to remain in office whilst opposing the demands of their members.

But isn't it true that the strategy as pursued by the new Labour left in the trade unions is still very much a broad left strategy: the idea of getting the right men and women (it's generally men) in the right places. And that means, for instance, that there's no serious Labour left organisation in NUPE because it's already considered to be part of the left. The same goes for the Transport and General Workers, and so on. So you arrive at the position where the supposed left slate for the trade union section of the National Executive of the Labour Party includes people like Alex Kitson or Sam McCluskie, who have voted for the witch hunt, when that supposedly this year is the key issue you're fighting on.

No, if you're asking me, do I think that the way to make progress is to get key individuals into key offices, I don't. I think that's sometimes one of the outcomes, and I think you're correct that many organisations we consider left only offer an illusion of leftness because the membership is not sufficiently conscious. I think you saw that last year in NUPE in the deputy leadership election. When it was put to the ballot a substantial majority of the individual mem-

bers were in favour of Denis Healey, who was opposed to most – all, perhaps – of the major policies for which the union leadership stood. That shows up the contradictions, and it's a measure of the work that remains to be done.

Let me shift the discussion back to the book. One of the interesting things about it is that Harry Perkins' Labour government is committed to withdrawal from NATO – and as you know Tony Benn is for remaining in NATO. Do you think that it's a serious weakness of the Bennite left that it hasn't taken the question of NATO seriously?

No, I think you have to walk before you run. Personally, I'm in favour of our withdrawing from NATO. I'm in favour of British neutrality as between the power blocs. I don't speak for Tony Benn – you'll have to ask him what he thinks on the question.

One other question of policy. In the novel, Harry Perkins' government is committed to the abolition of the House of Lords, but interestingly enough, like Tony Benn, it's not committed to the abolition of the monarchy, which does turn out later on in the novel to be one of the sinister extra-parliamentary forces.

You mustn't fall into the trap of expecting me to give Tony Benn's point of view. He's quite capable of speaking for himself. But I agree, the question of the monarchy and the role it will play, just like the role of the courts and the judges, is one that will have to be faced.

But don't you think it's an indication of the feebleness of the Labour left at the moment that it's not willing to pick up what look like hot potatoes, like the monarchy, like NATO?

Many people on the left are prepared to take these things up but you can only campaign on so many fronts at a given time. It's a question of priority. I've told you what my position on NATO is quite clearly. Whether there's anything to be gained by a kamikaze assault on the monarchy at this stage is another question. Personally I'm not a headbanger. I believe that one of the great faults of the non-Labour left has been to set

themselves, perhaps deliberately as a strategy, a target that cannot be possibly met, perhaps with a view to busting the system. But the result has been unimpressive over the last ten years.

If the Labour left is feeble, and it is, I can only say the non-Labour left is even feebler. With the exception of *Socialist Worker* supporters, I can't help noticing that in the last couple of years many of the non-Labour left have decided to join the Labour Party. That surely must be a tribute, rightly or wrongly, to the fact that they believe we are stronger and they are weaker.

There's a moment in the novel when a character purchases a copy of *Socialist Worker*, which makes a prediction on its front page. The character's comment is: 'Typical of the Trots – strong on paranoia, weak on facts'. Then half an hour later, he sees that prediction come true. Don't you think that in the situation of a left Labour government being eroded by the establishment that the sort of ideas we put forward, which today may seem very outrageous, would begin to take on a more serious appeal?

I think that simply by making a statement or simply by stating a series of unattainable demands, the effect that you have is to demoralise your own supporters. I would put it to you that the high turnover of membership in the SWP, and the declining membership (I don't say this to try to score points, because the Labour Party has got nothing to be proud of about its membership in recent years) of the non-Labour left over recent years is to some extent a result of that strategy I would call headbanging.


I've been in many countries that have had revolutions and they have backfired, and one of the things I note about the non-Labour left's analysis of the way the world turns round is that there is no society, no country, no system of government, no party anywhere in the world that has ever achieved anything worthy of more than the most trifling praise. And that leads to deep, deep pessimism and demoralises many of your own members eventually. I think that a very serious drawback upon which we ought to reflect.

Dear comrade...

Three letters to a Bennite

from Paul Foot

Cartoons by Phil Evans



a Socialist Workers Party pamphlet

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Petrograd: May Day 1917
Sailors and soldiers ... marching towards power.

The workers' state

On the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin wrote his short pamphlet, *The State and Revolution*. Gareth Jenkins discusses the issues raised in it.

Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution* in August and September 1917. The topic was an urgent, practical one. The February Revolution had given birth to two opposing types of power: workers' power, in the shape of the soviets, and bourgeois power, in the shape of the provisional government. Which one was going to win out? Would and should the state be overthrown by further revolution?

Originally Lenin intended to write a concluding chapter on the experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. But, as he admits with dead-pan humour in the postscript, he was 'interrupted' by the events leading up to the October Bolshevik revolution. 'Such an "interruption" can only be welcomed... It is more pleasant and useful to go through the "experience of the revolution" than to write about it.'

But no-one should imagine that *The State*

and *Revolution* is simply a response to local Russian conditions. Lenin in fact prepared his notes for it before the February revolution, while he was still in exile, and the references to Russia are few and far between. *The State and Revolution* is one of Lenin's most 'European' pamphlets.

That 'Europeanness' is important. Lenin is not just talking about backward, semi-feudal countries (like Russia), but about something much closer to us: advanced, bourgeois-democratic countries of the West, with mass, working-class parties, able to operate relatively openly, and having representatives in parliament and local government. He is talking about Germany, France, Britain, the USA.

He is also talking about those 'socialists' familiar to us: people who use the language of class struggle, who claim to be on the left, but who in practice prove to be betrayers of the revolution.

In Lenin's time, that proof came with the crisis precipitated by the First World War. Most of the major European socialist parties sided with their own bourgeoisies, and abandoned their internationalist principles. Worse still was the way in which 'marxist' theoreticians justified this betrayal. And the

worst offender was Karl Kautsky, the 'pope of marxism', correspondent of Engels, and an internationally respected leader of the biggest and best organised marxist party in Europe, the German Social Democratic Party.

We are now so used to seeing Kautsky through the medium of Lenin's polemics against him that we sometimes forget what kind of person he was. In formal terms, Kautsky was an *opponent* of the right-wing reformist trend in the German party; and right up until the outbreak of war Lenin (who had a sharp eye for political failings) had regarded him with the utmost respect.

Again, despite his betrayal, Kautsky didn't simply become a right-winger. As the horrors of the First World War increased, he used his marxist legacy to develop a soft, semi-pacifist opposition to the war and to distance himself from the right-wing. Kautsky was no Michael Foot. He was left of Tony Benn. But when it came down to fundamentals, Kautsky never swerved from his devotion to parliamentary democracy, to the existing state.

Lenin, then, faced no easy task. He was taking on what passed for orthodox marxism, and had been blessed by the highest authority in the movement. If he devotes so much space to quoting what Marx

and Engels actually say on the subject of the state, he does so not in order to defend holy writ, but to save the living revolutionary content of marxism from those who distort and destroy it.

What Lenin sets out to demonstrate is that the state is 'the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms.' That is to say, the state arises when antagonisms between classes with conflicting interests can no longer be settled directly, but require a power appearing to stand above society to regulate conflicts and stop them from tearing society apart.

The state does this by ensuring that it alone possesses a monopoly of organised violence. Its army, police force, prisons, etc – special bodies of armed men – claim to operate in the name of society. The population as a whole is disarmed and atomised.

The state doesn't, of course, act as a neutral arbitrator between conflicting interests, even though as a power above society it may appear to do so. On the contrary, the state exists as the instrument of one class (the ruling class) to oppress the other, subordinate classes. All states are *class* states, even though the direct expression of ruling class interests may seem to be absent, as is usually the case with capitalism.

Why did Lenin find it necessary to spell all this out? Because opponents like Kautsky argued that the bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary state was an exception to this general rule. Universal suffrage, they claimed, allowed the working class to enter politics, take over the modern state machine, cleanse it of 'alien' class interests, and set it to work for the benefit of society as a whole.

What this plausible (and still current) argument conveniently forgets is that while the capitalist class rarely intervenes directly in the political arena, its state exists to ensure that the daily round of economic compulsion in factory and office continues relatively undisturbed. The capitalist class thus preserves power by separating 'politics' from 'economics'.

'Democracy' in a parliamentary sense is a sham, not just because its purpose is to 'decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament.' It is a sham because the separation between 'politics' and 'economics' consigns the vast bulk of the population to wage-slavery, with effective control in the hands of very few. In other words, it preserves, probably better than any other form of bourgeois state, the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

To pursue power through parliamentary democracy is therefore to preserve a system of affairs in which workers continue to be excluded from effective control of their lives. Far from taking over the bourgeois state, the bourgeois state takes the 'socialists' over – as numerous examples since Lenin's time have proved.

What then is the alternative? In abstract terms, the separation between politics and economics must be ended. Political control over society must involve seizure of economic interests. How can this be done? Lenin, like Marx and Engels before him, pointed to

the concrete experience of the Paris Commune.

For a brief period of time (barely two months in 1871) the workers of Paris took *direct* control. The directness of this control was expressed in two ways: first, it suppressed the standing army and the police as special bodies of armed men – the population as a whole was armed. Secondly, it ensured that all public functions were subject to its will: all officials were elected and subject to recall; all public service was to be performed at the average working wage.

All this was designed to involve the population in *active* participation in public affairs. (Although, staggeringly, both Marx and Lenin ignored the fact that the Paris Commune did not give women the vote!) It was a democracy quite radically different from the 'democracy' of even the most democratic of bourgeois republics. Instead of preserving the exclusion of the vast majority from 'politics' (which remains the professional concern of the few), it laid the basis for the most comprehensive inclusion of the mass of the population in the running of their own affairs. Had the Commune lasted longer, it could have used its control over production to move in the direction of socialism.

Withering away

But to do all this the Commune had to impose its will on other, hostile classes.

For the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the Paris Commune substituted the dictatorship of the working class. It had to *smash* the old state. Now that the working class had become the ruling class it had like previous ruling classes to oppress its class opponents – the bourgeoisie. It needed a *state* of its own. To dispense with that (as the anarchists argue) is to renounce in advance the possibility of success.

But was it a state in the old mould. Lenin pointed to one absolutely crucial difference. While it is true that workers need a state

with which to oppress their class enemy, they no longer need a state in order to ensure economic exploitation. Their direct control over production means that a start can be made (with varying degrees of difficulty depending on the circumstances) on production for need rather than for profit.

So, Lenin concluded, it was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word, but a semi-state, one that would 'wither away' (in Engels' words) as the need to oppress its opponents died away and exploitation of labour by capital was replaced by social cooperation.

But Lenin insists that even this is not the final point of development. For democracy itself will wither away, once the reason for democracy becomes superfluous. And it becomes superfluous when the *control* that a majority necessarily exercises in order to run society on the basis of equality becomes automatic habit. At that point, human beings will transcend even equality and operate on the basis of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.' There will be no classes, no states

This vision of human possibility is not utopian, whatever Kautsky's latter-day descendants on the left of the Labour Party would say, with their 'realistic' pursuit of power through local and national government. The wealth of concrete detail that Lenin brings to bear on his argument shows exactly how workers' power, arising out of smashing up the old state, can organise the first steps towards socialism, and eventually to communism.

Despite the lean times we are living in, every strike gives us an inkling of that power, its ability to dictate its will over the bosses and the police, its capacity to draw workers into active, democratic control over their existence. The message of *The State and Revolution* can only be bettered by the 'interruption' referred to in the incomplete ending to the pamphlet – the actual experience of revolution itself.



Did Kautsky miss the revolutionary bus?

Empire builders

Peter Binns examines a new book on Russian foreign policy in the Middle East (*Threat from the East?* Fred Halliday, Penguin, £1.75). He finds that a familiar argument on the left leads to some very conservative conclusions.

Fred Halliday is a well-known writer on Middle Eastern affairs. He is also an editorial associate of *New Left Review*. An examination of Russian foreign policy in the Middle East by a left-wing writer should therefore be of considerable use to us.

Unfortunately, his book remains trapped within an all too familiar framework. It is excessively concerned to show that the Kremlin ogre is in reality a rather friendly (if sometimes silly and petulant) pussycat. Instead of answers to questions like, what exactly are the international interests of the Russian bureaucracy, and how do they flow from the internal dynamic of Russian society, we get a series of either true but trivial points, or else false ones. These actually fundamentally undermine the book's main – and correct – aim: to show that the West's 'concern' about Russian intervention is a cover for their own more serious intervention.

For a start, Halliday excuses Russian imperialism as 'defensive', telling us that 'the overall balance of Soviet economic ventures in the Middle East would appear to have been deficient' (p46). He concludes that 'there are no adequate grounds for... seeing Soviet policy as "imperialist"... If the term is used because of strictly economic factors, then the USSR has probably not gained substantially from its ties to the Middle East, bearing in mind the loss of 7 billion dollars loaned to Egypt.' And 'their aid programmes to Ethiopia, South Yemen and Afghanistan certainly constitute deficits for the USSR.' (p125).

But in that case we would have to conclude that America is *even more* of a benefactor and even less of an imperialist than Russia. It has, after all, contributed vast sums of money to the region (mainly to Israel) and recouped considerably less in profits returned.

The mistake here is to assume that imperialism can be read off directly from the balance sheets of companies trading in the region. Rather, the willingness of Russia and America to incur such deficits is explained by competition between *national* or *state* capitals. This competition then means that strategically crucial regions – such as the Middle East – get subordinated to the military and strategic interests of the major imperialist rivals.

National liberation

Halliday also tells us that 'a good way to start is by looking at the Soviet Constitution.' He quotes Article 28 of the 1977 Constitution and then immediately proceeds to draw from it conclusions as to what motivates Russian foreign policy. It is, according to Halliday, 'ideologically committed to supporting what it sees as progressive forces in the world.' (P35). But it is also constrained by the goal of 'preserving the security of the USSR, and seeking a reduction in tension and arms rivalry between itself and the West.' (P34)

What would we think of someone who tried to derive American foreign policy from the American constitution? Taking a regime's ideological utterances to define its real interests is rank idealism. And in the case of Russia it is refuted by facts, which Halliday himself provides. These 'progressive forces' for instance. Are they to be found in the murderous Ba'athist regime in Iraq, which Russia supported until recently? Or among the Iranian mullahs, who have in the past year been supplied by arms from Russia? Or in the Somalian regime, over which Russia has also changed sides recently?

Halliday states that there is 'no equivalence between the United States and the USSR,' and that 'the basis of their rivalry is the asymmetry of the two social systems.' There is no evidence for that conclusion, which only the most forshortened of historical visions permits him to draw. We have to look back no further than the 1914-1918 war, and the relations between the then leading imperialist powers, Britain and Germany to see why.

The Kaiser gave material aid to the anti-imperialist struggle in both Ireland and India, and greatly assisted the Russian Revolution by returning Lenin to Russia in a sealed train. Yet Imperial Germany's 'anti-imperialist' record cannot be used to prove an 'asymmetry' between the social systems of Britain and Germany.

The 'asymmetry' was due to the late and less developed nature of German imperialism, faced with a world already largely carved out by the British. The Kaiser could therefore afford to be more 'anti-imperialist' than Balfour, Asquith or Lloyd-George. But the socio-economic system in both cases was the same.

Russia emerged in 1945 in a comparable position. Its imperial borders had been extended to include the Eastern European countries from Poland to Bulgaria, but outside that it was faced by a world that was almost completely dominated by a block of western capital under the domination of the United States. By and large, anything that undermined the stability of that set up, such as national liberation movements, was good for Russia's interests. So long, that is, as it did not lead to major reprisals from America.

By contrast America's 'anti-imperialist' opportunities were much more limited. All the same, in the 1950s, it aided the struggle against Russian imperialism in Yugoslavia, just as in the same way, in the 1960s, Russia aided the struggle against US imperialism in Cuba. Each in turn stopped short, however, when the crucial interests of the other would have been threatened. Russia no more aided the fight against Western imperialism in Greece at the end of the 1939-1945 war, than America aided the 1956 revolution against Russian imperialism in Hungary.

So much for the Russian end of the connection. What about the Middle Eastern end of it? Why in particular did a whole number of regimes (Egypt, Iraq, etc.), which at various times were part of the Russian sphere of influence, later move out of it?

The underlying reason for this reorientation, according to Halliday, stems from 'the social character of these regimes: nationalisation and protectionism, far from encouraging a transition to socialism, were in fact building up local industry and finance within these states until they reached the point where they could more equally and actively integrate themselves into the capitalist system.' (p65)

But what is meant by 'transition to socialism'? Rather than identifying it with workers' power, Halliday generally identifies it instead with the stalinist notion of the state monopoly of industry and finance. So the question becomes in reality



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Russian troops in Afghanistan 'not part of some broader expansionist drive'?

(though Halliday doesn't recognise it) not that of capitalism versus socialism, but one about the conditions under which development will proceed: in a 'western' type direction or a more fully state capitalist one.

Halliday's mistaken view that the latter represents a society in transition to socialism means he has to embark on a futile quest to discover some hidden essence within broadly similar societies, which predetermine their western or eastern developments, quite irrespective of the actual conditions in which given societies find themselves.

Thus, because countries in the region have now taken the 'capitalist road', they must have lacked the hidden 'socialist' essence in the first place.

And what of the extremely sharp changes of relations between Russia and regimes like Somalia and Iraq (regimes which remained essentially unchanged)? That alone contradicts Halliday's assertion that the underlying reason for the relationship between each of these regimes and Russia 'was the social character of these regimes.'

The evidence is even more striking when we look further afield. The idea that 'socialist' regimes are natural allies against the common western enemy is disproved by the conflicts that have set Russia against China, and produced wars between Vietnam and China and Vietnam and Cambodia. Yet all these 'socialist' countries have virtually identical structures.

Nor, for that matter, has the westernised nature of the Indian social formation prevented its alliance with Russia either. In fact, the alliance has been strengthened at the same time that the Indian economy has progressively developed private capital at the expense of the major state investments that characterised the first few of India's 5 and 7 year plans. As soon as Halliday's thesis is examined within a broader context, its plausibility crumbles very rapidly.

All the same, the form that the inter-imperialist rivalry takes is affected, if only at

a subordinate level, by the ease with which the military and economic structures of Russia and America fit with those of the Third World countries each dominates. There is no doubt, for instance, that the fixed price exchange of sugar for oil between Cuba and Russia in the 1960s and early 1970s fitted the planning and production methods of each comparatively well. But the development of the Cuban economy along these lines did not exist independently: it was a product of the Russia/America inter-imperialist conflict, consequent upon the American blockade.

Now, apply the argument to Egypt, which despite billions of dollars aid from Russia in the 1960s switched allegiance to the West in the 1970s. But there was no original sin, no 'capitalist-roading' bacillus hidden within the Nasserite social formation that has given rise to the western-orientated regimes of Sadat and Mubarak. The change in direction is due to quite other factors.

False distinctions

In the 1950s, Egypt's size, the comparatively advanced nature of its society, its industrial hopes (especially in textiles) the anticipated advantages to the state from the Aswan dam and the Suez canal all led to the belief that Egypt would be able to lead a dominant block of Middle Eastern nations away from western imperialist domination. The way to do this would be via a state-run economy at home and a direct connection with Russia abroad.

These hopes were crushed, on the one hand by the economic crises of the 1970s (which put paid to Egypt's industrial aspirations and raised the economic power of the western-orientated oil sheikhdoms). And on the other by the military defeats inflicted by Israel.

Throughout this period, however, the basic structure of the state remained intact (though there was a certain change of emphasis over economic priorities). Two conclusions follow. First, if Egypt could

switch after many years of deep involvement with the Russian economy in the 1950s and 1960s, then the same is possible for South Yemen in the 1980s. Secondly, it suggests that the same regime and the same socio-economic structure can accommodate themselves to *either* the 'western' or the 'eastern' pattern of development.

More is at issue than how societies are labelled. For in drawing false distinctions under the guise of 'socialist' analysis, Halliday is substituting a strategy that counterposes 'progressive' to reactionary ruling classes for one where the interests of the working class are opposed to both.

This leads to all sorts of distortions, above all to apologies for Russian foreign policy. He suggests that Russian mediation in Middle East disputes has frequently been altruistic and helpful (pp74-75), that its invasion of Afghanistan was not 'part of some broader expansionist drive' (p93) and that therefore it was not 'behaving as an "imperialist" power' (p85). Russia's overall moderation is proved by the fact that it 'never acceded to Arab requests for nuclear weapons' (p73)!

It is also clear that in adopting an essentially ruling class perspective (albeit from its Kremlin section) Halliday ends up in favour of legitimising important parts of the status quo in the *West* as well. Starting from a defence of 'progressive' regimes and the Russian imperial connection he is led to defend the possibility of a 'peaceful' inter-imperialist carve-up between Russia and America.

To do this, Halliday has to see the new Cold War as a set of unfortunate accidents, rather than a necessary product of the return of the world economy to the kind of crisis conditions that generated the two previous world wars in this century. It is due to Western 'alarmism' about the military balance (p15), where the 'psychological component, based on anxiety and a foreshortened sense of geography, can weigh far more heavily than an informed study might justify.' (p23)

This impressionistic insistence on personal intentions necessarily excludes any mention of how class struggle at home could put an end to western imperialism. On the contrary, Halliday's main concern seems to be to stabilise and strengthen the West's ruling class interests abroad. How else could he put forward as his major policy proposal the following:

'Once a degree of realism and balance has been introduced it is possible to work within a framework for substantive mutual agreements on a wide range of issues. The Russians and Americans have found common ground on other fronts, and there is no reason why, within the limits outlined, such common ground could not be found in the Arc (of crisis in the Middle East) itself.' (pp128-9).

Here we can indeed see the logical consequences of Fred Halliday's position. Failing to support the working class against the class that exploits it in both Russia and the 'progressive' regimes in the Middle East, in the end leads to the legitimisation of the ruling class in the West too.

Marx's daughters

The Daughters of Karl Marx. Family Correspondence 1866-1898. AndreDeutsch £14.95

Jenny, Laura and Eleanor were Marx's three daughters and only surviving children.

As such a great burden of history has lain on their shoulders.

Born and brought up in a household teeming with socialist ideas and a spirit of internationalism they remained dedicated socialists to the end.

And it was there where the controversy began, for the three daughters were to die tragically. Eleanor and Laura committed suicide. Jenny died in agony worn out by motherhood. For bourgeois critics this is seeming evidence that Marxism can't work. After all if Marx can't save his own daughters etc etc...

More recently their cause has been taken up by feminists who see their bitter end as the result of three talents laid to waste by the men in their lives.

'The Daughters of Karl Marx, Family Correspondences' - a collection of over 100 letters from the sisters to their family, is a book weighted in favour of the latter theory.

Yet a look at the letters themselves shows how things are not that simple.

For Jenny, Laura and Eleanor are not just the daughters of Marx, they are also the children/victims of 19th century middle class society. A society particularly stultifying towards women.

Throughout their lives, armed as they were with a particular fierce intelligence, the Marx sisters came into conflict with it.

There was no independent role for intelligent middle class women in Victorian England. They were expected to conform by marrying, having children and spending their leisure time tinkering around on pianos.

Eleanor who was the only sister to play a truly creative and active role in labour movement politics, perhaps understood best what was

lacking when at 27 and at a time of crisis in her life she wrote to Jenny:

'After all work is the chief thing. To me at least it is a necessity.'

Work and independence the two things she craved and the two things denied middle class women. To which we can now add adequate medical care, the right to contraception and childcare.

Jenny the eldest daughters' fate was perhaps the most typical of the age. She suffers the anguish of an intelligence trapped by motherhood into a life of domesticity.

'Those blessed babies, though really charming good tempered little fellows, put such a strain on my nervous system by day and night that I often long, for no matter what release from the ceaseless round of nursing... Laura too suffered. Her three children died in infancy.

Hemmed in as they were by the burdens of domesticity, Jenny and Laura could only confine their talents to the passive (although valuable) sort. Translating, editing and the occasional writing of manuscripts. That they wanted to do more is certain. Laura wrote of her husband at the time of the Paris Commune:

'... Perhaps the sight of the barricades have tempted him to go in for fighting. I should not wonder, and I should not mind if I were with him, for I should have fought too. I intended starting for Paris but knew no one here to whom I could have trusted the children, and then the baby's illness made my leaving out of the question.'

Of the three sisters Eleanor was the most active. Although she lived

with Edward Aveling she was childless and therefore less restricted. After Marx's death she blossomed. She became involved in the attempts and intrigues to set up a socialist party in Britain and in the growth of new unionism. Speaking up and down the country, in particular at the East London radical clubs, she got to know the men and women who were to provide a resurgence in the Labour movement.

Much of this is missing from these letters which as letters written en famille often tend to concentrate on the small and domestic. And although there is much that is political there is also much that is tedious - for example the awful squabbles which took place over Engels towards the end of his life.

For a more rounded description of Eleanor's life, Yvonne Kapps outstanding book on her is much more worthwhile. She points out for instance that Aveling's final betrayal of Eleanor took place at a time when her involvement in the Labour movement was at a low ebb and this together with his behaviour led to her to reach for the poison.

That her life and those of her sisters was to end so tragically is no evidence that either men or marxism were the killers.

Rather it testifies to the fight they put up against the society they lived in.

And cut off as they were towards the end in their own domestic problems and away from the labour movement they could only fail.

Ceri Jones

Bookshorts

The most important new publication must be Chris Harman's *The Lost Revolution, Germany 1918-1923*. This is the first complete account of the period in English and we will be reviewing it extensively in our next issue. The book is included in this quarter's Bookmarx Club list at £3.70. (See page 4 for details.)

Also on the list is the latest in the Writers and Readers 'Beginners Series', *Kapital for Beginners*. Surely their most ambitious project yet. Written by David Smith and brilliantly illustrated by Socialist Worker's Phil Evans.

The Club list contains two titles we have recommended in past issues, *Wild Lilies, Poisonous Weeds*, a collection of Chinese dissident writings and Richard Croucher's *Engineers at War 1939-45*. Added to this is a real bargain, the first two volumes of Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* for only £10. This is the best detailed

account of Marx's ideas from a revolutionary perspective.

Amongst recent publications is Alan Freeman's *The Benn Heresy* (Pluto £3.50). This is a good example of how someone who claims to be a revolutionary should not write about Tony Benn. Whatever the weak-kneed criticism the overall impression of the book is one of sycophantic hero worship. And for those who want to read the real thing Penguin have now released in paperback Benn's *Arguments for Democracy* (£1.75).

The Gramsci industry's latest offering is Anne Showstack-Sasoon, *Approaches to Gramsci* (Writers and Readers £3.95). This has the added bonus of a Gramsci dictionary, a Gramsci photo album and a Gramsci cookbook... to be reviewed more fully soon.

'The sick man of Europe' is as appropriate a description of Turkey today as ever it was of Ottoman Turkey, and Berch Berberoglu *Turkey in Crisis* (Zed £5.50) provides a useful collection of facts and figures to prove it. But for British socialists looking for an honest account of the years before the September 1980 military coup, and of the terrible repression of the working class and socialist movement afterwards, it is a grave disappointment.

Still on Turkey, those who enjoyed Yashar Kemal's *Memed My Hawk* can read the further adventures of peasant-avenger Memed in *They Burn the Thistles* (Writers and Readers £2.95).

Nineteenth century dope

Opium and the People
Virginia Berridge & Griffith Edwards
Allen Lane £20

When Marx made his now famous remark on religion, opium was for most people of his day a remedy for numerous ills, much as aspirin is today. In this well researched yet easy to read book the two authors give a detailed rundown of most aspects of early nineteenth century opium production and usage. Imported by City merchants in huge quantities for open sale in all manner of shops it was so profitable that large scale home production was seriously considered. Yet even paying eight year olds three pence a day to harvest the drug could not make up for the inferior quality as against the best imported.

By the middle of the century concern was being expressed in certain quarters as to the ill effects of so much uncontrolled doping. There were those especially in the temperance movement who equated opium with alcohol. It was a common practice in a lot of working

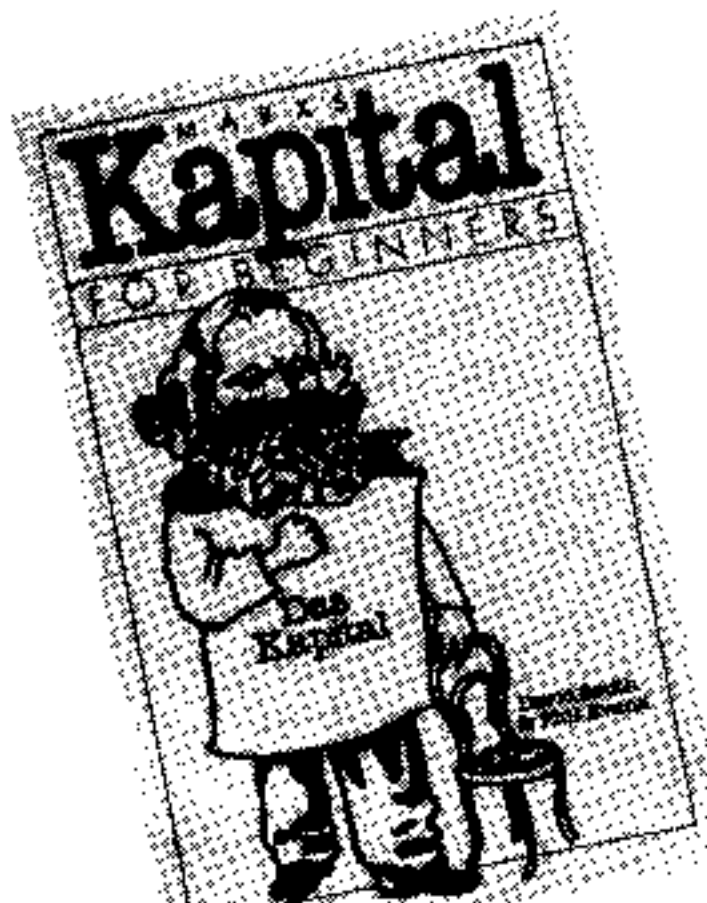
class areas to take a pennyworth of opium after a night's drinking thus avoiding a hangover. Yet the real outcry along with full horror stories in the press, was over the use of opium as a 'quietener' for very young children. Although between 1863 and 1867 235 infants died due to opium there is no way of telling how many children survived the terrible living conditions of working class life with the aid of 'quieteners'.

The main assault against popular usage of opium came from the medical profession which at that time was trying to establish itself a monopoly concerning the nation's health. The obvious dangers of opium use were used as arguments for greater control. And who better to supervise that control than doctors and pharmacists. The use of opium for self medication became a social evil and addiction (especially if you were middle class) a disease.

This book is a fascinating insight into the historical background of a 'social problem' but has the same drawback as modern day opium use—the cost.

John Houston

Socialist Review September 1982



In defence of Marx

Theories of the Capitalist Economy
Ben Fine
Edward Arnold £5.95

Ben Fine has authored or part-authored some useful expositions of Marx's method of economic analysis, defending it against both bourgeois critics and Marxists who would cut out crucial elements. The difficulty is they are written at a level of abstraction which makes them difficult to follow (especially for those trying to understand Marx for the first time) and which does not make it easy to see what their implications are for understanding the world today.

Thus Fine defends Marx's theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. He points out that the tendencies to counteract this—seized on with such enthusiasm by revisers of Marx—can only take effect through cyclical crises which tear society apart. But he never asks whether crisis can always be successful in offsetting the decline in the rate of profit. And he never considers what happens if each component unit of the system becomes so large as to prevent crises resolving themselves.

He is therefore left with room to adopt the method of revising Marx

preached by the more hardline elements in the CP—the contention that a radical version of the Alternative Economic Strategy from a 'new sort' of left wing government could get Britain out of the crisis.

Yet there is no doubt Fine stands on the extreme left of what passes for academic Marxist economics in Britain today. And what he writes is useful for those who want no truck with reformism at all.

This book is concerned with the history of economic thought. It points to certain problems that beset the classic bourgeois economists, Smith and Ricardo. Marx, Fine argues, was able to resolve these problems. By contrast the schools which have dominated academic economics from the 1870s onwards have been completely unable to, and instead have tried to ignore them. This has meant they could provide no real explanation of the most important features of the capitalist economy.

It is a pity the style of the book necessarily restricts its readership to a small academic audience and will make it inaccessible to those who want to change the world as well as philosophise about it.

Chris Harman

Down an old road

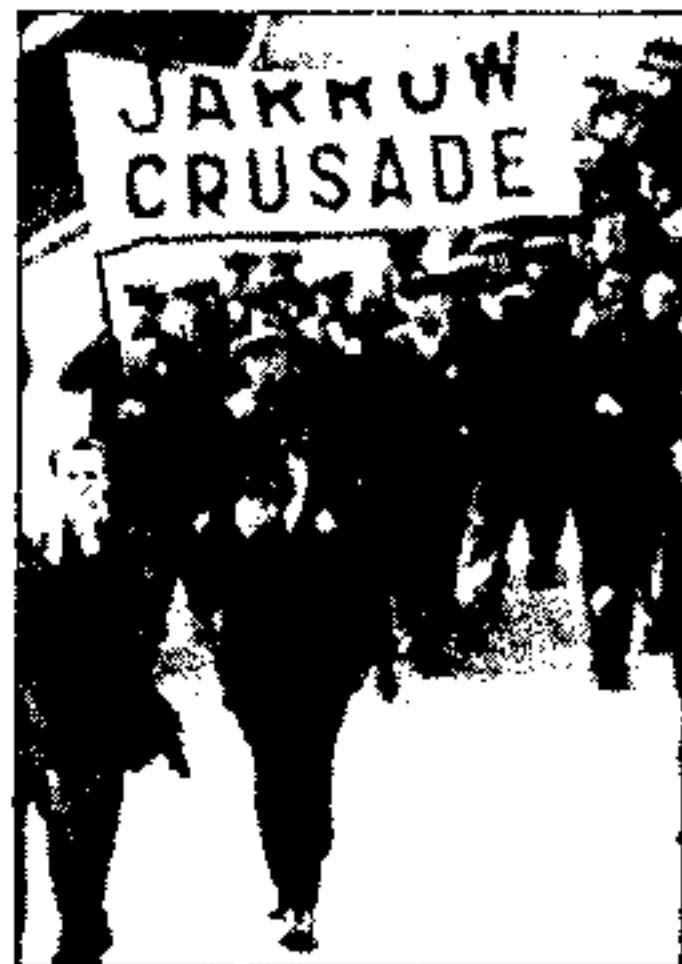
Jarrow March
Tom Pickard
Allison & Busby £2.95

In October 1936 from the Northern town of Jarrow, 207 unemployed men set out to march on Westminster. They marched to petition parliament about the conditions being endured in Jarrow and to plead that something, anything be done to help.

The march became famous but it achieved nothing in the way of relieving the plight of the jobless of Jarrow. As a participant on the march was later to say, 'The march produced no immediate startling upsurge in employment in the town; it took the war to do that'.

There were other marches that took place against unemployment in the '30s. Some much bigger than Jarrow, but it is the Jarrow march that is the one that is most written about. A lot of the reason for this is the role the Labour Party played in organising it. Particularly the part played by the Labour MP for Jarrow Ellen Wilkinson. She was later to become Minister for Education in the '45 Labour Government.

The story of the Jarrow March has been told many times by many people. Tom Pickard, to his credit perhaps, doesn't bother to tell it again. Instead he collects together newspaper cuttings, old photos,



the marchers' reminiscences and supplements them with his own poetry. It could have been interesting and entertaining but the overall effect just looks depressingly cheap and scrappy.

I expect Pickard will eventually write another book about the 1981 Peoples March using the same technique. Like the Jarrow March it was not the only march against unemployment but it was the one that got the attention of the Labour Party. Also like Jarrow before that attention did little to aid the unemployed in the fight for the right to work.

Peter Court

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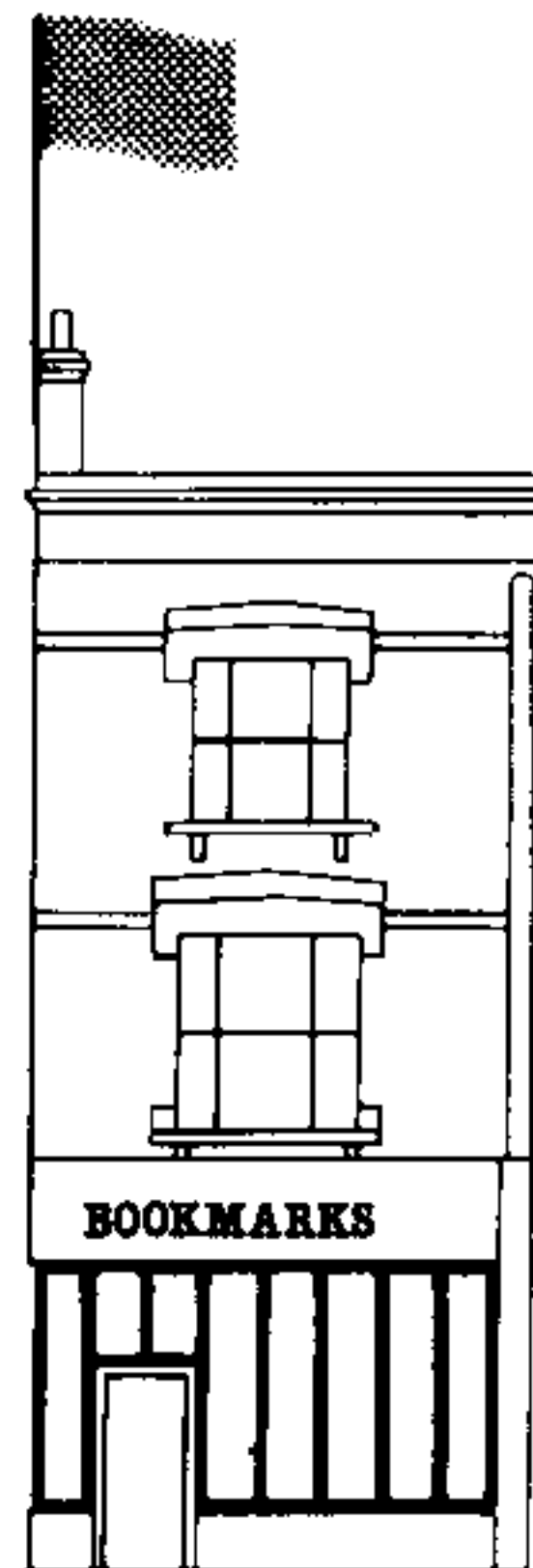
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1919 and 1920 in Italy have gone down in history as the *Biennio Rosso* – the Red Two Years.

Workers in both town and country flooded into unions. The socialist union federation, the CGL, had had only 400,000 members before the war. By the end of 1920 it had over 2 million. Strikes and demonstrations over food prices reached insurrectionary proportions in some areas. There was a two day nation-wide strike in solidarity with Soviet Russia. In the great industrial centre of Turin engineering workers formed a network of factory councils.

In the South peasants, often led by ex-soldiers, occupied the land. And in the army itself there were a number of mutinies.

The general election of November 1919 gave the 200,000-strong Socialist Party nearly one third of the votes. And this was no ordinary Socialist Party. Two months previously it had affiliated to the Communist International. Its leading group, known as maximalists, were strong on ultra-revolutionary rhetoric. As Trotsky was to put it, 'everything written in *Avanti* (the socialist newspaper) and everything uttered by the spokesmen of the Socialist Party was taken by the masses as a summons to the proletarian revolution.'

But, Trotsky added, 'The Socialist Party conducted a verbally revolutionary policy, without ever taking into account any of its consequences.' The maximalist leadership was disdainful of the peasant land seizures: they were 'petty-bourgeois.' It was disdainful of the Turin factory councils: 'this is the realm of aberration!' And in April 1920 it stood by passively while half a million Turin workers struck in defence of their councils and were defeated.

The maximalists also tolerated within the ranks of the Socialist Party open reformists, who were not only strong in the party's parliamentary group but also controlled the leadership of the massive socialist union federation, the CGL.

SEPTEMBER 1920

The ultimate test for the politics of the Socialist Party leadership came in September 1920.

From May onwards the metalworkers' section of the CGL had been pursuing their wage claim. On August 13 negotiations finally broke down.

A special conference of the metalworkers' union decided on a go-slow from August 21. On August 30 one Milan employer locked out his workforce. Immediately Milan metalworkers occupied all their factories in the town. On August 31 the engineering employers made the lock-out nationwide. Again the workers' response was swift.

By September 4 half a million metalworkers had occupied their factories throughout Italy. The wage dispute was now transformed. The occupying workers continued production, often supplied with deliveries from the railway workers' union. In a number of cases they spread the occupation into neighbouring gas works and chemical plants. Armed workers defended the factories.

One story sums it up. The representative of a transport firm phoned the Fiat factory in Turin hoping to speak to the manager:

'Hello. Who's there?'

'This is Fiat Soviet'

'Ah! . . . Pardon . . . I'll ring again . . .'

But as revolutionary fervour mounted in the factories, the leaders of the CGL gathered in Milan to enact the most extraordinary charade.

First the union leaders quizzed representatives of the Turin workers. Would Turin

kindly start the armed insurrection? Knowing how these same union leaders had let them down in April the Turin representatives of course said no.

Then the CGL leaders turned to the national directorate of the Socialist Party. 'You believe this is the moment for revolution. You assume the responsibility. We submit our resignation.' The socialist leaders declined to accept. It was 'too grave a responsibility'!

Instead the question was put to a special congress of the CGL on September 11. There were two motions. One, from the union leaders, called for a struggle for 'union control' of production. (The union leaders now recognised that there was no possibility of ending the struggle on the basis of wages alone.) The other motion, from the Socialist Party leaders, called for the movement to be put under their direction to be led 'towards the maximum solution of the socialist programme'.

Predictably the union leaders' motion won – 591,245 to 409,569. The socialist leaders heaved a sigh of relief and eagerly stressed that they were willing to abide by the 'democratic decision'.

This was the turning point. Of course the bosses' intransigence had to be overcome to get a settlement. That was the work of the crafty prime minister, Giolitti. On September 19 he summoned together bosses and union leaders in Rome and rammed through a settlement giving a wage increase and setting up a joint commission of twelve to draft proposals for legislation on 'union control.'

The metalworkers balloted on the settlement the following week. Worn out and with no alternative presented, they accepted by three to one. By the end of September all the factories had been handed back.

A great revolutionary moment had been missed. But in the weeks that followed the implications of missing it were not clear.

True, revolutionaries like Gramsci and Bordiga now saw that it was an immediate necessity to break with the reformists and form a real Communist Party. But when it came to the Socialist Party conference at Livorno in January 1921 it became clear that the maximalist leaders had learned nothing. They preferred to stay with the reformists, leaving the new Communist Party with less than a quarter of the members of the old Socialist Party.

On the bosses' side there was a sense of profound psychological shock after September. Fiat boss, Agnelli, was so demoralised that he proposed making Fiat into a workers' cooperative. But the more common reaction was for the bosses to turn to the fascists to wreak vengeance for the indignity they had suffered. As 1920 drew to an end the big money poured into the fascist war chests and fascist armed bands multiplied their attacks.

As for the 'union control' scheme for which the union leaders had sacrificed a revolutionary movement, that died an ignominious death in government committees in 1921. With unemployment rising and the workers on the retreat the ruling class now had no need of such pretences.

On October 29 1922 Mussolini became prime minister.

Pete Goodwin

