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# Marxism and the Missiles

The US Left CBI Gripes Womans Own



# Charting the Gulf

**The press has represented the war as a clash between the 'expansionist megalomania of Iraq and the religious fanaticism of Iran. What have been the real causes?**

The Iranian revolution generated instability throughout the Gulf. After the Shah was overthrown on 12 February last year, far from subsiding the upheavals in Iran continued apace and the crisis in the Gulf increased.

Other Gulf states were threatened by these developments. The narrow capitalist base on which they depend was exposed, and they became extremely vulnerable to the upsurge in militancy produced throughout the area. Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Ras al Khaimah, Bahrain and especially Iraq were hit by a wave of militant opposition with, for instance, demonstrations and armed actions from sections of their populations.

In the past these regimes had been protected by a "guarantor", a power which would preserve stability in the Gulf. Until 1971 this power was Britain. After 1971 it was the Shah, who by that time was the dominant force in the area.

The fall of the Shah presented them with a problem. They had to assume responsibility for their own security. This was very difficult as they all have, with the exception of Iraq, tiny armed forces.

Attempts which were made to impose some form of discipline on Iran within OPEC failed. Iran refused to accept the oil producers' present relations with advanced capitalist countries. Pressures grew. Saudi Arabia tried to force Iran into submission through an economic war which intended to run Iran's foreign exchange dry. Iran, for its part, broke OPEC's collective stance.

Antagonisms developed into a shooting match between Iran and Iraq along their border. Each side sponsored raids against the other. Iran supported groups of Shi'ite Muslims in the south of Iraq in raids they made on the offices of the Ba'th Party, Iraq's ruling party. The main opposition to the Iraqi regime, the Iraqi National Rally, was based in Tehran. Meanwhile, Iraq supported Arab groups fighting for autonomy

within Iran. Finally, having obtained the backing from other Arab regimes, Iraq invaded.

Thus, the war is not a clash between "religious fanaticism" and Iraqi "megalomania". Nor is it the product of rivalries between Sunni Muslim Baghdad and Shi'ite Muslim Teheran. It is a war designed to stabilise capitalism in the Gulf.

The only way Iraq can do this is by dealing a severe blow to the Iranian revolution and becoming the supreme power in the Gulf itself.

**But surely, for a long time Iraq was generally thought of as a 'progressive' country?**

Iraq was seen to be "progressive" for entirely spurious reasons. First, because of its militant rhetoric in support of the Palestinians. Second, because it had close ties with the Soviet Union. Third, because it was avowedly anti-imperialist and claimed to believe in "socialism". And fourth, because sections of the economy have been nationalised.

In the case of the Palestinians, Iraq's rhetoric on this issue has always been matched by passivity in practice. Iraq has, in fact, been a thorn in the side of the Palestinian resistance ever since the ruling Ba'th Party came to power in 1968 Iraq has sponsored a Palestinian group called the Arab Liberation Front (ALF). Iraq has used this organization to try to hijack the Palestinian struggle for its own national purposes.

In 1978 the ALF started a violent conflict with the PLO. All PLO offices in Iraq were closed with the exception of the ALF. There were shoot-outs in Beirut and elsewhere. Said Hammami, the PLO representative in London, was murdered by the ALF, as were the PLO representatives in Paris and Kuwait.

On the second point, Iraq's close ties with the Soviet Union are surely no proof that it is "progressive". India and Ethiopia also have close ties with the Soviet Union—and they are hardly "progressive". In any case, the issue is now a dead one. In 1978 Iraq swung away from the Soviet Union and threatened to break its friendship treaty.

Iraqi troops fought Soviet troops in Ethiopia and supported reactionary North Yemen against Soviet backed South Yemen.

Iraq's professed anti-imperialism is a result of the nationalism of the Ba'th Party. It has opposed certain imperialist interests at certain times in order to negotiate better deals with them later on. Witness the very large Western investments—and the large number of Western technicians who have been fleeing from the burning oil installations.

Iraq's interpretation of 'socialism' rejects the class struggle because 'it causes division' in the Arab world. As the Party's founding theoretician, Michel Aflaq, said, 'Marxism greatly exaggerated the importance of class struggle, gave it world-wide significance, and ignored to a large extent the vital historical development of nationalism.'

The Ba'thists first built up their power out of the smashing of the Iraqi left in the coup of 1963, which left tens of thousands of worker militants dead. And since then their record of torturing trade unionists has been second to none.

It is silly to say that Iraq is 'socialist' because it nationalised the production of oil, the distribution of dates and large tracts of land. Such moves have been made by many sorts of regimes throughout the world in the last 25 years. They have increased the power of local bureaucratic and/or business interests. But nowhere have they brought an end to the exploitation of workers and peasants.

**So what is the real nature of the Iraqi regime?**

Iraq is run by a bureaucratic oligarchy. They occupy the chief government body, the Revolutionary command council and are all drawn from the Ba'th Party. In Iraq they are known as the "Tikriti faction" because they all tend to come from the area around Tikriti, and are often related to each other. Saddam Hussein, for example, the present president, took over from his cousin last year. And his brother controls the defence forces.

**Should we then have been supporting Iran as a way to defend the Iranian revolution?**

You cannot defend the Iranian revolution by backing the present Iranian regime. It will be more concerned with maintaining the oppression of national minorities, such as the Kurds and Arabs, with keeping women in subjection, with smashing the Iranian left and with stepping up its exploitation of Iranian workers than with resisting Iraq's attempts to stabilise the area for capitalism. The Iranian generals will be trying to exploit the war in order to restore to themselves the sort of power they had in the Shah's time. The different factions in the Khomeini regime will each see it as a chance to get the fruits of exploitation into its own hands, so that it can do its own deal with the imperialist powers. The mass of the Iranian people will find that they cannot defend their gains from the revolution against the Iraqi attack unless first they dispose of both the generals and the mullahs.

**.Jon Bearman**

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Peter Shore (top left), Tony Benn (bottom left), David Owen (middle right) and Dennis Healey (bottom right)

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# Fruitless Labour

The left was victorious. Tony Benn's army had taken over. The 'Party of McDonald and Attlee, Gaitskell and Wilson' had swung in an entirely new direction. That was the message of most of the press as we sat down to write this editorial, on the morning of the fourth day of the Labour Party conference, after conference had voted to take away from the right wing dominated Parliamentary Party the choice of leader when Callaghan retires.

We were going to cast a note of caution, to point out that always after past spells of Labour government there has been a swing to the left especially among constituency activists, but also that the union leaders who

control the massive block votes at conferences have only been prepared to move so far to the left and no further. We were going to recall the way in which Ernest Bevin of the TGWU was prepared to sponsor the left wing Socialist League after the debacle of 1931—only to curb its activities and force its dissolution a few years later; the way in which the upsurge of Bevanism which swept the party after the 1951 defeat was brought to a halt before the immobility of the GMWU and TGWU block votes; the way in which Jack Jones of the transport workers and Hugh Scanlon of the engineering union seemed to steer the whole labour movement to the left after the Tory victory in 1970—

only to deliver it tight bound to Wilson, Callaghan and Healey in 1974.

But events overtook us. The union leaders were already putting their feet down as we wrote. In the corridors and bars around the Winter Gardens they were taking aside the members of their delegations, bullying some, more or less bribing others (the offer of a place on an international delegation or of backing for a full timer's job can always work wonders, ensuring that no new mechanism for electing the leader could get a majority, preventing any shift of real power within the party to its left.

The union leaderships are not, of course, a monolithic group. Since Jack Jones retired no single figure has been able to dominate the rest. Moss Evans would like to, but he has not yet even got sufficient grip on his own union to make other national officials bend to his will (witness the way in which Kitson and Larry Smith removed Weighell of the NUR from chairmanship of the TUC transport committee without Evans' say-so). The right wing union leaders are hopelessly divided among themselves, with the EETU poaching members from and scabbing on the only skilled section of the GMWU. Nevertheless, through all these wranglings, the full time trade union bureaucrats share something like a common interest when it comes to the politics of the Labour Party.

They do not feel too happy about going to their members and pushing for a simple endorsement of the team and the policies that produced the last Labour government. People's memories of the Healey cuts of 1976 and the abortive five per cent wage norm of 1978 are too fresh. Promising more of the same is not going to persuade shop floor trade unionists to wait three or four years for a general election as an alternative to Thatcher. New slogans and new leaders are necessary. Hence the casting of bloc votes against the Common Market and even for unilateralism (although not against Nato). Hence the willingness of certain unions to vote with the left to take the choice of the leader away from the parliamentary party on the basis of the call 'Stop Healey'.

But *not* wanting the unreconstructed right around Healey was a different matter from *wanting* the left wing around Benn. Hence the absurd impasse, the spectacle of unions blocking all the mechanisms which would have allowed the choice of leader; there was fear of the old method that left power with the parliamentary right; but there was also fear if any new method that might increase the power of the constituency left.

We have no more idea than anyone else exactly what is going to happen now in the months leading up to the special conference in January. It is going to be a period of infighting and horsetrading, with the left trying to get Callaghan to stay on for the time being, the right trying to push Healey through, the unions trying to ensure that they emerge with a veto over the name of Callaghan's successor.

But two things can be said.

The first is that Healey is not the best

nominee from the point of view of those elements who want a Labour Party that can take responsibility for the problems of British capitalism should the Tories fail. Given his past record, it would be difficult for him to sell to workers more years of 'sacrifice', of social service cuts and wage controls. The way he was booed at the conference shows he is not the figure to unite the party and 'the movement' behind yet another spell of social contract.

The Shirley Williamses and the David Owens are so carried away with the sense of their own self-importance that they forget the most elementary lesson from the history of the Labour Party. All of its leaders except for Gaitskell and Callaghan (and he was only a partial exception, since he was thought of with gratitude by the union leaders as the person who led the fight inside the cabinet against Barbara Castle's anti-union measures in 1969) have come from the 'left', rather than the right, of the party. Only then have they been able to enthuse activists committed to fighting the worst aspects of capitalism into helping to patch the system up. To take the most obvious example, the party was bitterly divided between left and right during the tenure of the right's nominee Gaitskell. But within months of his death in 1963 the left's nominee Wilson had the enthusiastic support of the whole party for a programme of revamping capitalism.

Because the 'lefts' as much as the rights are committed to 'the inevitability of gradualism' (and even Tony Benn is a keen member of the Fabian society that first coined that slogan), once in office, they bow to the dictates of keeping the system going—to the social service cuts, the wage controls, the immigration controls, Nato, and so on.

There are hints that Callaghan himself recognises such realities. In the middle of the conference, the *Financial Times* was reporting rumours that he wanted Shore, not Healey to succeed him. Were they both not such nonentities Shore or John Silkin would be the ideal leaders for those who want the Labour Party to behave in the future as it has in the past.

Their ultra-nationalistic rhetoric about

the Common Market, national sovereignty and import controls would enthuse almost all the left, would not be taken amiss by right wing figures like Bill Sirs and Frank Chapple, and would even win support among some sections of the Confederation of British Industry. Yet their leftism has never been more than skin deep (remember Shore's enthusiasm for the US sanctions against Russia only six months ago) and in power they could be relied upon to do what the system required. A victory by either of them could have both left and right joining in standing ovations within a year's time. There would not be the bitter division that would follow a Healey victory. And there would not be the 'danger' associated with a Benn victory of it becoming a focus for social forces that Benn could not control.

The second thing to be said is that all of this has very little to do with socialism or even with the elementary task of resisting the Tory attacks. Big business and the media get upset if the Labour Party shifts to the left, however little, because its leadership is one of their lines of defence against any working class insurgency. But they have many other lines of defence as well. More important than the votes in Blackpool are the plethora of little battles over redundancies and wage rates and manning levels and productivity and hospital closures.

It is these which will determine whether the Tory government lasts until 1984 or whether, like the Heath government, it is forced out before that. Nothing would be worse than if thousands of working class activists were drawn away from the all-important task of building resistance in these battles towards time consuming wrangles in local Labour Parties that at best are going to lead to a Shore or a Silkin taking over the Party leadership.

In the months ahead it will be the task of revolutionaries to try to combat such inward lookingness. That means going out of our way to try to involve Labour Party members and supporters in united action where it really matters—against the cuts, against unemployment in anti-Tory demonstrations against racism, against the missiles, and above all in the industrial struggle.

## Will Lambeth give a lead?

One of the first big tests for the Labour Left after the party conference will come on November 1 at the 'Local Government in Crisis' national delegate conference called by Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Council, and by the Lambeth Council joint trade unions, (AUEW, GMWU, NALGO, TGWU, EETPU AND UCATT). Its aim is to 'call throughout the Labour and trade union movement for a campaign of action against the Government's policy of cutting local authority spending, to include extended industrial action beginning in January 1981.'

It is a welcome development which

demands support. However there are many problems involved in pulling the campaign together.

Not the least among them will be the sincerity and determination of any Labour council to lead from the front. One only has to consider the case of Lambeth Council itself to have doubts about this.

Lambeth was one of the first councils, Labour or Tory to announce cuts of three million pounds. They were only prevented from implementing them by the absolute refusal of NALGO members to co-operate and subsequent pressure from constituency Labour Parties. Rates were increased in

April by 49 per cent and rents by £1. The local government committee of Lambeth Labour Party has recommended that the council co-operate with the law regarding the sale of council houses and have already announced their willingness to sell off two large plots of housing land.

Add to this Ted Knight's response only last month to Hestletine's latest penalty package—that the choice was cuts or rate rises—and some scepticism is not unfounded.

The conference could lead to coordinated, determined resistance by some Labour Councils to implementing either cuts or rent and rate rises.

Scores of councils defying the government could provide a vital focus for all the campaigns against the cuts. A small council like Clay Cross could have considerable impact in the fight against the last Tory government. Think what the effect would be if instead of Clay Cross defiance came from Lambeth and Sheffield, Camden and Tower Hamlets.

The draft statement for the conference hints at such action. It does call for Labour councils not to go along with the Tory cuts. But it also contains what suspicious minds might think is a let out for these councils. It calls for 'extended industrial action from January 1981... against the government's policy of cutting local authority spending.'

Such calls can have an excellent ring when issued from public platforms or written in fine sounding declarations. But it is doubtful if they actually fit with the mood of most local authority workers at the moment. Industrial action is needed to fight the cuts. But you do not get it unless you work for it, and that means giving a lead. If local councils were refusing to implement either cuts or rent and rate increases, if they were being dragged before courts as Clay Cross was, then no doubt there would be a magnificent response from their workers. But they can hardly expect prolonged industrial action before they themselves have put themselves in the firing line.

It would be scandalous if local Labour councils used the refusal of trade unionists to endorse an unrealistic call for industrial action as an excuse to proceed with cuts and rent and rate rises next April.

Also on November 1 (another example of one hand of the Labour Left not knowing what the other is doing?) is the 'Labour Party Rank and File Trade Unionist's Conference' called by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. The conference is open to both delegates and individuals (and is not limited to Labour Party members) and has a distinctly leftish set of platform speakers. But whether the Labour Co-ordinating Committee has the organisational experience to pull off anything really big here must be doubted. And even more doubtful is whether its different elements can overcome their ties with different levels of the trade union bureaucracy for anything significant to come out of it. Still it is a development that that should be watched.

## Inside the system

Your average Tory whines on endlessly about hordes of civil servants. It is certainly true that there are a lot of them: 707,800 on January 1 1980. But they don't fit the Tory myth of bureaucratic inquisitors preventing the honest—well, almost honest—businessman making a fast buck.

241,750, or 34.2 per cent, are directly engaged in Defence. This contrast with the obviously bloated bureaucracy of the Health and Safety Executive, with 4,150—a staggering 0.6 per cent. The largest department doing anything useful is the DHSS, which employs 95,400 or 13.5 per cent, of the total. In terms of bodies, the Tories think that Defence is 2.5 times more important than Social Security and 58 times more important than safety at work.

But of course, the Tories are determined to make cuts in the civil service. In the year of 1979, they managed to reduce the total by 25,400. Even the Defence allocation fell by 6,800. This was the largest single cut in terms of people, but as a percentage it was a grand total of 2.7 per cent. On the other hand, Customs and Excise fell by 1500, or roughly by 5.5 per cent.

Now, you might think that this was quite a good thing as it might improve your chances of getting another couple of bottles of booze back from Benidorm. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work that way.

One of the major cuts in the Customs and Excise was in the number of VAT inspectors. What this means is that while you and I will go on paying 15 per cent over the counter, the number of people checking up that every last little business actually pays the money into the government is cut to the bone. Fraud increases and some of the more squalid of the Tory supporters get a licence from Maggie to make a few very fast and very illegal bucks.

Another little aid to industry is the cut in the Inland Revenue—the people who run income tax. Their numbers fell by 6,000, or about 7.6 per cent. For most of us, income tax is something we can do nothing about—it is just comes off the pay slip. But if you are rich and can afford an accountant and a sharp lawyer, there all sorts of little dodges in the grey areas of the law. Maggie's cuts mean that there will be fewer people hunting her friends for their tax bills.

When we come to the great British growth industry of unemployment, we find that here, too, there have been

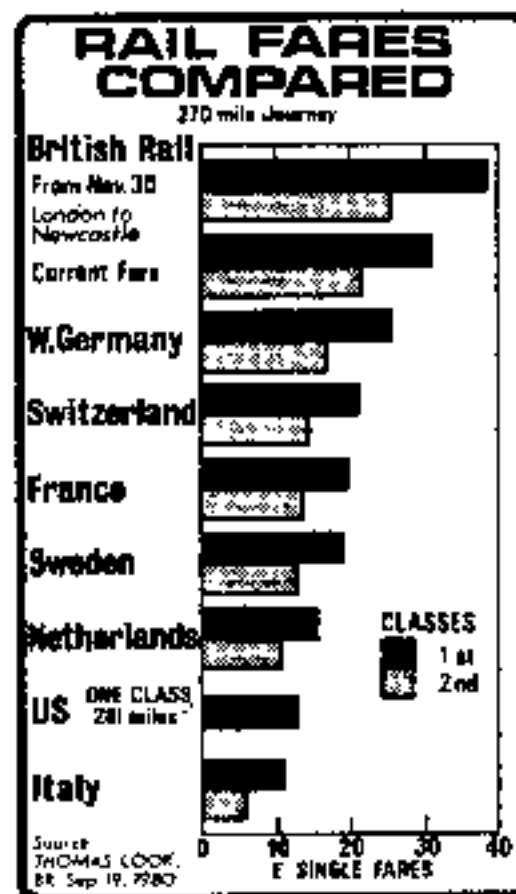
cuts. In the Department of Employment by 2,300 (4.5 per cent) and in the DHSS by 2,300 (2.4 per cent). That means that fewer of the poor will get the benefits they need when they need them.

Even in the cuts, the Tory policy is quite consistent: keep up the means of destruction make life as little easier for the rich and very great deal worse for the poor.

The news that British Rail is to raise its fares by 19 per cent from 30 November has a couple of interesting side-lights. One is that, after government pressures, season tickets for commuters are going to rise by 17 per cent. The reason why these expensive-to-run services should have such privileges is simple. To quote the *Financial Times*: 'Ministers were concerned particularly about commuters in parliamentary constituencies where Tory MPs hold marginal seats. The number of daily commuters from some Kent constituencies exceeds local parliamentary majorities ...'

The other concerns our old friend the transport subsidy, and Tory determination that 'we must pay our way'. Once again, the Tory myths about the way in which we are pampered compared with other countries are based on lies. Wages on British Rail are lower than in any other major West European system. Workers have a 25 per cent longer working week than elsewhere. Productivity in Britain is well above the average. British Rail has lower investment per train kilometre than any other system. It also covered more of its costs out of revenue than any system apart from Sweden. It manages to earn about 70 per cent of its expenditures from fares etc., compared to 61.2 per cent in West Germany and 55.3 per cent in France.

But, if state subsidies in Britain are tiny—even as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product only about half of those in West Germany, for example—then there is only one place that this can come from. Surprise surprise, rail fares in Britain are by far the highest in Europe.





## The 'sensible soldiers' step in

The military takeover of the 12th September in Turkey has been heartily applauded by the press, the foreign office, NATO, the EEC and all the other pillars of democracy and human rights. Such staunch defenders of freedom in Afghanistan as *The Times* have been assuring us that the Turkish army has intervened 'to restore rather than subvert democracy', that it does not seek 'power for its own sake'. And in case we still have a lingering suspicion about generals, our doubts are laid to rest when we learn that General Evren is 'paternal rather than threatening', he is 'not thought to be a man with dictatorial ambitions'.

Now, if you are not the Union Bank of Switzerland, the Bank of America or Lloyds you may not fully appreciate how jolly fortunate all this is. However, the *Financial Times* does. They know that Turkey owes 16 billion dollars to Western banks and governments. 'Turkey is a major potential market', they write, 'but it is also of considerable strategic importance.' The 22 bases on Turkish territory provide the Americans with up to one-quarter of their direct information on Russian missile launches.

With so much at stake, what a stroke of luck that some solid, reliable people have stepped in to salvage Turkey from the unpredictable chaos into which it was sliding. What's more, these people are good democrats, not your bloodthirsty, Latin American-style butchers but 'sensible soldiers'.

So sensible in fact that a few hours after the coup, Gen. Evren, leader of the new 5-man junta, personally delivered a message pledging Turkey's continued loyalty to NATO. He also gave assurances that allied military exercises planned to take place in Turkey shortly would go ahead as arranged.

The following day the junta elevated to the position of supremo for economic affairs the man who had designed the previous government's economic 'reforms', an American-educated monetarist.

When you add to all this the fact that over the last two years more than 5000 people were killed in political violence and parliamentary politics was becoming a bit of a sham, how can we escape the conclusion that the coup was on the whole a good thing for all concerned.

### Background to the Coup

Turkey is a very important country. I don't just mean strategically or as a potential market. While it has no oil, it occupies a special place in the Middle-East. The Turkish working class is the only one in the region organised in independent trade unions. Two confederations, DISK with nearly one million members and TURK-IS with nearly 1.5 million, represent over 50% of industrial workers in Turkey. Sections of white-collar workers, notably the teachers, are organised in associations, often more militant than the unions.

At another level, the left in Turkey, in spite of all its problems, is a force which has found a growing response among workers in the sprawling shantytowns and many well-organised workplaces. Over the past few years struggles such as the eight-month long strike of 80,000 metalworkers, the occupation of an agricultural processing plant by its 11,000 workers, the one-day general strike in response to the murder of a trade union leader, have sent shivers down the spine of a ruling class already battered by economic difficulties.

The combination of a crippling economic crisis deepening throughout the 70s and an

organised, militant working class was proving to be too much for Turkey's rulers. This was most dramatically illustrated by the state of the economy and the helplessness of the government faced with an increasingly violent politicization at all levels of society.

The economy, to put it simply, fell apart. Foreign trade deficits of up to 4 bn dollars, added to debt repayment obligations of 2.5 bn, drained the treasury of foreign currency, putting an end to much-needed imports of industrial inputs. Whole chunks of industry went down the drain, unemployment soared, inflation reached 100%. Chronic shortages led to blackmarkets in goods ranging from toilet-rolls to light-bulbs. Apart from touring the West in search of loans, successive governments proved thoroughly unable to do anything about this situation.

Such economic problems which sound familiar and rather abstract on paper made daily life increasingly intolerable for an ever larger number of people. The result was a level of politicisation among ordinary people beyond the wildest dreams of any British revolutionary. As tens of thousands turned to one or the other of the numerous organisations on the left, however, equally large numbers were driven by poverty and desperation into the arms of a growing fascist movement.

The fascists, led by the National Action Party under ex-colonel Turkes, grew into a serious national force when they were part of a coalition government between 1974 and 1978. This enabled them to penetrate large sections of the state machine, educational institutions, the police and army. A classic fascist party, the NAP combined a respectable parliamentary facade with the arming and training of well-organised shock troops—the Grey Wolves. Over the 70s

their major aim was to build a mass base and they achieved considerable success both in electoral terms and in terms of the reign of terror imposed on many small provincial towns.

Based in the organised working class, the shantytown communities and the student movement, the two major trends in the left were the Communist Party, illegal, blindly loyal to Moscow, and DEV-YOL, younger, more eclectic in theory and more militant, rather similar to the Fedayeen in Iran. DEV-YOL in particular fought the fascists for control of every street in every town.

As fascist violence escalated over the past year or so, with the murder of the leader of the metalworkers union and many professors, journalists and students, as 'liberated zones' controlled by the left and areas controlled by fascists (both being no-go areas for the police) proliferated, as long and bitter strikes continued despite many being 'postponed' by martial law authorities, government and the whole parliamentary process turned into a game of charades.

For several months the major parties were unable to agree on a new president. After more than 100 rounds of voting in parliament there was still no president last month. In August, the foreign minister had to resign after a vote of no confidence. The date of the next general election had also become the subject of dispute.

In short, by 1980, businessmen could no longer manage, security forces could no longer secure, the ruling class could no longer

rule. Parliamentary democracy became redundant to the needs of capital.

#### The Coup

Whether Turkish generals are less blood-thirsty than Chilean ones or not is neither here nor there. They have come to do a job and they will try to do it no matter how kind at heart they might be. Their job is to destroy working class opposition, trade unions and the left. They must impose by force the imperatives of a capitalism in deep crisis. They will, by the way, also attack leading fascists, as *all* unrest must be stamped out for capital to function smoothly again.

They are already doing their job. They have outlawed all political and trade union activity. DISK is banned and all officials and leading militants are under arrest. Midnight swoops on shantytown districts have already rounded up thousands of people. Strikes have been banned. Torture of prisoners, rife even before the coup, will no doubt be taken to new heights.

Sections of the left have shown some resistance by killing the odd policeman or soldier. In the face of a half-a-million-strong army, however, this kind of resistance can be no more than token. Real opposition will arise in the factories, workplaces and shantytowns. And arise it will, for the task facing the military is well beyond their capabilities.

#### Ali Saffet

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end counter-productive. Not only was there an ever-present danger of them turning into revolts against the system, but they came to make lower levels of the bureaucracy afraid to take any initiatives for fear of being denounced when there was a change of line.

The new strategy is one of slow, steady, growth aiming particularly at developing capital-intensive industry and improving China's export potential. This involves massive inputs of Western capital and technology, and has led in the past year to China joining the IMF, opening up a large industrial estate in Shumchun, Guangdong province, directly to Western firms (who they attracted by fixing lower wage rates than Hong Kong!), and imports from the US alone reaching an estimated total of \$1800-2000m this year, double the 1978 figure.

Central to this new strategy is the need for stability, to reassure both foreign investors and the Chinese bureaucracy that the new leaders and policies are here to stay. This has to mean disposing of all actual or potential opposition, for Deng Xiaoping's track record is not good. Twice before he has been among the top leadership, pushing similar policies, and been overthrown in internal power struggles. 'Third time lucky' is not a well-known saying in China.

Hence the Gang of Four trial, the closing down of Democracy Wall and the punitive sentences handed out recently to two well-known dissident writers, Wei Jingsheng and Fu Yuehua; and also the forthcoming disgrace of Deng's main rival, Hua Guofeng.

Hua was elected Mao's successor in September 1976 as a compromise candidate acceptable to all factions in the leadership, including the Gang of Four. Now practically all those factions have been removed from power. But there remains a dispute within the ruling class about the speed and extent of de-Maoisation. Though Hua Guofeng has little personal power-base, he could still act as a figurehead for those opposed to Deng Xiaoping. He will probably be removed from power at the next Party congress, though his close ties with the military leaders, who are less than happy about recent cuts in their budget, still make this problematic. But in the main, the power struggle seems more or less decided.

In the long run, the most serious dangers to the new strategy are inherent in the strategy itself. The Chinese leaders have already talked in interviews about the danger of 'bourgeois morals' (corruption) affecting the bureaucracy as a result of increased contact with the West. More seriously, in entering the world market as a backward component of it in general conditions of crisis, the Chinese economy will become increasingly subject to the world economy as a whole, less and less under the control of the Chinese ruling class. The fundamental problems of China cannot be solved by the new strategy; it is most likely that it will make them more acute.

**Charlie Hore**

## CHINA

# Getting rid of Mao's gang

The trial of the 'gang of four' is due to start in Peking as we go to press. For the new Chinese leaders it is essentially a public relations exercise. Its main aim is to prove that the days of Maoism are over and that Deng Xiaoping's men are now firmly in charge. The severity of the sentences will be an indication of how secure they themselves are in that belief. It is part of a steady process of de-Maoisation which has been going on for the past three years as former Maoists have been replaced in most top Party and state posts by supporters of Deng Xiaoping. The recent National People's Congress saw Mao's successor Hua Guofeng lose his position as head of state, and many previously disgraced bureaucrats returning to important state positions.

Where do the Gang of Four fit into all this and why is their trial so important? They are: Jiang Qing, Mao's fourth wife; Yao Wenyuan, an ideological hitman for both Mao and his wife; Zhang Chunqiao, former Party boss in Shanghai; and Wang Hongwen, a token 'model worker' who was taken into the CCP leadership. They rose to power during the Cultural Revolution as the only people Mao could depend on to launch his attack on the then party leadership, and consolidated their power during the seventies at a time when many in the bureaucracy were trying to move away from orthodox

Maoism, particularly in the economic field. They were purged from all positions of power in October 1976, a mere month after the death of Mao. Since then they have been held in prison while the current leadership work out what to do with them.

The basic problem is that, while it is essential to put them on trial to show that they are finished politically, it is impossible to attack them without attacking Mao himself. Mao first brought them into the Party leadership, and they obviously depended on his support for remaining there. Further, many of the policies they are attacked for stemmed initially from Mao himself. The current leadership wish to attack the whole period from the Great Leap Forward (1958) onwards as economically disastrous for China. But they cannot yet attack Mao publicly. To do so would strike at the foundations of the legitimacy of the Chinese state, and further increase the cynicism felt in China about all factions of the leadership.

The importance of the case is at bottom economic. The dominant faction in the ruling class want to abandon Mao's previous economic policies. They can see that the idea of building a siege economy through self-reliance has made China fall further behind the rest of the world in its level of technology, and that the constant campaigns waged to increase production were in the

# Pinochet's plebiscite

The most appropriate remark I have heard about last month's plebiscite from a very well-informed Chilean living in Santiago is "irrelevant".

However, the fact that it was called at all and the fact that a great many Chileans came into the open to oppose the plebiscite, is important. The plebiscite, held seven years to the day after General Augusto Pinochet took power on 11 September 1973, marks the beginning of a new phase in Chilean national politics.

The plebiscite was called only one month before it was due to take place. Some observers speculate that Pinochet, concerned by dangerous and scarcely disguisable squabbles among current and former members of his secret police, called the plebiscite to draw public attention away from the in-fighting of this sinister mafia and to simultaneously strengthen his hand and that of his hard-line colleagues in the armed forces.

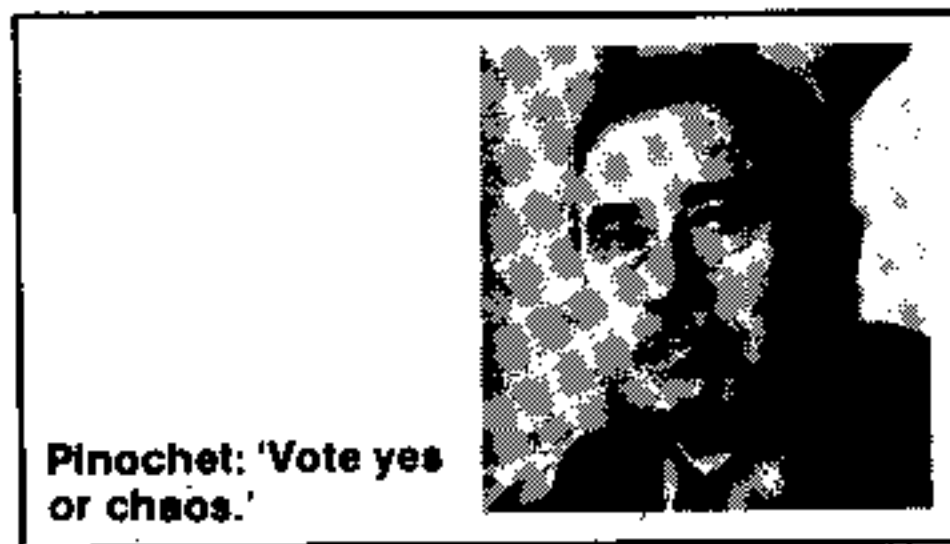
The reaction of the left wing parties in clandestinity was confused and confusing. But in the end, they fell in behind the clear and publicly expressed line of Christian Democrat leader Eduardo Frei. Frei called for a 'No' vote while condemning the plebiscite from the start as illegal and fraudulent. Moreover, Frei also called on Pinochet to debate the draft constitution with him and to agree to the formation of an interim civilian-military government which would prepare the ground for democratic elections in three years. Naturally, the invitation was ignored.

The weeks preceding the plebiscite were marked by frequent demonstrations of varying sizes in Santiago, the capital, and other major cities. There was one demonstration of around 100,000 people in Santiago surrounding a large public meeting called by the Christian Democrats. There were fights in the streets of the capital between left-wing and right-wing students. Leaflets were distributed, flyposters put up, walls painted with slogans. Radio station controlled by the Church and publications owned by the Church and the Christian Democracy carried lengthy and outspoken comment about the plebiscite and its significance. Many arrests were made but few people were detained for longer than it took the police to register a name and identity card number and impress upon their victims the fact that they were living under a military dictatorship and not in a democracy.

Hundreds and thousands of dollars were spent by the Junta in their 'election' propaganda. Many people were honestly confused about what they would be voting for. The only alternative offered by Pinochet to the 'Yes' vote was 'chaos'—and yet a 'Yes' vote was a vote to boost Pinochet and to give him unprecedented personal powers to 'eliminate terrorists' and to see that the economy was run in the interests of a handful of Chi-

le's capitalist class and some multinational corporations.

The official results of the plebiscite gave the expected resounding victory to Pinochet—almost 70 per cent of the vote. Unlike some less-subtle dictators who claim 95 per cent of 'popular' votes in similar exercises, Pinochet conceded an amazing 30 per cent (one and three quarters of a million votes) to the opposition. The voting patterns show there to be marginally more opposition in major industrial centres and cities, and less in the countryside among the peasantry.



Pinochet: 'Vote yes or chaos.'

The thing that has emerged from the plebiscite of vital importance is the strengthened public profile of the Christian Democrat Party led by Eduardo Frei, president of Chile before Allende.

The Christian Democracy won 55.7% of the votes in the 1964 presidential elections and only 27.8% in the 1970 elections that brought the Unidad Popular to office under Salvador Allende. The Christian Democrat leadership, by and large, is vicious and double-dealing. The party bore a large part of the responsibility for the 1973 coup. And yet there is little doubt that it has a genuine base in the middle and working classes—a base which almost certainly has grown because of the socially invaluable work done by the Church during these seven hard years of repression.

The Church, through its Vicarate of Solidarity has provided kitchens and medical care for the families of political prisoners and disappeared people, legal aid of a very high standard for prisoners and the persecuted and has campaigned vigorously for the restoration of human rights in Chile. The Church continues to provide premises for community organisations, trade unions and mothers unions to meet. It is also providing facilities for intellectuals of the broad left to work and publish through its Institute of Humanitarian Studies.

The Christian Democracy owns two radio stations and publishes one widely distributed weekly current affairs magazine, *Hoy*, which voices moderate criticism of the government. Church publications, including the fortnightly *Solidaridad* are also highly critical of the government.

But the left has no voice of its own, controls no publications, has access to no radio or television. Tragically, the left appears disunited and still weak from the ferocity of the

repression. Although reliable information is difficult to obtain, it looks as though only the Communist Party remains more or less active with members throughout the country operating in different social classes and following a fairly consistent party line, a line of compromise and waiting. The other mass party of the left in Chile, the Socialist Party, is fragmented both inside Chile and in exile. The far left Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) also remains active but has adopted a policy reminiscent of that of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, of urban guerilla tactics, with no popular base at all.

Despite the lack of cohesion in the policies of the left, and their current state of disarray, Chilean workers, although deprived of most of their traditional weapons of struggle, are not cowed by any means. There have been some important strikes over the past 12 months which demonstrate a spirit of anger and combativity which does not die so easily in a highly politicised proletariat despite enormous defeat. Moreover, the destruction of traditional national trade union bureaucracies seems ironically likely to have the effect of strengthening the trade union in the work place... which is precisely where the Spanish and Brazilian working classes were able to begin to rebuild under repressive governments. Recent key union elections in important sectors of the copper and coal mining industry have brought defeat for the government candidates who are replaced by 'new' outspoken men, critical of the junta, some of whom are socialists.

Whatever the structures of the left wing parties in clandestinity and however workers are able to organize and regroup at grass roots level, it is clear that there is no coherent programme for struggle on the left. While the exiles still debate the experience of the Unidad Popular, within Chile workers are struggling for survival and to create a little space in which to organize—without the assistance or guidance of their traditional parties. The rules of the game, dictated now by the bosses and the military, are being slowly adapted and challenged by workers, developing new cadres and a new generation of militants, familiar with this new game.

The increasing strength of the Christian Democracy—especially now after the plebiscite—imposes an imperative task on the parties of the left. It is essential now that a socialist programme for struggle is elaborated which relates to the present situation in the country and which takes into consideration not only the military and big business, but also the powerful Christian Democracy.

The task for the revolutionary left in Chile today—for those who can see beyond the end of Pinochet—is to start to build a real base in the unions, in neighbourhood organizations and women's groups, in the schools and universities and with the unemployed so that a viable alternative to Christian Democracy will be felt and fought for by the working class.

Jill Poole





Even Milton Friedman is saying the Tories have got it wrong...

*This Conference supports the Government's strategy in making the defeat of inflation its top priority but draws attention to the damage being done to the country's industrial and commercial base and profitability and employment by the high value of sterling and high interest rates. (Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Council)*

*Conference calls upon the Government, whilst complying with international agreements, to act imaginatively, instantly and aggressively to inhibit disruptive imports of manufactured products. (Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Council)*

*This Conference deplores the extent of the fall in the level of capital investment by the public sector... (National Council of Building Materials Producers, Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, National Federation of Building Trades Employers)*

*This Conference draws the attention of HMG to the serious damage that is being done, to British industry because of energy prices which are, as an act of policy, higher than they would be if determined by the market alone. (Alcoa Manufacturing (GB) Ltd)*

*This Conference calls on the CBI to reinforce the efforts being made to establish a constructive dialogue with the trade union leadership, with the objective of achieving a better understanding of the vital importance of making industry more competitive and innovative. (The Delta Metal Co Ltd)*

*Young people left for long periods without employment are a potential danger to a stable society and therefore this Conference believes that industry has a responsibility to absorb many more than it has planned for. (Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire Employers Group)*

## The bosses begin to gripe

The Confederation of British Industry meets in Brighton on November 9th for its fourth annual conference in a completely schizophrenic state of mind.

In little more than a year of Thatcher government the 'balance of power'—as the CBI is fond of calling it—has shifted dramatically towards the employers. The trade union leadership is in disarray, the unofficial resistance has been intimidated by victimisation, sackings, closures and the reality of more than 2,000,000 on the dole. Pay settlements have begun to come down. The capitalist arguments about profits and viability have by and large been won.

But to look at the agenda for the employers' jamboree is to realise how uncomfortable large numbers of companies feel with the economic—and even social—consequences of Thatcher's approach.

More than 100 resolutions were submitted for the CBI conference, the majority of them critical of the government's performance, fearful of overseas competition, resentful of the way prices have been pushed up and, above all, hostile to the bleeding of manufacturing industry.

How is it that a government acclaimed with such fervour 12 months ago is now getting such a critical message from the employers. And how is it that a class which ought to be crowing about the way the unions have been 'tamed' (even if they haven't been!) is in fact showing clear signs of lack of nerve, in contrast with the mood of noisy aggression voiced this time last year? Despite the very

real political gains which the employers have won in the first year of Tory government, they have had problems on two fronts. The weakness of the British economy is one major factor, exacerbated by government policies which have tended to squeeze their own capitalists even more than the world recession is squeezing foreign capitalists.

Secondly, the employers' offensive on the shop floor has only been partly successful. And it has met with two major setbacks from within its own ranks: the failure to achieve 'employer unity' in action and the failure to set up a strike insurance fund.

Taken together these factors point to the real problem that is worrying the employers: not the so-called 'de-industrialisation of Britain'—a myth anyway—but rather what happens when the Tories begin to ease the screws, say in a year's time, or in 1982. The employers do not believe that they will have the capacity to compete internationally, nor to invest, nor to extract the huge amount of extra productivity needed, nor to avoid renewed wage demands when the upturn comes to compensate for real wage cuts now.

The longer the Tories persist with policies designed to squeeze us and weaken workers' organisation—high interest rates, the strong pound, public sector cuts, the assault on social security benefits etc—the more difficult it becomes for firms in the long run.

If you take the analogy of a spaceship—it's not too bad cruising around in a vacuum, but when you try to re-enter the earth's atmosphere, things can over-heat very quickly. The

longer the re-entry takes, the more you heat up.

The most serious breach between the Government and the majority of major employers has arisen over economic policy. Initially—that is up to the end of the steel strike—the Thatcher formula of squeezing the money supply, with high interest rates and a strong currency, had a large degree of support.

But from April onwards the slump in manufacturing came very, very fast. And instead of a sharp and clean cut policy of maybe six to nine months, firms have suddenly realised that they face a severe recession lasting anything up to two years, while other competitors are—relatively—cushioned.

The decline in UK manufacturing output has been most severe just as the decline in the USA—the other western country most hit by recession—has levelled off. Manufacturing production has fallen by four per cent since the beginning of 1980 and shows no signs of picking up again. Output is now lower than it was at the worst stage of the last recession in 1975.

Almost as if to mock the government's economic strategy, the figures for the growth in money supply in August and September were wildly out, showing that the only factor on which the Tories' policy relies on is not under their control. This is about the most damaging psychological blow that those companies backing the monetarist strategy have yet had to face.

Significantly, it was also the occasion for a much more overt and concerted attack on the government's record from several of the *Financial Times'* economic columnists and also from the Tory-dominated Treasury and Civil Service Committee in Parliament.

This committee published a collection of papers from various economists and others in August, most of which contain more or less detailed attacks on the Tory strategy. Ironically one of the more critical is from Thatcher's chief theoretician and monetarist guru, Professor Milton Friedman, which endorses the general lines of the policy—and then insists that the Tories are doing it wrong!

Writing on the Tories' proposals on monetary control, for example, Friedman pronounced:

'I could hardly believe my eyes when I read, in the first paragraph of the summary chapter, "The principal means of controlling the money supply must be fiscal policy—both public expenditure and tax policy—and interest rates". Interpreted literally, this sentence is simply wrong. Only a Rip van Winkle, who had not read any of the flood of literature during the past decade and more on the money supply process, could possibly have written that sentence.'

A bit like the headmaster telling the head boy that he's let the school down.

More seriously, the government is now in the position of not having controlled either the money supply or public expenditure; of

having squeezed the private sector *more* than the public sector; and of having prolonged the recession beyond the point of 'weeding out' the weakest firms to the point where stronger firms do not feel they will have the strength to compete in two years time.

#### The Politics of Propaganda

At first sight the employers have had it all their own way on the shopfloor at least, since Thatcher came to power. In the last few months, as the full impact of depression has set in, the number of strikes has plummeted. There are general indications that large numbers of workers are prepared to take cuts in real wages. There has—hitherto—been no resistance to sackings. Successful victimisations have multiplied; lock-outs are more and more common; big concessions are being made in terms of shop floor conditions.

But there is another side to the coin. Again taking the CBI conference resolutions as a touchstone, the most striking thing is the way aggressive policies have been brushed under the carpet: the calls with almost no exception are for caution and conciliation. The talk of solidarity, unity etc which dominated employers' circles last year is simply nowhere. What has changed?

#### The Employers Divided

Recession has brought intensified competition and worked against the pooling of employer strength. This was seen at its clearest in the print dispute in May. The employers, grouped in the Newspaper Society and the British Printing Industries Federation, took a decision to lock out the NGA craftsmen who were resisting a deal accepted by the two other print unions, SOGAT and Nat-sopa. The previous time this occurred—in 1958—the result was a serious defeat for workers after a very bitter struggle. On this occasion, the employers, especially the BPIF, crumpled from the first day.

The lock out was largely the decision of the large firms in the industry, like Reed International. The smaller firms were picked off by the NGA, and the threat of contracts being grabbed plus the solidarity of the rank and file put huge pressure on those companies behind the lock out. The result was a severe and very public defeat for employer unity and particularly Sir Alex Jarratt, its main partisan within the CBI, and the chairman of the working party on strike insurance etc.

Jarratt's main publishing concern, IPC, embarked on a lock out of journalists at the same time, clearly on the instructions of Reed's senior management, on the issue of an NUJ pay claim.

Not only did IPC eventually have to raise their pay offer to get a return to normal working, they also had to pay 1,500 journalists for the period of the suspensions. The combined effect of these two disputes was to lose Reed's £12 millions in profit.

#### Engineering Employers

While the print dispute is the most spectacular example of the hard line coming unstuck—the BPIF for the moment does not

even have a national agreement with the NGA—there has been a weakening of unity elsewhere. The engineering employers were at the heart of the calls for employer solidarity during 1979, above all in the national dispute and with the famous 'guidelines' for industrial action. But in the wake of the dispute there was a serious reconsideration by some of the largest firms of whether it was all worth it.

This doesn't mean of course that these employers are getting any softer—if anything the reverse—but it does mean that the united front approach pushed by the EEF at national level has had a severe battering. As in print, firms cannot see why they should be dragged into supporting other companies with which they compete.

#### Strike Insurance

The most serious defeat for employer organisation came with the collapse of the CBI's strike insurance plans in June. After months of pressure only 400 firms out of 4,000 replied to a CBI circular canvassing support for the insurance scheme—a result, incidentally, which makes most union postal ballots look like exercises in mass participation. Of the 400 replies only about 200 were in full support of the idea: ie 5 per cent of CBI membership. In an embarrassed letter to member firms, CBI President, Sir Raymond Pennock, concluded:

'I believe it is one of our most important jobs to produce ideas and develop proposals, and then to be ready to listen and adapt according to the response. On this occasion, in view of the response, it is undoubtedly right that we should not go ahead as planned. Equally, I have no doubt that it was right for us to do this work—and we shall go on looking for new initiatives to help deal with the problems that face us all'.

#### Two Steps Back

The conclusion to be drawn from this series of setbacks is not that the shop-floor offensive against established conditions, trade union practices, stewards etc is likely to ease off. On the contrary all the signs are that it will get worse, as employers attempt to exert absolute control over the one element within their immediate grasp—labour. The extent to which real concessions are being made for even quite puny wage increases is quite frightening. Edwardes-style operations are still few and far between but there is a steady attack—in the name of efficiency, discipline etc—taking place.

A general sign of this is the way in which employers have gone on a propaganda offensive to force down wage deals in the past three months. Carefully-staged pay-cutting deals have been blown up as major events; a selection of firms has been organised within the CBI to push the line of single-figure increases; newspaper journalists have been given special employer briefings on what to do. This is all part of the major current CBI strategy, defined as 'Getting Business Reality Across.'

But at the same time the employers are

moving back to an overt recognition that an understanding with the trade union bureaucracy is needed. The lesson of the Derek Robinson affair, after all, was that even Edwardes could not victimise a leading convenor on his own—he needed Duffy and Boyd. The conduct of the current negotiations in engineering also depends heavily on the AUEW's right-wing leadership—so much so that the EEF actually put off negotiations till the first round ballot for Duffy's position was out of the way.

There are also some clear moves by employers to build bridges with unions on other fronts. There have been several lobbies for import controls in different industries with joint statements. The building bosses have joined hands with UCATT in a campaign against cuts in public sector capital expenditure (from the same firms that gave you the Campaign Against Building Industry Nationalisation only two years ago!) The CBI has agreed—nationally—a joint statement with the TUC on new technology.

### The Outlook

The next few months are going to see growing public pressure from the employers for changes in government policy on a number of fronts. On the economy, for example, a special CBI committee on the exchange rate is lobbying for a weaker pound. There is a lot of pressure from large exporting companies for the CBI to toughen its attitude. There is similar pressure on the question of high interest rates, import controls, energy prices and the investment of North Sea oil. The general message coming out is for the Tories to adopt right-wing Labour policies of strategic intervention, and not to leave things to the 'market'.

The Tories are in fact already operating non-monetarist policies to a limited degree. Not just in the sense of misunderstanding Milton Friedman, but in the way they are not prepared to follow through the logic of their own position. In the steel industry current plans mean that the UK would produce less than Poland, but the Tories have agreed to give BSC another £400 millions. They have propped up Dunlop; they are almost certainly going to prop up Bowater. They have continued with Labour's short-time working subsidy, probably subsidising about 350,000 jobs this autumn. They are not going to put up interest rates, which is what they ought to do if they believed in their own policies!

So what is going to happen is a steady worsening of the recession, a steady growth in unemployment, a much longer and more messy decline than capitalism wanted. Things are going to be very nasty; but not nasty enough to crush a working class response. The pressure is on, but the ruling class cannot see what it will really have gained when the pressure is lifted. Sir Raymond Pennock's declaration on September 24th that he was concerned at the growth in unemployment 'because the militancy of the post-war period was bred among the young men of the 1930s' is a small indication of which way their thinking is going.

David Beecham

10p  
Greater  
concentration  
On Sunday

# DAILY WORKER

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## Fierce Fighting In Hyde Pa

**Welcome!**

**100,000 WORKERS GREET HUNGER MARCHERS**

**MASSES RESENT FURIOUS CHARGES BY MOUNTED POLICE**

**TREMENDOUS GATHERINGS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY**

**WORKERS DEFIANT AT JUB**

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**Terrific Scenes Birkbehead**

**FIGHT FOR US**

**MANY ARRESTS AND CASUALTIES**

**'The militancy of the post war period was bred among the young men of the 1930s'**

**Sir Raymond Pennock (President of the CBI)**

# Dockers' quiet victory

As I write this article dockers in Britain have just won their most important victory since Pentonville in 1972. There has been no strike, and no dockers in prison, just an apparently very sudden threat of a national docks strike, and an equally sudden negotiated end to that threat by the National Port Employers and the T&GWU. Three days' headlines in the national press, and after the deal—nothing. Now what is this all about?

After Pentonville in 1972, the dockers were sold an agreement by the then general secretary of the T&GWU, Jack Jones, now Companion of Honour (whatever that may mean), and Lord Aldington, Chairman of the Port of London Authority. This agreement said that the TUR (Temporary Unattached Register) would be abolished. This TUR meant that a docker whose employer went out of business would be returned to a central pool of labour, similar to a labour exchange, but getting less money. To dockers, this meant unemployment. It was the threat of this, along with the fight against containerisation, and the loss of dock work, that led to the events of Pentonville.

The National Ports Shop Stewards Committee (NPSSC) and other militants said at the time that the Jones-Aldington Report solved nothing, was not binding on either party, and that problems would arise again, as it did in 1980. In the eight years since Pentonville, our fears have seemed well-founded. We have seen our industry decimated by severance payments, and dockers selling jobs. We have seen our number drop nationally from 42,000 in 1972 to 24,000 now, and still falling. In London, from 14,000 dockers in 1972, we now have 6,000. We have seen some of our best shop stewards and pickets from Pentonville leave the industry, usually without even telling their mates.

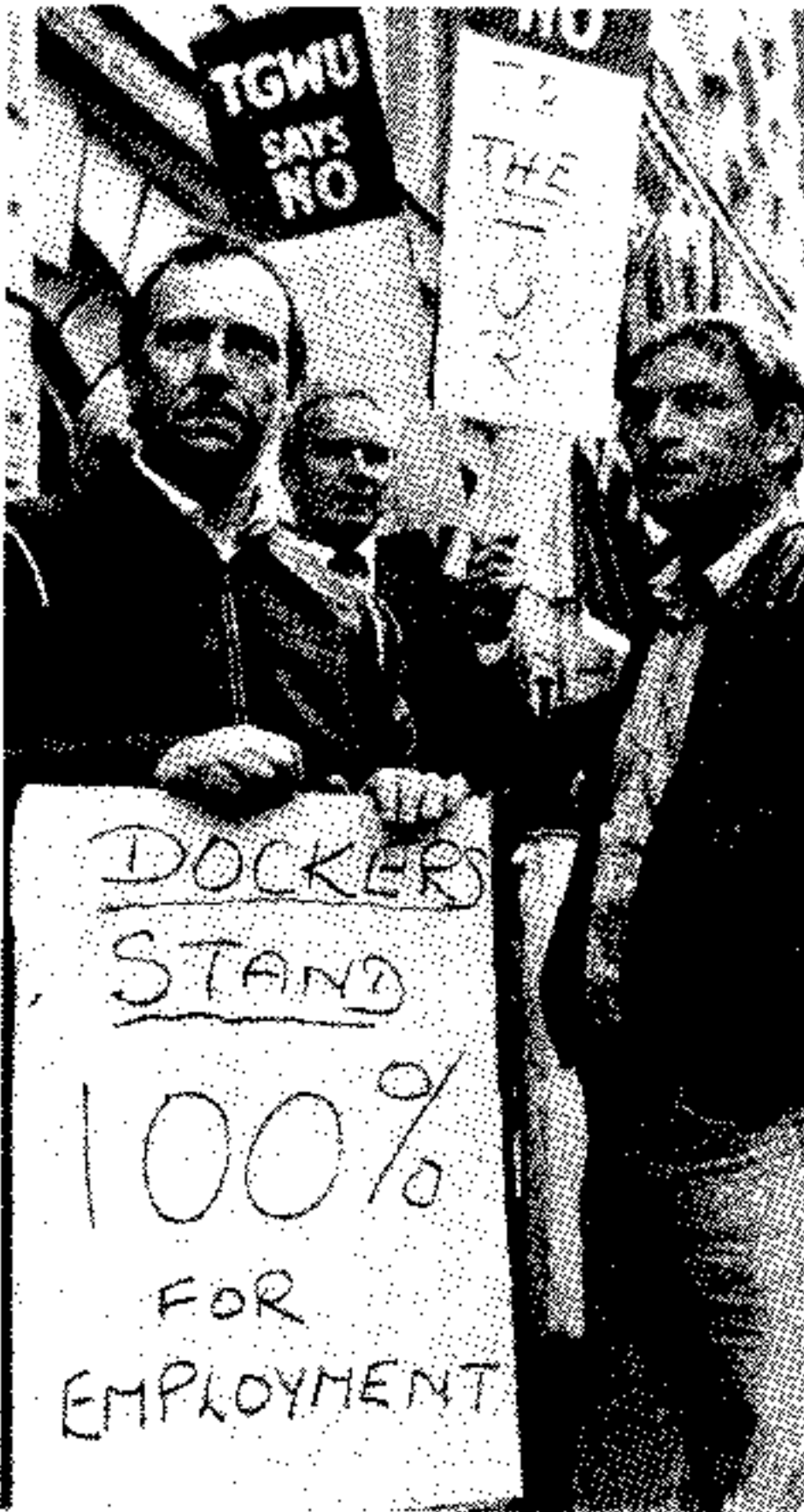
But as this process was going on, the NPSSC continued to function, and gained strength gradually with better organisation. Meetings were held representing dockers from approximately 10 European countries. And it was the NPSSC which both in 1972 and 1980 was behind the scenes of the disputes.

The T&GWU national docks official said in 1972 that unless his union acted on the TUR, there was a group waiting in the wings that was quite ready and willing to do so. That is exactly what happened again in 1980. The officials of the T&GWU are shit-scared to lose control of the docks to the NPSSC, who, before the official Recall Delegate Conference called the national strike, had already held mass meetings in four major ports which agreed to go on indefinite national stoppage in support of the Liverpool dockers threatened with the TUR.

Dockers in Liverpool faced with little prospect of other employment, if they

accepted severance, were refusing to discuss severance terms for any surplus labour in Liverpool. One employer in Liverpool, J. Harrison, owned by Lord Vestey (the same man who owned Midland Cold Store and caused the five dockers to be imprisoned at Pentonville), stated that they were going into liquidation and wanted to make 178 dock workers redundant. The other major employer in Liverpool, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, then reneged on the Jones-Aldington report and issued a statement that they would not employ the 178 men. This matter had already been discussed a month previously at NPSSC meetings by Liverpool stewards, so the strike was not as spontaneous as it first appeared.

The feeling of the men where I work, the Royal Group, was one of reluctant determi-



nation, that if we had to fight, then so be it. In the week before the threatened strike, I did not hear one docker oppose it, and the more militant ones seemed to be just ready to teach Thatcher the same lesson we had taught Heath in 1972.

If the strike had taken place, I am confident we would have done just that. We would have put Prior's picketing laws in the same dustbin the Tories put the Industrial Relations Bill, and the Tories knew that. They had behind-the-scenes talks with the national port employers to find a way out, and to save face (*Financial Times* 22.9.80)

Our industry has been weakened since the start of containerisation and Devlin Stage One in 1967, as port after port signed separate productivity deals with different wages and working practices, always at different months of the year. This was divide and rule at its most blatant. With the TUR we are united in our fight for our right to work, and once again we have shown that when dockers have a common cause, no government will hold us down. Britain is still an island, and very little of anything can get in and out without dockers touching it. Since decasualisation our industry has been going through the process of changing from being a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive industry, which has simultaneously occurred in many traditionally strong British industries, such as the car factories, the print, and agriculture, to name just a few.

In all the major ports, the employers have creamed off men to work their container gantries in Tilbury, Seaforth and Southampton. This has caused other dockers left handling conventional cargoes some concern over the possibility of an elite labour force being set up.

Since the strike over wages in February of this year, in London, the signs have been that the men in container bases are prepared to support other dockers, even though they are on different agreements, and their wages are not affected. Even the unregistered port of Felixstowe was prepared to join in the fight against unemployment in the docks, despite being our bitterest opponents in the past. When people left the industry in large numbers, it seemed that we might lose our hard-won security, but now we have reason for optimism, as the events of last week proved.

Micky Fenn, NAS&D

## Arson: Tory style

One of the less well publicised efforts of the Thatcher government to reduce public spending and re-shape our expectations of public services, has been the publication recently of a consultative document *Future Fire Policy*.\*

It is the result of a four-year study of the effect of fires on the community, which looked at what is being done to minimise fire losses and examined the

effectiveness of counter measures including of course, the cost of the publicly run fire brigades. It is this last aspect that represents a major threat to firemen, and in the process the public, but the document is amazingly cynical about some of the more worrying features of fires—like fatalities!

Deaths in fires have been at about 900 a year for the last decade, and the

government draws some comfort from that, especially when the report goes on to point out that almost all the victims were pensioners or persons on very low incomes! 'These people don't contribute to the economy,' they seem to be saying, 'therefore we can afford to see the number of fire deaths drift upwards if we cut back on the fire service.'

Even the figures used in the government's report show that the number of fires are rising. There was an increase in 1979 over the previous year of 12.4% and it is no surprise, therefore, that the Fire Brigades Union,\* in reply to the government's plan, is calling for increases in the number of fire engines and firemen. There is no rational basis on which there can be a decrease. Yet that is what the government are after, having only one fire engine in most stations and with less firemen on it, leading to a greater delay in getting sufficient fire fighters to an incident. As the union's booklet points out,

'It would be a worthwhile exercise to ask those people who were trapped behind the barred windows at Woolworth's in May 1979 or Moor-gate tube station in 1975 if they would have been prepared to wait a further few minutes for their rescuers to arrive.'

The Tories also plan to undermine the effectiveness of fire prevention work done by brigades. Instead of requiring all premises to get a certificate from the brigade to say that there are safe means of exit in the event of a fire, the plan is to allow the local councils to be selective and decide for themselves which are the 'more serious cases' that need such certificates. Woolworth's in Manchester, where ten people died in the 1979 fire, did not have a certificate, something that the Home Office enquiry made special mention of.

The union estimates that 3-4000 fire service jobs are threatened by this report and even before the necessary statutory changes are pushed through, local authorities are being encouraged to cut back to the minimum standards that were approved in 1958 and are widely recognised today as inadequate.

The threat to jobs is not the only worry for firemen at the moment. The settlement of the strike in the winter of 1977/78 included a pay agreement designed to keep our pay at the level of the top 25% in the manual workers wages table. Thatcher is saying that wages in the public sector have to be kept in single figures, whereas our agreement must mean we will be entitled to around 20% in November — double what is planned for everyone else in local government except the police.

The FBU Executive are committed to calling a delegate conference if the government prevents, or the employers refuse, payment in full of the agreement. They have also decided to recommend a national strike if the con-

ference is necessary. Anyone who remembers the leadership's vehement opposition to the strike call in 1977 will wonder what is different this time. It is obvious to everyone that if we do not defend the formula in the pay agreement this year we never will catch up with it again. And the threat to jobs is a very real one.

Memories of the nine weeks out on strike are still relatively fresh in a lot of firemen's minds and the thought of another spell like that outside the doors is a real worry to a lot of them.

This time around is going to be harder without question. In the rural areas where part-time retained stations might keep open under the influence of the so-called Retained Firemen's Union (a scab outfit which gained strength in the last strike against militancy and industrial action) those stations will have to be

regularly and heavily picketed to make sure they shut down and stretch the army's resources as much as possible. The new picketing laws will make things that much harder of course. It also seems unlikely that the employers will be as passive this time in allowing the stations and appliances to lay dormant. At the very least I suspect they will try to use the stations for the troops. That is certain to lead to confrontations with the strikers.

On the plus side, though, the fact that it is a Tory government should make it easier to get support within the trade union movement.

**Terry Segars**

*\*Future Fire Policy: A Consultative Document, HMSO 1980.*

*\*Fire Safety — A Public Issue, Fire Brigades Union, August 1980.*

## Christ, Hitler and Florence Nightingale

"This newspaper has a better record of support for women in the movement than any other trade union journal," snaps the editor of the T&GWU *Record* rather defensively in reply to a critical letter from one of their oft-featured women. But it has to be admitted that he's right—not because the *Record* is so good, but because everything else is so bad.

If you look through issues of the T&G paper over the last year or so you will certainly find centre page spreads on women's issues, reports from schools and conferences written from the point of view of women delegates, photographs of and articles about women on strike, women demonstrating, women elected to regional committees of the union and so on. Occasionally they slip up, like the time a sexist cartoon appeared on the back of a page displaying the TUC's women's charter which has as its final point "the content of journals and other union publications should be presented in non-sexist terms".

Trades union publications are curious things—one wonders why almost all are so dull and boring and generally out of touch with what is happening on the ground. NUPE's paper is perhaps one exception—it is short and to the point and directly agitational. The *Record*, however, is no particular exception, I can't imagine the membership clamouring to get their hands on a copy each month, but considering the T&G has a relatively small female membership (16%), the paper's coverage of issues relating to women, coupled with their openness to criticism via the letters page, makes me feel they deserve at least 5 out of 10 for trying.

No-one could say the same of the AUEW, whose executive recently opposed the appointment of a women's organiser. As with the T&G, women form 16% of the membership, but as far as the journal goes, they might not exist at all. In fact the real

world in general appears to impinge very little on the editor's consciousness: the March issue, for example, carried no mention at all of the TUC Anti Employment Bill demonstration. But with regard to women, when a relevant article does appear—and that seems to be about twice a year—it will more than likely be written by a man. One page under the proud heading "Our Women's Conference 1980" was mostly filled with what "the President, Bro. Terry Duffy, said".

But you can't have everything, I suppose, and the *AUEW Journal* does have other little gems to compensate: regular features such as "Your Garden" or occasional pieces like "Keeping Cats" and "Why not be an MP?". Better still was the piece entitled "Dead or Alive" on the Boy Scouts . . . "how many of those reading this article can proudly say 'I was a scout?'" . . . And I suppose you could even say that women have been given their fair share of representation in the feature "Lives that changed the world". For, in amongst Jesus Christ, Adolf Hitler and Karl Marx we have Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie and Sylvia Pankhurst.

Almost as much enjoyment is to be had from reading USDAW's journal *DAWN*. USDAW is Britain's sixth largest union, or so they keep telling you, and women form 66% of the membership. The general secretary and the deputy general secretary (both male) delight in defending women's rights in the face of Thatcher's "anti-feminist, anti-

*'Casablanca (US 1942)* This archetypal Hollywood melodrama of the forties was lucky on several counts. It nearly starred Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan instead of Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman . . . —from Halliwell's *Filmgoer's Companion*.

welfare state policies" which they rightfully acknowledge make life difficult for working mothers and single parents. But behind this crusading facade, tucked away at the back of the paper, is the "women's page", edited by Kay Nash, who seems never at a loss for helpful hints to pass on to the membership. Anything from how to cook liver and dumplings to how not to get your shopping nicked in the supermarket (by other light-fingered customers!). And if you are overweight why not try disco dancing in a stunning little number from Littlewoods Mail Order Fashions. Kay could only repeat what Littlewoods themselves said about the dress: "If you've got it, why not show it?"

Perhaps the general confusion in USDAW with regard to women and women's issues is best summed up by this letter which appeared in *DAWN* last February:

'Dear Mr Editor, Once again . . . I have received a gratis union diary and sadly, feel obliged to complain, as it is the "Ladies" version—very helpful when it comes to remembering the shopping and for arranging the food at dinner parties. Unfortunately, this edition does not give details of area organisers, officials' addresses, telephone numbers, or details of DHSS benefit rates etc . . .'

The highest proportion of women in any union is to be found in the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW), which has 90 percent. Quite a large amount of the journal is devoted to articles on women and unemployment, women as low paid workers, maternity rights etc, but you really have to pinch yourself to realise it. This is partly because each article is approached in such an unimaginative way—usually a report of a report from the Equal Opportunities Commission or the Low Pay Unit or some similar body. It is also because reading the journal for more than ten minutes makes you feel like slipping off quietly to slit your wrists. After the fighting talk of articles like "1979—another year of problems", "Cold comfort for the clothing industry" and "1980—Few reasons to be cheerful" a certain feeling of numbness takes over, which not even the most inspired feminist piece could dislodge.

If trade union publications reveal anything at all, it must be a vague sense of how the creaky machinery of one union differs from the creaky machinery of another. For example, the NUT paper, the *Teacher*, in its attempts to rival the *Times Educational Supplement*, clearly suggests a different style of union from that of the *Yorkshire Miner*, which models itself on the *Sun*. Thus, the different types of coverage given to women's issues in the journals in recent years reflect the different approaches of the various union bureaucracies in attempting to come to terms with the increasing size and significance of their female membership.

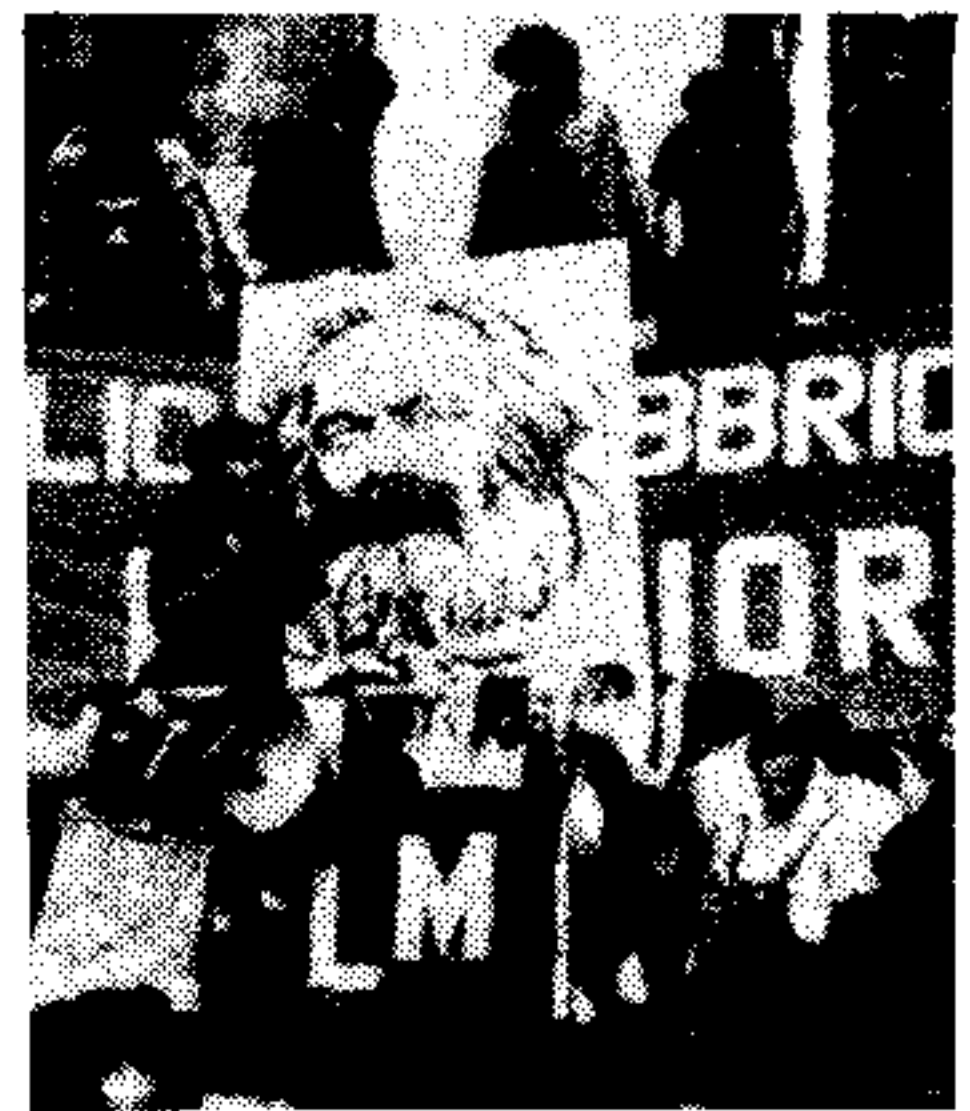
In most cases it is only a question of paying lipservice, since no union has restructured itself to enable women to play an active and leading role in proportion to their numbers. Even then, these attempts to pay lipservice are none too hot.

Jane Ure Smith

## Doing it like Gdansk?

'We've got to do it like Poland, like Gdansk. And now let's see those journalists from the bourgeois papers who exalt the Polish workers so much. Let's see them here in Mirafiori. This is our Gdansk.'

These were the words of one of the FIAT workers who staged a token occupation of the Turin factory last month. They show how the Italian city could explode if union leaders do not succeed in defusing bitter protests at redundancies planned by the company. As we go to press the company has postponed actual redundancies, in the wake of the political instability following the fall of the Cossiga government. But it is going ahead with 'temporary lay-offs' that could well become permanent redundancies, and the workers have sent out pickets to all FIAT plants to stop the movement of goods. Tom Behan writes on the background.



Car makers demonstrate in Turin

During this year tension has been building up between management, the workers and the trade union. The management, are trying to sack up to 15,000 workers. The union is caught between it's policy of sacrifices for the company, and the increasing anger of the members it represents.

The result of this clash will have profound significance for the entire Italian working class. Fiat has the best organised labour force and the result of a Fiat dispute is the main indicator for future settlements in smaller companies; if there are sackings at Fiat they will rapidly spread, but successful resistance would increase workers' confidence to fight as the economic crisis starts to gain momentum.

Many of Fiat's problems are of their own making; direct financial losses through lire speculations, and many wrong marketing decisions. A major policy decision taken in 1972, was to produce existing models for as long as possible, thus sucking the maximum profit from them. The result now is that the new models have been held back too long and do not have a strong competitive edge; thus the fall in sales.

When management saw the effect of this they panicked and began pushing new production models; and the union co-operated; accepting the company was in crisis and that "sacrifice" were needed. The story at Autobianchi, one of the factories where the Panda is produced, is a good example.

Production started in August '79 and the average was soon established at 70 vehicles per shift. Towards the end of the year the Factory Council met management to discuss new investment and recruitment, and without receiving a specific reply they agreed to an increase of 105 vehicles per shift, and soon after that management stopped all recruitment. Then in Rome in February the national officials of the engineering union FLM, signed an agreement with Fiat mainly concerning another factory, but one clause was that production at Autobianchi

would increase to 115 vehicles per shift. In March there were rumours of a lock out if a "reasonable" solution was not reached, and the factory council entered into a dangerous discussion on technical modifications, and this reason was used to increase production to 130, while the union leaders showed complete disinterest.

The factory council still pressed management for negotiation on over tiring jobs, etc, but the said they were only ready to talk after an act of "good faith"—for example an increase to 150 vehicles per shift. After the first indignant reactions production reached 135, and the national officials arrived on the scene. Needless to say, after small concessions, in a climate of rumours and threats, production reached 150 a shift. Thus production had doubled in less than a year without any new employees arriving.

That example is not particularly localised; in South America (in Brazil workers are paid five times less than Italian workers), Fiat is also facing diminishing sales because of it's lack of competitiveness.

In May this year, the Fiat chairman, Umberto Agnelli, announced that for seven Fridays between the middle of June and the end of July, 76,000 people would be laid off. Opposition was slight at the time, one reason being that the measure would take effect two months in the future, and also the vast majority of employees take their holidays at that time anyway. But what was more important was that the union failed to present a credible alternative to management's solution, so accepting the battle on Fiat's terms.

The government, strengthened by the June regional elections and the support of the Socialist Party, presented a package of "anti-crisis measures" in June. The most contentious of these was a 1/2% cut from everybody's pay packet, to subsidise the firms in crisis, or in other words giving money to companies like Fiat. What is more interesting is the reaction of the Communist

Party (PCI) and the unions. The PCI oppose it, partly because their 'historic compromise' position lost them many votes at the election, but for the first time for many years the unions have disagreed with them, supporting it and showing their continuing slide to the right. In any case the measure was not passed, mainly due to a one day national industry strike held in early July.

After the announcement of lay offs Agnelli then began to demand "inter-company mobility", a system by which workers would be transferred to other Fiat factories, as production targets demands. Alongside this there is a similar-sounding proposal; "external mobility", which entails workers technically being laid off, but in practice unable to return inside to the factory, and then being placed on special employment lists in the hope of finding work in another factory. Even then the general secretary of the FLM, Vincenzo Mattina said, "But at the present how many factories are there in Turin and the province capable of absorbing the 'surplus' manpower at Fiat? External mobility therefore is only a euphemism for sackings." The unemployment figures for the Turin area bear this out—68,000 unemployed and 23,000 in search of a first job.

To add to this there is the question of workers who are dependent on Fiat orders—for example it is estimated that for every one of the 60,000 workers at the Mirafiori factory, there are two others who produce components and associated goods, and when you add on their families the figure reaches nearly 300,000. For example at the Borletti factory in Milan, which produces dashboard instruments, 3,000 people will be laid off for the last three weeks of October, and the people remaining in the factory will work reduced hours. Also the company has refused to accept any new recruits and redundancy payments are being offered.

This present dispute flared up at the start of September, when everybody returned from holiday, with Fiat saying it wants to reduce production by 20%, with an equal number of sackings. One example of Fiat's two-facedness is at Cassino in the South: nine days of lay offs were announced for September because of falling demand, but immediately after they increased the speed of the production line, provoking a strike in the paint department, which spread to the following shift—this was the first example of spontaneous strikes without union guidance. In Turin management commented "for motives that we still can't understand, other departments of other lines have also gone on strike." The motive is simple, it's called solidarity, which has become known in England now as "secondary picketing."

Negotiations have been held at Turin between the union and Fiat, which first demanded 12,000 lay offs until the end of 1981! when the market would pick up again according to them. The unions proposals are defeatist to say the least; pensions at 55 and 50, no more new employees, and incentives for voluntary redundancy—no proposals for reducing hours or improving

conditions. Seeing the union's weakness, Fiat then announced that letters of dismissal would be sent to 15,000 employees at the start of October.

As soon as the news came over the radio of the breakdown of negotiations, the night shift at Mirafiori in Turin spontaneously came out on strike, and waited for the morning shift to arrive, because for that day a three hour strike was organised, but instead it became all day and the following night.

They formed up and began to march towards the city centre, without any hint of union organisation. The workers are extremely angry: "They treat us like meat at the butchers. First they put the posters up to call us to Turin, the city that gives work, and now they send you away with a kick up the arse." A woman explains the fallacy of "external mobility". "Mobility, mobility, but what mobility? For a year I've gone up and down to the employment office, only after a year I've found work here in Fiat."

The main slogan of the march is "From Mirafiori to the south, a single shout, employment".

At the meeting came this proposal "It's no longer a case of waiting for the letters to arrive, on the contrary, the time has come to occupy, we have to do it in a hurry. Let's occupy all Mirafiori and if it's not enough let's occupy all the city." An old delegate added 'We mustn't close ourselves inside, we must go out, to contact people, in the streets, the markets, the buses, everywhere.'

The occupation lasted only a day, because of the mediation of a minister who re-opened negotiations. At the time of writing the situation is far from clear, the government have hinted they may give some money to Fiat, and the Union are reported to be close to accepting "external mobility". In this way the union may be able to avoid the open resistance of the workers, but if the sackings go ahead Italy could be in for another "hot autumn" like that of '69. In either case, the result will determine the balance of class forces for a considerable time to come.

## Much ado about netting

There is a town-twinning arrangement between the French port of Boulogne and Gdansk in Poland. And if Polish workers gave us the most significant victory of the summer, the Boulogne fishermen put up a heroic if unsuccessful fight for the right to work.

The French fishing industry is in deep crisis. During the seventies the number of fishermen in France fell from 36,000 to 24,000 (the number of jobless in France is now lower than in Britain, but still well over a million). Yet the French government was willing to offer aid to the fishing industry only on condition that wage costs were cut—i.e. that the size of crews doing a dangerous and exhausting job should be cut. The fishermen's main grievance was the rising cost of fuel. Over recent years fuel prices have risen six-fold, while fish prices have only doubled. Yet in 1979 French oil companies doubled their profits. French fishermen tend to have to travel especially long distances to the fishing grounds, which

makes fuel costs a particularly heavy burden.

The most exciting thing about the fishermen's strike was the way in which it brought to life what is generally one of the most dreary cliches of Marxist theory—the class alliance between the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie. The French fishing industry is remarkable in that it unites in the same trade unions wage-earning fishermen employed by big companies, like those in Boulogne, and self-employed artisan fishers like those in Brittany. (This situation goes back to the thirties when the CGT and the Catholic unions competed to organise the self-employed fishermen).

While the Boulogne fishermen merely took strike action they had little impact. But when, in mid-August, the blockade tactic caught on like wildfire, it united in struggle fishermen who were paid according to a variety of systems—either wages plus bonuses, or sharing the proceeds of the catch.

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# Inside the system

Workers, say the right-wing, are a threat to civilised values. They have no heart for the higher things in life. This seems to be true. The Metropolitan Opera Company of New York has just been forced to cancel their 1980-81 season (ticket prices around twenty quid a head) due to industrial action. Musicians in the orchestra are demanding a 12.5 per cent pay rise and a twenty per cent reduction in their working week. The squalid material interests of mere workers have spoilt the pursuit of art by rich Americans. Truly, the barbarians are at the gates.

It's nice to hear it from the horses mouth. Reviewing a book by a former leftist about the 'microelectronics revolution', a writer in the *Financial Times* commented: '... they are a part, even if a greatly accelerated one, of the steady replacement of labour with capital which is the fundamental feature of industrial society.'

Traditional distrust between Breton and Normandy fishermen, based on earlier disputes, also evaporated. Demands for a guaranteed fish-price and, above all, a fuel subsidy, forged a magnificent unity in struggle.

The blockade tactic proved, in the first instance, highly effective. On August 19th there was what amounted to a picket line right round the French coast from Dunkirk to Corsica. The largest French shipowners, the Compagnie Generale Maritime, lost nearly half a million pounds in the first week of the dispute, the port of Le Havre claimed the blockade was costing half a million pounds a day. A hundred thousand processing distribution workers on shore depend

## FIGHTING REDUNDANCIES: EURO-STYLE

on the fishing industry; at Boulogne 900 fishermen on strike caused five thousand lay-offs on shore.

Moreover, the struggle received impressive solidarity. The Boulogne fishermen got substantial financial support from the locality. The support of the fishermen's wives was magnificent and total. At a demonstration in Boulogne on August 13th fishermen were joined by steel-workers, hospital workers and railway workers. The blockade was supplemented by vigorous and imaginative tactics. Boulogne fishermen regularly invaded employers' offices; the CGT organised a pirate radio in support of the strike.

The vigour and extent of the strike posed the French government with some real problems. The pro-competition, anti-subsidy ideology which is at the centre of the government's economic policy meant that it could not concede on the key demand of fuel prices. Moreover, to make concessions at the very beginning of the autumn negotiating round would have risked opening the floodgates to other sectors. Yet to break the strike was also not so easy. The traditional riot-police could not be used against sea-borne picket lines—the navy would have to be brought in. But the navy is not a force with any experience of strike-breaking. Many sailors in the French navy come from fishing families, and some of the naval conscripts are themselves fishermen. The navy is popular among sailors and one of its principal peace-time duties is helping fishermen in distress.

For a short time in mid-August it seemed as if the French government was bewildered by the situation. Transport minister Le Theule was left to carry the can while the rest of the cabinet lounged on the beaches. But in fact the French government strategy was rather more subtle than it appeared at first sight.

The apparent neglect of the situation was designed to weaken the unity of the struggle by giving time for contradictions between the various groups of fishermen to emerge. The government steadfastly refused overall discussion, saying the problems were different in the different ports, and would have to be settled by separate negotiations. This distracted attention from the key unifying issue—fuel prices—and encouraged differences to develop. By sitting back the

government avoided the unpopularity of sending in riot police and instead allowed clashes to develop between the fishermen and other groups of workers—especially lorry-drivers—as well as with holidaymakers, all of which necessarily weakened morale and solidarity. When the navy was sent in, it was not to break the blockade as a whole, but on the pretext of safeguarding oil-supplies (in fact France had over three months' supplies at the time). Two ports only were attacked, Antifer and Fos-sur-Mer, the latter of which is on the Mediterranean, far away from the main centres of militancy.

Such a 'divide and rule' strategy could have been defeated—but only if the unity of the fishermen themselves had been maintained by united organisation. Unfortunately there was deep and public disunity between the two unions involved, the CP-dominated CGT and the CFDT with its looser links to the Socialist Party. (The Boulogne men are divided 50-50 between the two unions, while the CFDT had most of the artisan fishers). Both unions seemed to be more interested in next year's Presidential election than in winning the strike. The CFDT was anxious to prove itself 'responsible' as the ally of a potential governmental party, while the CGT was concerned to prove its 'militancy' by outflanking the CFDT to the left—without actually making that militancy concrete.

The strike originally erupted when the workers rejected the compromise proposed by the unions (reduction of crews from 22 to 20, instead of the 18 demanded by the employers). The unions backed the strike, but failed to take the measures to spread the struggle that could have been crucial at the high-point of struggle (around August 20th). The CGT did nothing to involve dockers and other port-workers in the strike, let alone link the struggle to other strikes, like the long fight by railway track-layers, which lasted from June to September. If there was spontaneous nationalism among the fishermen (demands for import controls, hostility to British and German fishermen) the unions did not fight it but actually encouraged it. The protest by Seguy, the CGT leader, at the use of the navy, was strong, but purely verbal.

Thus it is no surprise that the strike fragmented and was defeated. The Breton strikers went back, in a mood of bitterness, by September 8th, and the last blockade (Fecamp, near Le Havre) was lifted on September 10th. But it was only on September 18th that the Boulogne fishermen voted, by a majority of 399 out of 699, to resume work. The gains, claimed as concessions by the CFDT, were minimal—a promise to cut hours that is meaningless in the conditions of non-stop work that prevails on a fishing-boat, and an agreement that crews stay at 22 pending negotiations (which will almost certainly lead to cuts). The CGT quite correctly denounced the CFDT for accepting such limited gains; but by urging the Boulogne men to stay out, without any prospect of victory, for an extra week, the CGT seemed more interested in its political image than in helping the fishermen. Bitter lessons from a struggle of magnificent potential.

Ian Birchall

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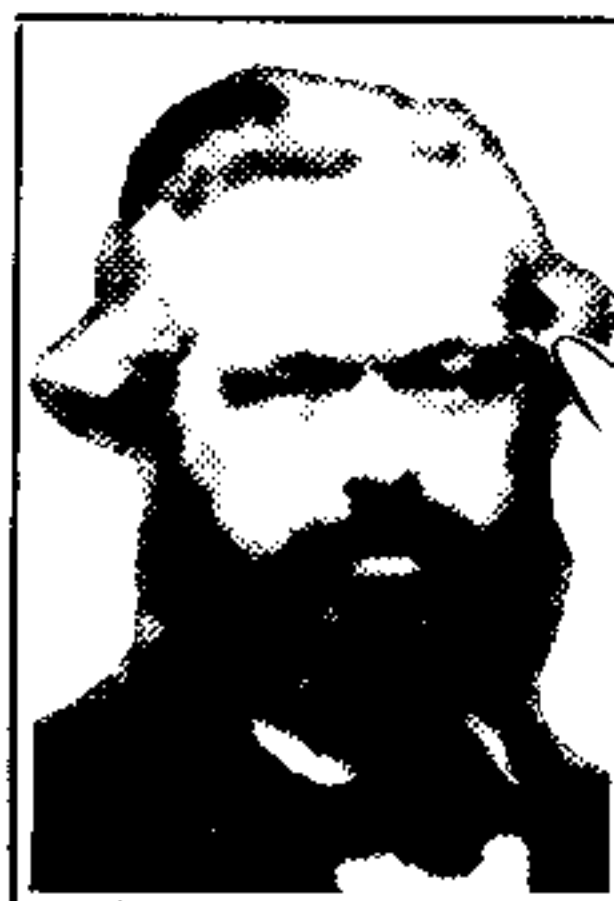
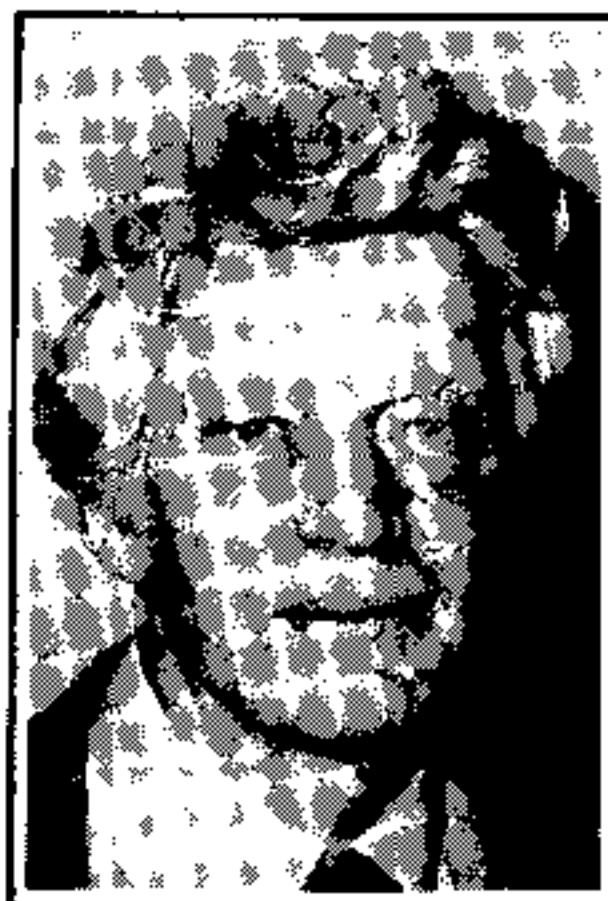
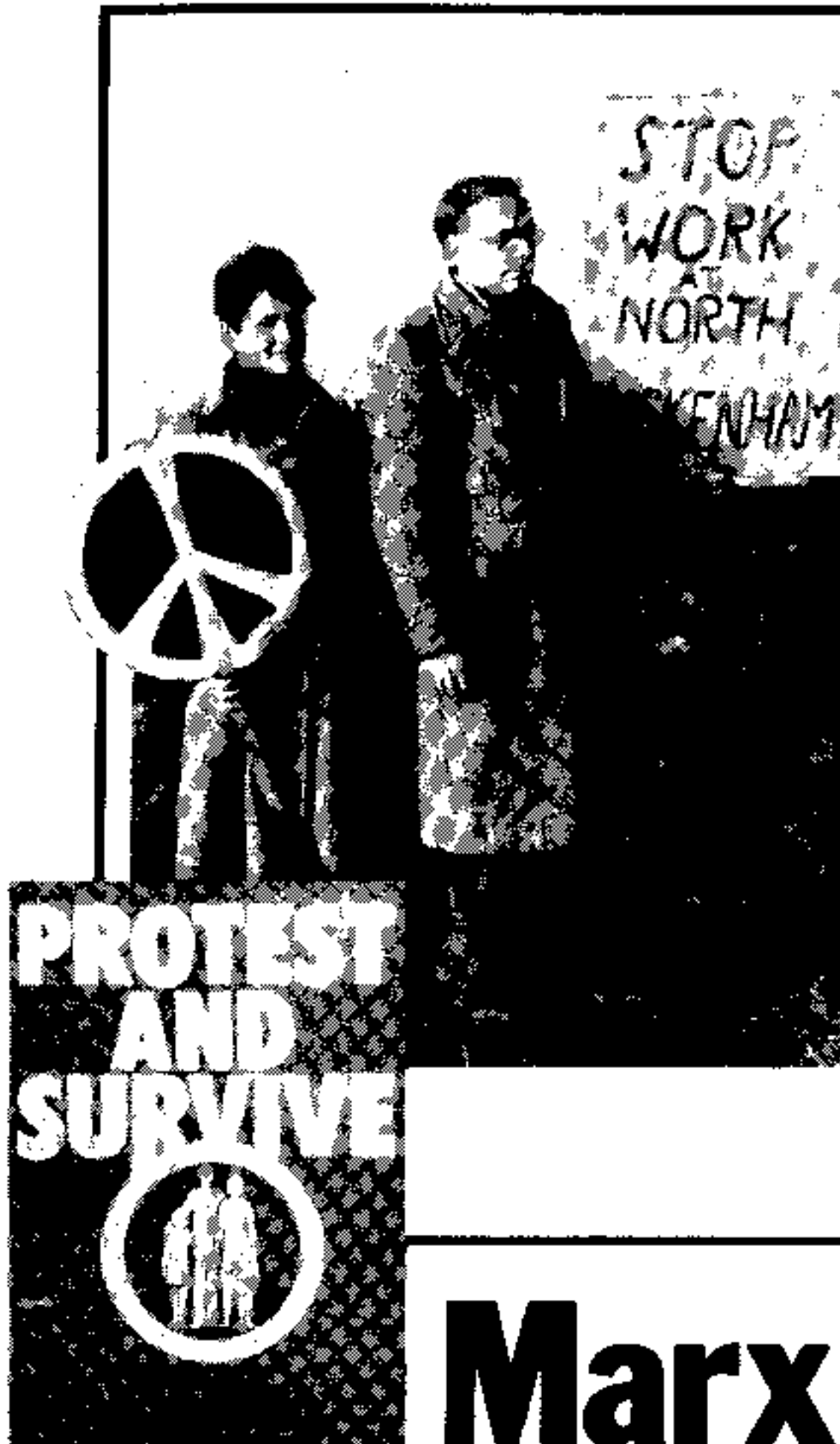
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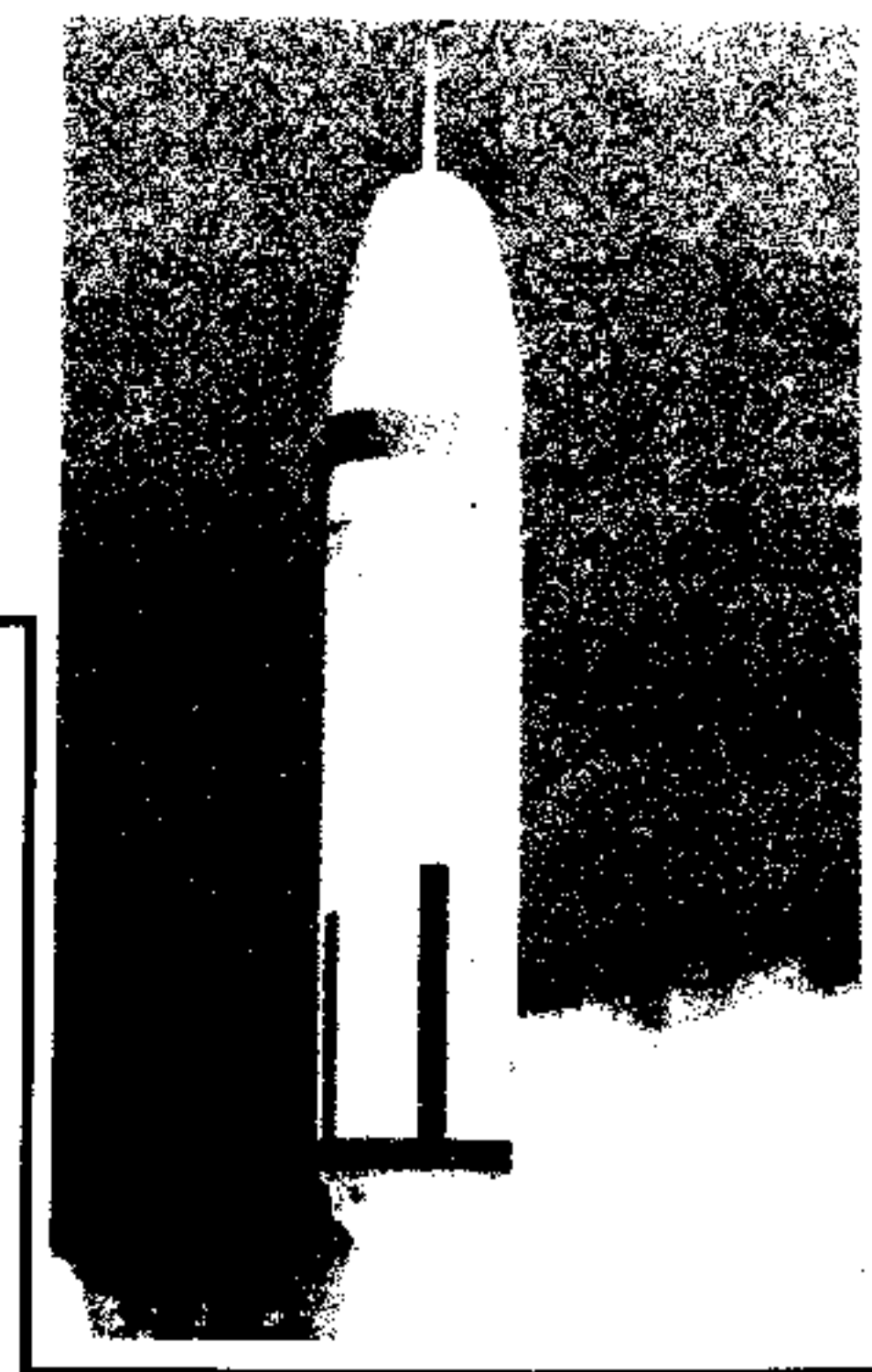
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Pat Arrowsmith urging industrial action against the bomb in 1958 (left), EP Thompson, author of 'Protest and Survive' (above) and part of the £5,000 million Trident missile programme (bottom right)



# Marxism and the Missiles

One of the major themes running through *Socialist Review* over the last nine months has been the drive towards a new Cold War. We have insisted that it is a prime duty of socialists to resist this, and we have attempted to provide the arguments they need.

Until recently, however, our assumption was that we would be very much on the defensive over the question. The media were putting out a deluge of Cold War propaganda. There seemed to be no wider movement of resistance from which we could get support.

Over the summer, however, things have begun to change. The anti-bomb movement has suddenly taken on a new lease of life. From many different parts of the country come reports of very large public meetings, and of sizeable demonstrations, leading up to in what looks like being a very big protest in London on 26 October.

At the heart of the revived movement has been the historian E.P. Thompson. In articles in *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, in the pamphlet *Protest and Survive*, and in scores of public meetings, he has polemicised brilliantly against the Cruise missile. He has not been alone in putting the arguments. But it has been Thompson more than anyone else who has brought the movement back to life. And all credit is due to him for doing so.

It has also been Thompson who has provided whatever analysis the new movement has of the drive towards

missile madness and of a strategy for combating it.

It is here that we in *Socialist Review* (and the SWP generally) have to dissent from what Thompson says.

Thompson's strategy is, quite simply, to arouse the largest possible numbers of people to protest at the decision to deploy the Cruise missiles:

'We must generate an alternative logic, an opposition at every level of society. The opposition must be international and must win the support of multitudes. It must bring its influence to bear upon the rulers of the world.'

*(Protest and Survive)*

Who is to make up this opposition?

The impression you get from reading *Protest and Survive* is that Thompson is looking essentially for the same sort of people who made up CND 20 years ago and who turned out in considerable numbers to the public meetings over the summer — the articulate middle classes, people with university degrees, or possibly studying for them.

'As it happens the major bases (for the Cruise missiles) are to be placed in close proximity to the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and it seems to me that useful work can be done from these old bases of European civilisation. There will be work of research, of publication, and also work of conscience, all of which is very suitable for scholars...Oxford and Cambridge then are privileged to

initiate this campaign.'

But it can involve:

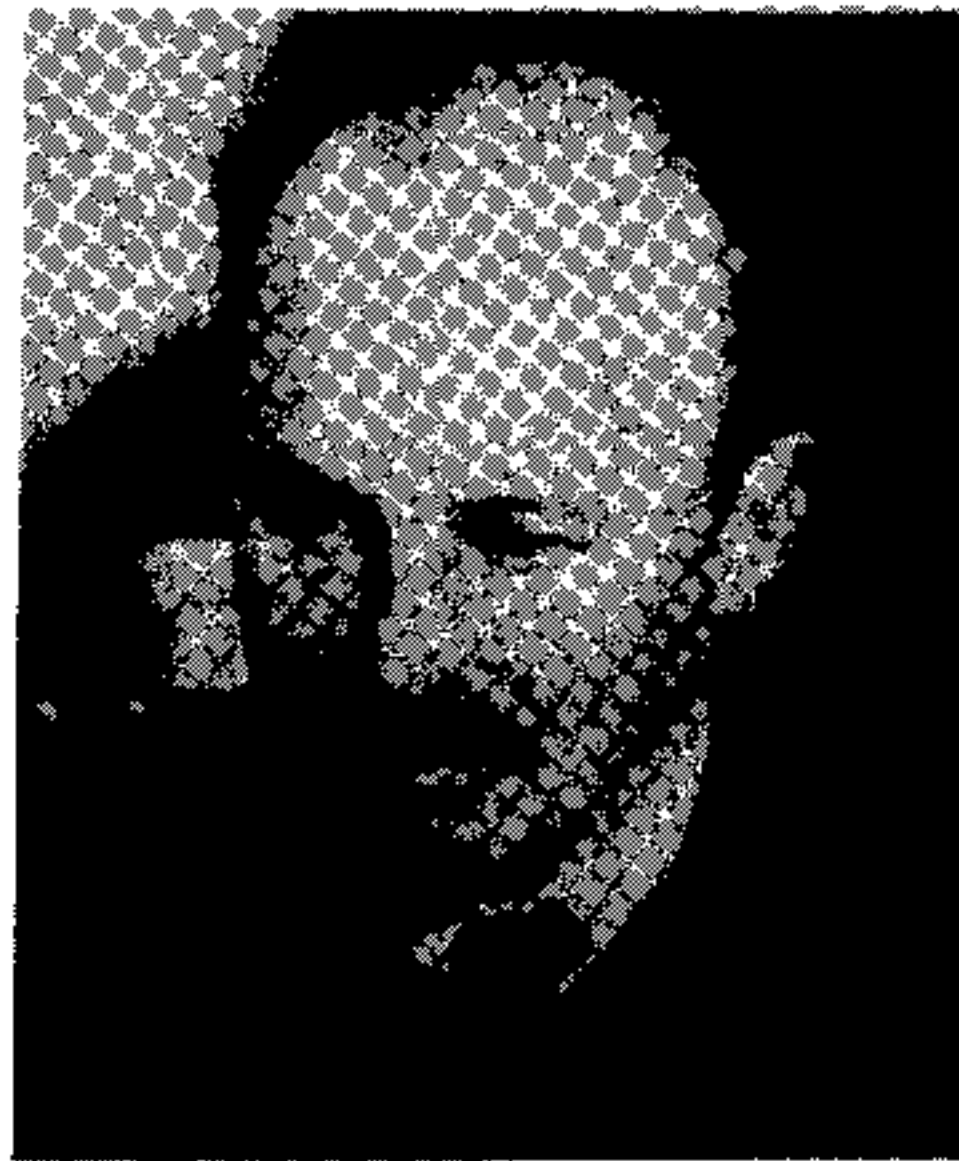
'Any existing institution or even individual, universities and colleges — or groups within them — trade unionists, women's organisations, members of professions, churches, practitioners of Esperanto or chess...'

With these:

'Before long we will be crossing frontiers..., bursting open bureaucrats' doors, making the telephone tappers spin in their hideaways...and breaking up all the old stoney Stalinist reflexes of the East by forcing open dialogue and debate...'

If this were all that Thompson were arguing, we would be tempted to make a few words of protest. Even on the basis of purely arithmetic calculation it seems a bit strange to give no more prominence to 12 million trade unionists than to the half a million members of professions, the two million church-goers or the 45,000 university dons — particularly when all the emphasis is on the dons.

But Thompson does not end his argument there. Underlying his comments in *Protest and Survive* is a wide reaching attempt at analysis of the new Cold War dedicated to refuting the notion that 'the bomb is a class issue'.



**Lenin and Bukharin expanded Marx's analysis to explain the apparently pointless carnage of World War One.**



This is most openly argued by him in a recent issue of *New Left Review*.

The burden of Thompson's analysis is that society East and West has reached a new and terrifying stage in its development – *Exterminism*.

'Exterminism designates those characteristics of a society which thrust it in the direction whose outcome must be the extermination of millions...'

It results from 'the accumulation and perfection of the means of extermination and the structuring of whole societies so that these will be directed towards that end.'

The factors which gave rise to 'exterminism' may once have been imperialist interests or the pursuit of profit by military-industrial complexes. But the methods used initially by ruling classes in the rational pursuit of their interests have taken on an irrational life of their own and are no longer reducible to their original courses.

'What originated as reaction becomes direction. What is justified by rational self-interest by one power or the other becomes in the collision of the two, irrational. We are confronted with the accumulated logic of process.'

To treat this outcome as the product of 'rational' choices by ruling classes is 'to impose a consequential rationality' upon an 'irrational' object.

Exterminism has to be challenged by the presentation of an 'alternative' logic, by:

'Initiating a counter logic, a thrust of process leading towards the dissolution of both blocs, the demystification of exterminism's ideological mythology.'

It is this which has to be achieved by the alliance of 'churches, Eurocommunists, Labourites, East European dissidents (and not only "dissidents")...trade unionists, ecologists...' As 'the blocs' swing 'off their collision course', 'the armourers and the police will lose their authority.'

Any talk of the bomb as a 'class issue' makes these tasks more difficult.

'Class struggle continues in many forms across the globe. But exterminism itself is not a "class issue": it is a human issue.'

'Revolutionary posturing', Thompson insists, can only 'carry division into the necessary alliance of human resistance – indeed, worse than that, it can inflame exterminist ideology.'

'It should go without saying that exterminism can only be confronted by the broadest popular alliance, that is, by every affirmative resource in our culture.'

#### The analysis

Is 'exterminism' something so entirely new in its irrationality?

The picture Thompson paints of rival blocs, each ruled by elites imprisoned by the pressures of the military competition between them is correct. But it is by no means something outside the scope of old Marxist methods of class analysis.

Back in 1844 when Marx began to develop his ideas, he took over the notion of 'alienation' from the philosophers Hegel and Feuerbach. He observed that in capitalist society the activity of people on the world becomes something separated from them, takes on a life of its own and comes to dominate them.

'The object which labour produces confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer ... The more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien world becomes which he creates over against himself ... The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to himself but to his object.'

But for the young Marx it was not only the worker who became imprisoned in this 'alien' world beyond his or her control. So did the capitalist: he was alienated as well, even though he was 'happy in his alienation'.

The point of Marx's later work – especially *Capital*, was precisely to work

out the way in which 'objective laws' came into existence that controlled this world of 'alienated labour'. Marx showed how the ability of the capitalist to extract surplus value from the workers at the point of production put a continual constraint on both the worker and the capitalist. The harder the worker works, the more wealth he creates for the capitalist. This wealth can then be used to expand the productive forces at the disposal of the capitalist, to employ more workers and to create still more wealth for capital. The very labour of the worker has created the chains (even if the worker is well paid and they are 'golden chains') which tie him or her to endless production.

But the capitalist too is a prisoner. The very fact that exploitation and accumulation is possible for one capitalist makes it obligatory on *all* capitalists. Any capitalist who does not exploit in order to accumulate and accumulate in order to exploit will be driven out of business.

Yet, Marx went on to argue, the capitalist is doomed by the very world of alienated labour in which he thrives. The compulsion to endless accumulation regardless of the consequences leads, in the short term, to repeated economic crises in which many capitalists go bankrupt. And in the long term it drives the whole capitalist system to economic stagnation, political chaos and social turmoil which in the end dooms the capitalist class, facing it either with socialist revolution or 'the mutual destruction of the contending classes'.

This did not mean that capitalists individually or as a class could be made



to see sense and behave differently by reading *Capital*. Any capitalist who tried to do so would be driven out of business by the others. And so the ruling class necessarily identified the continuation of society as they knew it, of what they saw as 'civilisation', with enthusiastic imposition of measures that could only end by destroying that society. Only the violence of an insurgent working class could make them step aside and allow the reorganisation of society on a rational basis.

Marx's analysis of the effects of 'peaceful' competition for markets might seem a far cry from the world of *Cruise and Perishing*. But in 1915 and 1916 the analysis was expanded to explain the bitter, bloody and apparently pointless war which had the great nations of Europe locked in combat, rapidly threatening to tear all of them apart.

#### **Imperialism and 'Exterminism'**

There was already one attempt at explanation of the war -- expounded chiefly by the German socialist, Karl Kautsky -- that went something like this:

The war was not at all in the interests of the great majority of capitalists on either side. They had been conned into believing by a minority of arms manufacturers that only through war could they defend their capitalist interests in the colonies. But in reality it would be the easiest thing in the world for the different capitalist powers to meet together and agree jointly to exploit the colonies. And so the war could be ended merely by bringing pressure to bear on capitalists to behave differently

(or, as Thompson might have put it, to pursue 'an alternative logic').

This account of the war was challenged by the Bolshevik theorists, Bukharin and Lenin. Some aspects of Lenin's analysis of imperialism may not have stood the test of time. But in it, and even more so in Bukharin's *Imperialism* are accounts of the 'logic' that produced World War One. And these can still throw much light on 'exterminism' today.

Lenin and Bukharin insisted that the development of capitalism leads to military competition complementing and even taking over from peaceful competition for markets.

For, as capitalism grows older two apparently contradictory things happen. On the one hand, within each country there is a concentration of economic power into fewer and fewer giant firms, increasingly integrated into state. Yet at the same time, the growing scale of production means it can no longer be contained within the narrow boundaries within which existing states operate.

The only way the contradiction can be resolved is if the national state can extend its powers beyond these boundaries within which existing states operate.

The only way the contradiction can be resolved is if the national state can extend its powers beyond these boundaries. It has to build up its armies, its navies, its airforces, its weaponry, so as to be able to safeguard markets, production facilities and raw material resources that exist abroad. This means annexing some territories, establishing spheres of influence over others, forcibly pres-

surising the rulers of the rest to safeguard its interests.

'The struggle between state capitalist trusts is decided in the first place by the relation between their military forces, for the military power of the country is the last resort of the struggling "national" groups of capitalists,' wrote Bukharin in 1916.

'The capitalists partition the world, not out of personal malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method in order to get profits,' Lenin insisted a year later. But any partition could only be agreed on by all of them for a short period of time, since as some of them grew economically more quickly than others the military balance between the powers would shift and the stronger ones would demand a larger share of the world.

Under such circumstances, periods of peace 'inevitably can only be "breathing spells" between wars. Peaceful alliances prepare the way for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars.'

Bukharin spelt the argument out again in 1921 in his *Economics of the Transformation Period*.

'The anarchy of world capitalism -- the opposition between social world labour and "national" state appropriation -- expresses itself in the collision of the state organisations and in capitalist wars...

'War is nothing other than the method of competition at a specific level of development...The method of competition between state capitalist trusts...'

Just as economic competition has a logic of its own, so Lenin and Bukharin argued the military competition does. Lenin observed that imperialism was characterised not just by the seizure of areas necessary to the national economy but areas which might strengthen the rural power if it possessed them and areas of importance from the point of view of military strategy. And Bukharin noted that the militarist structure of the state arose from the 'economic base', but 'like every "superstructure" reacted back on the base and moulded it in a certain direction.'

The point of this discussion of Marx, Lenin and Bukharin is not to show that Thompson has infringed some 'orthodoxy'. It is rather to emphasise that that he sees as completely new developments, right outside the perspectives of classic Marxism, are exactly the sorts of things that classic Marxism was trying to explain. Competition between manufactured products gave rise to competition between those fairly nasty classes of manufactured objects, Dreadnoughts, machine guns and poisonous gases and that in turn gave rise to competition between the most horrendous of manufactured objects, intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear bombs. The level of alienation is raised to an incredible degree; the physical future of all members of all classes is put at risk. But all on the basis of the 'world of alienated labour', the capitalist relations of production.

## The Logic of the Cold War

Let's look briefly at what motivates the major protagonists of the Cold War.

The facts about the expansion of the interests of US capitalism beyond its national boundaries are well known: it controls about half the productive wealth of the world; firms like Ford or General Motors or the oil giants operate productive facilities in scores of countries: US investments overseas produce more output than any single country apart from the US itself and the USSR; the US banks receive the lion's share of the 88bn dollars a year which developing countries have to pay out on debt servicing each year. The point has been reached where the viability of almost all of the major US industrial corporations and banks depends upon maintaining intact integrated complexes of components operations throughout the 'free world': the great banks could be brought to their knees if one of the great debtor nations defaulted, even Ford would have gone bankrupt in the last couple of years but for its overseas operations.

Under such circumstances the rulers of the US see the frontiers of their vital interests as much wider than the frontiers of the US itself. They believe that they have to maintain the most powerful armed forces in the world so as to be able to ward off threats to these interests, whether from genuine national liberation movements, from Russian moves, or from the other Western capitalisms taking measures that would damage the functioning of the US multinationals and banks (for instance, through protectionist measures).

This basic military drive is reinforced by subordinate factors: by the way in which over 30 years the cost of maintaining this huge military apparatus has been partially offset by its effect of stabilising the civilian economy and lessening the severity of economic crises; and by the way in which key firms and powerful bureaucratic sectors within the armed forces and the Pentagon gain as against other parts of the ruling class from the scale of the arms effort.

But the US does not operate as the only force in world affairs. Thompson quite rightly dismisses those who would see US imperialism as the only cause of missile madness. But he does not comprehend how Russia has developed an imperialist drive of its own. And so he can conclude imperialism is *not* the cause of the arms race.

Yet if we look closely at the way in which Russian society has developed since the late 1920s it is easy to see how an imperialist drive has developed symmetrical to that of the Western powers. When the group around Stalin took complete control of Russia, they set themselves the task of defending that control by developing a military apparatus as powerful as that of any potential foe. But that was only possible on the basis of imitating in Russia much of the basis of the Western military potential - building up heavy industry through squeezing the living standards of workers and peasants and ploughing

the excess value so obtained into accumulation. But once such methods were adopted, it was logical to copy the West in other ways as well - to reach out beyond the USSR's borders for further resources for accumulation. Hence the division of Poland with Hitler in 1939, the division of the whole of Europe with Churchill and Roosevelt in 1944-45, the move into Afghanistan last December.

Accumulation in order to match the arms potential of a rival is an endless process. Every success in expanding the industrial base or armaments only spurs the rival to do the same. The arms budget has to be increased in order to hold together a ramshackle empire already groaning under the consequences (the shortages of food and consumer goods) of the existing arms burden.

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**'In both the Pentagon and USSR Ltd powerfully based bureaucrats see their own career prospects as identified with further enlarging military-industrial structures...'**

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Yet to relax, to let the arms programme slow down, is to risk being humiliated by the opponent at one or other point of confrontation, and to see allies switch sides, clients regain their independence, semi-colonies rebel.

And so the mere possibility that the opponent might develop some new form of weaponry compels one to do the same. Just as in economic competition as seen by Marx, the accumulation of means of production is necessary, regardless of the individual desires of capitalists, so in military competition, accumulation of arms - and the economic potential to make them - is necessary, even if both sides can see that ultimately it is going to destroy them. But, of course, the individual desires of capitalists do come to be identified with accumulation - the system provides the appropriate psychological and ideological mechanisms to keep itself functioning. The bureaucracies of the state and industry which participate in the accumulation of arms become so structured that the individuals in them see that as a good thing in itself. In both the Pentagon and in the great firm that is USSR Ltd powerfully placed bureaucrats see their own career prospects as identified in further enlarging the military-industrial structure.

The continual expansion of military might feeds back into each protagonist, just as 'pure economic competition' would, forcing each ruling class to tighten its grip over subordinate classes,

forcing each to broaden still further the base of its arms potential by spreading still more beyond its borders, creating still more interests in each society intimately bound up with the pursuit of further military expansion, even to the point where the demand of the military on resources pushes society as a whole into the deepest instability.

## Cold War and Crisis

This leads to a final point of *analysis* where we part company with Thompson. His account of the new Cold War cut it right off from an important element determining its course - the existence or otherwise of economic crisis.

The point can be put like this. Until the mid-1940s it seemed that the *Western* imperialisms could not coexist on the face of the earth without continual recourse to war with each other. But the antagonisms that had produced the First and Second World Wars were soon forgotten in the boom conditions of the 1950s and 1960s. The whole world economy was expanding, and the different powers could share in the prosperity without stepping on each other's toes.

As between the various Western powers and Russia things were more difficult. Although the division of Europe was agreed in 1944-45 and adhered to, with respect to the rest of the world there were problems. It was by no means clear what the real balance of forces was because of the number of unknown factors (the effects of the colonial revolution, the Chinese revolution, the then higher growth rate of the USSR, etc.). However, by the early 1960s, something like a stable balance of forces seemed to exist. The basis was laid for 'detente'.

One of the things that has reactivated the old antagonisms has been the effect of economic crisis in both 'camps'. Both great powers have been faced with an increased need to deploy resources outside their own national frontiers at the same time as there has been a destabilisation of the foreign countries in which these resources are located.

In the case of the West there has been the massive growth of the international credit system (Eurodollars and Petrodollars) and the increased pressure to internationalisation of production (the 'world car', for example). But this has been accompanied by increased tensions among the advanced powers (the continual pressures for import controls against each other's goods, the attempts of Germany and France to play an independent role in international affairs) and by the creation of whole zones of instability in the rest of the world (especially the Middle East, but also Central America and the Caribbean).

In the case of the Eastern bloc the Russians have found the Chinese openly aligned with the West, have lost Egypt to the US camp, see Iraq changing sides, are having difficulties consolidating their hold on Afghanistan and fear new rumblings in Eastern Europe - all at a time when they are more dependent

than ever before on their economic ties with the West and the Third World.

Both sides find themselves with economic problems that create dissent among allies, clients and semi-colonies. Both fear the other will exploit these to its own advantage. And so both attempt to increase the number of their warheads, to raise the accuracy of their missiles, to prepare to threaten the other with 'limited' nuclear war if it intervenes in the wrong 'sphere of influence'.

### Theory and Practice

The analysis of the world put forward above does not contradict Thompson completely. On many points there is concurrence. But the practical conclusions that follow are very different.

For Thompson the struggle against the missiles is *the* struggle, the resolution of which must be achieved before we can deal with other issues (with taking on the 'armourers and the gaolers'). For us it is a struggle that intersects with many other struggles over many other issues.

This is fantastically important. CND last time round was very successful in mobilising numbers of people. But in the end it failed. It did not get rid of the bomb and most of the activists moved on to other things: Thompson himself, for example, stopped campaigning and started writing (very good) history.

Failure was not the result of lack of effort. It was because, essentially, CND did not gather behind it a social force that could break the grip of the bomb makers. And that was because it was cut off from the everyday preoccupations of the great majority of people. Trade union leaders like Frank Cousins of the TGWU could cast bloc votes for CND. A Labour Party conference could even pass a resolution against the bomb. But neither enough TGWU members nor sufficient Labour Party supporters cared about the issue to enforce implementation of the resolution or blacking of nuclear bases. When, later, we sat down in the streets in an effort to get our way through direct action, we soon learnt it was powerless, because we, by ourselves, were *not* a social force.

The impotence of CND was something that had been experienced by anti-war movements before.

Take, for example, the experience of the First World War. Ultimately that war ended because first the Russian and then the German workers and soldiers would endure it no more. But for long years before that the anti-war movement was isolated, on the margins of society, unable to influence events. One of the most important worker leaders of the German revolution, Richard Muller, later explained why. He tells how the most virulent opponents of the war (organised in the *Internationale* grouping) remained cut off from the workers in the big Berlin factories. These workers were fairly hostile to the war, but it seemed something remote from them until it led to direct attacks on their living standards and their trade union



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rights.

To build up a movement in the factories capable of action took four years of slow, relentless work by Muller and his comrades. By contrast the anti-war socialists outside the factories called repeatedly for demonstrative actions which could only appeal to small 'vanguard groups' of workers, easily dealt with by the military and the police'. There had to be a unification of the anti-war sentiment and the struggle over material conditions *before* there could develop a force powerful enough to crack the regime and the war.

One of the problems for CND in the late 1950s and early 1960s was that the material conditions were not such as to make possible such a unification of the 'economic' and the 'political'. Most workers could still look forward to rising real living standards year after year, unemployment was less than two per cent, the welfare state was still expanding.

Today things are different, precisely because the new surge of nuclear missiles is linked with the trend towards international crisis. The increase in arms spending takes place at the same time as the cuts in schools, hospitals and housing; the militarisation of society takes place as workers engaged in traditionally 'peaceful' trade union practices find themselves up against the forces of the state; the growth of the new anti-bomb movement takes place as the retiring head of the Supplementary Benefits Commission warns of the 'danger' of the unemployed rioting in the streets.

Yet Thompson virtually ignores all this. For him the way forward is to repeat the movement the last time round, with bigger numbers of essentially the same sorts of people. It is a recipe for unnecessary failure.

Thompson is not clear on another thing of immense importance -- whether we are going to have to seize the

weapons of destruction from the hands of our rulers, or whether all we have to do is peacefully persuade them of the folly of their ways. At times his tone is one of confrontation. But at others it seems we only have to point to an 'alternative logic'.

This is not surprising, since the very sort of people he sees as constituting the core of the movement would run a hundred miles at the very thought of real confrontation. Just look at his proposed allies. 'The churches' are the archbishops and cardinals en masse going to lead an assault on the missile bases? 'The Eurocommunists' -- when, as Edward Thompson well knows, the Italian Communist Party leaders have argued *against* Italy leaving NATO, the Spanish Communists do not argue for an ending of Spain's alliance with the US, least that should 'destabilise' the international situation, and the French Communist Party is the most enthusiastic supporter of the French nuclear *Force de Frappe*. The 'Labourites', if by this Thompson means the leading Labour lefts, then it should be remembered that it was only two years ago that their star was threatening the use of troops to break a strike at Windscale. Even the category of 'trade unionists' is ambiguous: does it mean those at the base, or those leaders who spend much of their time trying to stop strikes in places like the naval dockyard where the nuclear submarines are fitted out?

Thompson has drawn up a list of people who might -- on occasions -- put their names to anti-missile petitions. He has not located a coherent force that will fight to dismantle the missiles, regardless of the consequences.

The deployment of nuclear warheads is *integral* to the society in which live, capitalism. The more people are enmeshed in the higher structures that society, the more they resist anything which threatens to overturn it.

society – even if such an overturn is necessary to stop it leading humanity to annihilation. They might sign letters to *The Times*; they will run in fear of riot. They may clap politely at a public meeting; they will shudder at the thought of social upheaval. They may distribute the odd leaflet; they will hide if the leaflet leads to real conflict.

This is not an argument for putting up a sign at anti-nuclear meetings: 'Workers Only'. It is an argument for developing strategies aimed at sections of society who are not so tied to existing structures as those who have pride of place in Thompson's vision. The missiles do threaten the future of the individual members of all classes. But the question is: how many of them can be won to a strategy not just of token opposition, but of active struggle?

And here it has to be recognised that the stockbroker who wants to fight the bomb has to look to a movement that will destroy his profits, the priest to a break with his own church, the Euro-communist to a fight against party leaders who tolerate the weaponry of destruction, the Labourite to a battle with left figures who oppose bombs in opposition only to preside over their construction when in office.

In this sense, the bomb is a *class issue*. There are those whose class interests lead them to accept the threat to humanity (including themselves). And there are those whose class interests point in the opposite direction, who even if they have been conned into accepting the bomb can find themselves bitterly fighting the bomb makers over other issues. A really successful movement can win individuals from the first group. But only if it makes them break with that group to build among the second. Thompson with his near-mystical incantation of terms like 'exterminism' and his grandiose verbiage about 'broad movements' obscures this essential fact.

### **Bolshevism in the Age of the Bomb**

Politics is not just about theoretical analysis or even strategy. It is also about getting things done, about the organisational forms that can turn theory into practice. What should these be in the era of missile madness?

For Thompson – and no doubt for many other people in the new movement – the sheer horror of what the missiles can do means dropping the traditional forms of organisation adopted by Marxists, especially the notion of a disciplined revolutionary workers' party. All that is needed, it is argued, is the broadest possible alliance. But before anyone goes along with Thompson on this they should reflect on one thing: it was precisely the way in which capitalism produced an earlier version of militaristic horror (that of trench warfare and poisonous gas) that led the most consistently anti-war socialists to adopt a precise organisational form, that to be found in the notion of the 'Bolshevik Party'.

The idea of such a party certainly

was not adopted because of any obsession with orthodoxy. When first broached it was a most unorthodox innovation. People found out the hard way it was what they needed as they struggled against what was (at that point) the most horrendous war in human history.

A Gramsci, a Big Bill Heywood, a Eugene Levine, an Alfred Rosmer, a John MacLean a John Read, even, at the very end, a Rosa Luxemburg, came to see that the only way to cope with capitalism in the era of world wars was to build a party of the sort that had been pioneered in the struggle against Czarist despotism in Russia. Why did they come to this conclusion?

Until 1914 opposition to the different aspects of capitalist society tended to flow into different channels. There was a trade unionism that was concerned chiefly (when it even did that) with the wage rates and working conditions of workers with particular skills. There was a 'political' socialism that only concerned itself with making propaganda and collecting votes. There was a pacifism that only made ineffectual protests against participation in wars. There was a feminism which restricted itself to fighting the legal disabilities facing women.

The war threw each and everyone of these currents into disarray. Trade unionists turned against one another as the state offered privileges to those union leaders who would support its war effort and prison sentences to those militants who resisted. The 'political' socialists had the choice of acting as a left front for militarism or continuing in the most difficult conditions with propagandism that seemed ineffectual against searing bullets and burning flesh. The pacifists were either converted to instant patriotism, or made individual protests which eased consciences but could not stop the carnage. The feminists split between those who saw 'equality' as meaning an equal right to suffer in the trenches, and those asserted that it meant an equal part in the fight to turn the guns against the generals.

What was different about the party that had grown up around Lenin in Russia was that it showed that impotence could be overcome by linking the different struggles. Trade unionism which cut itself off from the struggle against other aspects of capitalism (militarism, despotism, discrimination against minorities and women) left intact a system that would not only recoup any concessions it made over living standards but which would threaten life itself: this was the import of Lenin's famous attacks upon 'economism'. Socialism which put its faith in pamphlets and ballot boxes alone talked about a future that was already being destroyed in the present. Pacifism which preached peace without locating a force that could seize from the militarists control of the means of waging war merely created the illusion that the blood pouring from capitalism's every pore was an accident.

By contrast a socialism that was

rooted in the day-to-day struggles in the factories was wrestling for control of the future in the here and now; an opposition to the war that based itself on strikes over living standards, working conditions and trade union rights did not merely pray for an end to bloodshed, but made it more difficult for the Hais and the Hindenbergs to keep the bloodletting going.

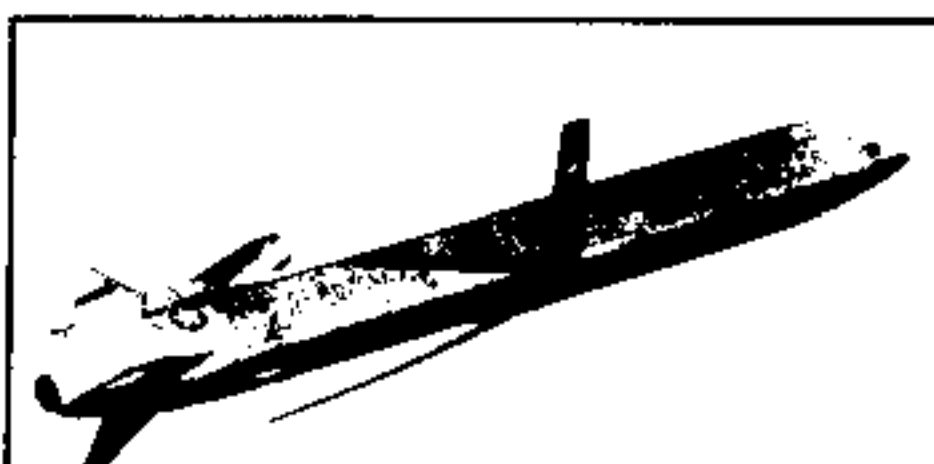
This did not mean barring from the factory struggles those who did not believe in revolution, or from the anti-war demonstrations those who accepted private property. But it did mean creating a party which would educate, agitate, organise within each of these wider movements for the connections to be made, for the strikes against food shortages to become strikes against the militarists, for the demonstrations against the war to be demonstrations against the system that created the war.

The party had to be 'of a new sort'. No longer concerned just with propaganda or vote catching. No longer delegating to 'trade unionists' alone responsibility for agitation in the factory. But itself obsessed with action, above all action in the workplaces, and structured in such a way as to make action effective.

The question of building such parties was absolutely central because of the way 'peaceful' capitalist competition for markets had given way to war and the preparation for war. Ruling classes who hurled millions of armed men against each other would not recoil from murdering and imprisoning socialists who tried to stand in their path: the fates of Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Levine, Joe Hill, Connolly, Gramsci, MacLean bear witness to that. Parties were needed that could operate as peaceful protest became civil war, as legality gave way to illegality. Those who had already presided over 20 million deaths were not going to be stopped unless for every bullet they fired bullets were fired back from a thousand factories. And that had to be organised.

It would be utter folly to believe that it needs a lesser social force, a lower level of organisation, to deal with those who are prepared to contemplate the destruction of humanity than those who 'merely' sent a generation of young men to die in the trenches.

Chris Harman



**Armageddon here we come**

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# Star-spangled tatters

On 4 November the most powerful nation in the world goes to the polls to choose its leader for the next four years. As the following articles make clear it is an election without choice in which probably the majority of those eligible will not vote.

It is also an election which takes place against the background of the worst recession since the thirties. Eight million Americans are officially registered jobless and millions more do not even enter the official statistics. In what was the heart of the American auto industry, Detroit, even official figures put unemployment at 20 per cent. In Baltimore when the city's social service department announced 77 vacancies for clerical workers it received 26,205 applications within a week.

No wonder that a recent Harris opinion poll revealed more Americans feeling powerless and alienated than at any time since the polls started in the sixties.

But that frustration remains undirected or misdirected. The trade union movement is weak and getting weaker. The New Left movements of the sixties seem exhausted. Aggressive conservatism and chauvinism are resurgent.

What are the prospects then for American socialists in this no-choice election year. Three members of the *International Socialist Organisation* (our co-thinkers in America) take a look at some of the problems.

Carter, Reagan and Anderson are agreed on one thing—the right of the United States to intervene militarily anywhere in the world to defend its 'vital' interests. The argument is over tactics. Anderson wants massive increases in conventional weapons and forces. Reagan is a right wing jingoist of the 'nuke them back to the stone ages' variety—whose only regret in the Iran-Iraq conflict is that the US cannot unilaterally intervene. Carter has already boosted arms spending dramatically, brought back the B-1 bomber, the MX missiles system and the neutron bomb.

A desperate attempt is being made to bury the humiliation of the Vietnam war—both domestically and internationally.

A drift to the right in the U.S. through the 1970s turned into a severe lurch at the end of 1979 and the beginning of 1980.

What gave the American ruling class the green light was the Iranian revolution, the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran, and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

The clearest indication of this lurch is the sharp rise in jingoism and chauvinism—most clearly expressed in the anti-Iranian sentiment around the country.

In the first week the American embassy was seized, there were large anti-Iranian demonstrations in many cities. There is



much evidence that these demonstrations were not 'spontaneous' as the press claimed, but often organized by right wing groups. In any case it was clear which way the wind was blowing.

Around the country Iranians were attacked. In San Diego, California, two Iranians were stripped, tied to chairs and shot at close range with shotguns. The incident was not reported in the national press.

Official deportations began. Today, the INS (immigration and naturalization service) is seeking to deport 8,000-10,000 Iranians it claims are here 'illegally'.

Every night the television networks ramed the point home. 'America held hostage. What has happened to American might?' Everyone jumped on the bandwagon. The dividing line was what kind of retaliation should be taken.

Bumper stickers proclaiming 'Nuke Iran,' 'Fuck Iran' 'America No.1' appeared on hundreds of cars. Local radio and TV stations sponsored 'solidarity' actions with the hostages. Ayatollah dartboards sold like hot cakes.

Much of this sentiment was consciously sponsored by the press and state. It was clear to Jimmy Carter—whose popularity was at an all time low—what advantages could be reaped.

'USA, USA, We're number one' was the chant after the Americans won the hockey game at the Lake Placid Winter Games. The outburst of patriotism was reminiscent of the 1950s, and it was clear that the stakes were much higher than a championship in ice hockey or the decision whether or not to compete in the summer games.

Then came Carter's fiasco in the desert. Whatever else can be said about the raid, it is clear it was a desperate attempt by the US to assert its ability and right to intervene anywhere in the world to protect its interests.

Today, the wave of patriotism has died down somewhat—eroded by unemployment and inflation. Nevertheless, the American ruling class has won an ideological victory—it re-established domestically its right to use force, to intervene where 'necessary'.

But the new Cold War, the lurch to the right has had other consequences. It has produced nationally, a small minority which is actively seeking an alternative to this madness. A small minority which courageously stood its ground and said at the height of the xenophobia a few months ago, 'No U.S. intervention in Iran.'

Ever since the reintroduction of draft registration there has grown a small but

vocal anti-draft movement, which has held pickets, demonstrations and meetings. Out of the four million 19 and 20 year olds that were required to register, it is estimated that there was 25% non-compliance. That is one million young people refusing to register.

The numbers opposed to the system are at present small—but the polarization in America has made the situation more political—easier for socialists to intervene. We can expect the numbers to grow.  
Ahmed Shawki

## Ballot or bullet

Riots in Miami, Orlando, Chattanooga and Philadelphia are dramatic evidence that black workers are once again fighting with their backs to the wall. Reports from all black leaders that Watts, Detroit, Chicago and Cleveland will also explode add to the realization that blacks are, as always, bearing the brunt of the capitalist crisis.

Both Reagan and Carter are making 'efforts' to woo blacks in this election. Reagan, well known for his opposition to every civil rights bill passed by the Congress, attempted to visit the desolate South Bronx, only to be booed by blacks and Latins. He also accused Carter of visiting the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan (although he got the place wrong) implying that Carter's trip south aided the Klan. Carter's response has been to call Reagan a racist. And that is about the extent of the debate on the issue of racism in America.

For black Americans both candidates pursue the most racist policies, and with the current drift to the right, their stands only encourage extreme right wing groups such as the KKK and the Nazis to crawl out from under their rocks.

Economically blacks face the greatest economic attacks. According to the US department of labour the unemployment rate for black men is at 12%, for black women at 11.9%, double that for whites. Government figures show that black teenage unemployment is at a staggering 43%. However, these government statistics only count those people who collect unemployment benefit. The Urban League estimates that black unemployment for both sexes was 24%, and this was before the heaviest layoffs of the current crisis. Given the government undercount, black unemployment in May, 1980 was 38%. In other words, one out of every three black people who need jobs can't find work.

The income gap between blacks and whites is widening. In 1970, blacks earned 61% of white's income. By 1977, the figure dropped to 57%. Families headed by black women had incomes 66% less than those headed by white men. In 1977, 31% of all black families were below the government's 'poverty line.' Only 9% of all white families fell into this category.

The crisis facing black Americans goes even deeper. Education, always has been a major concern for blacks, is now in crisis. The schools are more segregated today than they were 25 years ago. Funding crises in Cleveland, New York, Detroit and Cincinnati where blacks are concentrated, are on the verge of collapse. There is mass organized resistance by whites to busing for the

purposes of integration. Schools remain separate and very unequal.

Health care and social services are also under attacks which directly affect blacks. This year right wingers led an almost successful campaign to cancel the food stamp program altogether. The black infant mortality rate is twice that of whites; a black child today can expect to live an average of 68 years, a white child is expected to live another five.

Combined with the constant economic attacks comes an increase in police racism and brutality. Everyweek in almost every city in America the police shoot a black person. Or in the case of Miami, beat Arthur McDuffie to death, and get off. In Chicago, the police beat to death a retarded 52 year old man because he kept smoking in the subway. The policemen were suspended, but later given jobs as goons for the teamsters

union. The KKK is also mobilizing and appearing publically. They were able to murder five members of the Communist Workers Party, and it looks as if they will be given light sentences. Three Klansmen who shot two women in Chattanooga also got off with no or very light sentences. There are rallies and cross burnings in both the North and South.

Carter won the election through the black vote in 1974. This year even though he is campaigning against an arch conservative and racist he knows the black vote is not going to be won easily. In 1964, Malcom X, made his most famous speech, 'The ballot or the bullet'. In it he spoke about elections. What he said then is as true today for black Americans:

'The most explosive year. Why? It's also a political year. It's the year when all of the white politicians will be back in the so-called black community jiving you and me for some votes. The year when all of the white political crooks will be back in your and my community with their false promises, building up our hopes for a let-down, with their trickery and their treachery, with their false promises which they don't intend to keep. As they nourish these dissatisfactions, it can only lead to one thing—an explosion'.

Barbara Winslow

## Attacked from all sides

Unlike most American elections, the issue of women's rights has become an important part of the 1980 presidential campaign. Ronald Reagan and the Republican party have come out in opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). They oppose any federal funding for abortion; in addition, their program calls for a constitutional amendment which would outlaw abortion altogether. The Republicans also promise that only anti-abortion federal judges will be appointed when Reagan wins.

In contrast, the Democrats say they favor the ERA, federal funding for abortion, lesbian and gay rights. At the Democratic national convention an unprecedented 50% of the delegates were women.

If this sounds as if the Democrats are committed to women's equality it is only a rhetorical commitment. The Democrats have been in control of the White House and Congress for the past four years when abortion funds were cut off and when states failed to ratify ERA.

Last June, the nine old men on the Supreme Court ruled that the government did not have to provide funds for poor women who needed abortions. Since federal funding has been cut off six women are known to have died, and Planned Parenthood estimates that deaths will reach 1000 a year—80% of them black and Latino women.

The right wing has been bolstered by Reagan's candidacy. In September, the National

(anti-abortion) Right to Life Organization planned an assault on 1000 clinics in an attempt to 'save' 300 fetuses—fortunately they were stopped by Reproductive Rights activists.

While Congress busily slashes funds that would pay for abortion, it is also increasing funding for sterilization programs. Already 35% of all Native American women have been sterilized and 33% of all Puerto Rican women in US-run Puerto Rico.

Working women are finding it more dangerous to work. Over two million women work in situations dangerous to pregnancy. Some women, like those who worked for the lead base paint company, American Cyanamid, were forced to submit to sterilization in order to keep their jobs.

Women who work do not have the same rights as do men. In 1976, the Supreme Court ruled that General Electric did not have to pay pregnancy and maternity benefits for women, even though the same company paid for vasectomies and hair transplants for the men.

Working mothers find the growing economic crisis attacking them as mothers and workers. A working mother spends two thirds of her wages on child care, and very few companies provide the service. There are less than 200,000 licensed day care centers for the six million children under six years of working mothers. Women's wages are getting worse. Today a woman takes home 57 cents to a man's dollar.



A woman in a union earns \$2000 more than her non union sister. Yet only one woman out of six is in a union and half the 800,000 union jobs lost due to plant closures and 'runaway shops' since 1976 have been women's jobs.

The increased economic and social attacks have begun to anger women, but as of yet, there is no mass response. The radical women's liberation movement, which came out of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the sixties, was co-opted. The women today, who proclaim themselves the leaders—the Gloria Steinems—are in fact reform Democrats who will sell out wom-

en's issues to keep a Democrat in office.

But there are a small number of militant feminists who see the attacks on women as connected with the capitalist system. For the most part, these women are involved in the reproductive rights movement, and have organised demonstrations defending abortion rights and against the anti abortionists.

And there have also been a number of strikes involving women, such as the Essex wire strike in 1977 and the Sandersons strike in Laurel Mississippi, which show the potential of working women in the struggle for real liberation.

Barbara Winslow

## A new generation

The majority of Americans will probably sit out the 1980 elections. And most of these people will be working people who see no difference between the candidates of the two parties, Carter and Reagan, and no alternative in Anderson, the Republican running as an independent.

Unfortunately, there is little hope that the left will be able to take advantage of this opportunity. There are several socialist and populist candidates on the ballots, but they represent organizations that count their members in the hundreds. They exist at best on the margins of working class life. Their combined vote will represent a small protest, but little more.

The American left, most of which was born in the turbulence of the sixties—the anti-Vietnam war movement, the black liberation movement, the women's movement,—steadily declined in the seventies. The Black movement was smashed, its leaders murdered, jailed and driven into exile. The anti-war movement did not outlast the winding down of the war. And the student and women's movements were largely incorporated.

The left wing organizations that survived are often wildly sectarian or following the sharp shift to the right in American politics. The New American Movement, for example, was a fairly large organization of sixties' radicals who considered themselves revolutionary. At its convention this summer, NAM voted to join DSOC (the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee), an organization of social democrats who work inside the Democratic party.

The past three years have seen stirrings in a new generation—in solidarity with Southern Africa, against nuclear power. And now in opposition to Carter's plans for a new draft.

But the likelihood is that the sixties left will continue to decline, fragment, and drift either to the right or into even crazier sectarianism.

This situation is partly a result of the fact that high hopes for an American working class movement did not materialize in the seventies, and the experience of hundreds of radicals who left the campuses of the sixties

to go into industry has been one of a decade of disappointment, defeat and demoralization.

There are some signs that the situation is changing. There continues to be a reform current in the unions, though it is weak and on the defensive. Ed Sadlowski and the leaders of the Steelworkers' largest district in Chicago still challenge the international leadership. William Winpisinger, the head of the machinists union, has refused to endorse Jimmy Carter in the elections, and there is a small but significant opposition in the Teamsters union.

The rank and file movements of the early seventies are mainly gone. The biggest defeat came in the miners' union, with the defeat of the Miners for Democracy (MFD), the only rank and file movement in recent history to oust an entrenched union leadership. Arnold Miller, the leader of the MFD, largely defeated himself in office, and was replaced last December by Sam Church, the leader of the right-wing forces in the union.

Still a low ebb does not mean that nothing is happening in American labour, certainly not that there are no possibilities for revolutionary socialists.

In the fall of 1979 there were more teachers' strikes that ever before in American history. This fall there is another wave of strikes.

The strike last winter against the International Harvester Corporation lasted 171 days, the longest major strike in the history of the United Auto Workers. There have

been bitter fire fighters strikes, notably in Chicago and Kansas City. In Kansas City dozens of fire fighters were jailed in the course of a fight for a union contract.

In Youngstown, Ohio, hundreds of steelworkers responded to US Steel's closings first by marching on the company's headquarters in Pittsburgh, and then by occupying the company's district headquarters in Youngstown. Only the betrayal of the local union leadership prevented the development of an ongoing fight against the closures.

In rural Laurel, Mississippi, a small group of black women workers have caught national attention by waging a heroic strike against Sanderson's Farms, a poultry corporation that specializes in inhuman working conditions and hires Klansmen as supervisors.

These are just examples, of course, but they are given not only because they represent significant working class struggles, but also because socialists have been involved in each case—and many others. They show that socialists can work openly inside the unions today, and that they do.

The national elections are really out of the reach, in any sense, of revolutionaries in the United States this year. The Democrats are not a left-wing alternative to the Republicans. The two parties represent different wings of the ruling class. Watergate exposed, among other things, how top companies contribute equally to both parties. There is no socialist alternative, and most socialists themselves will not vote.

But the elections are far from irrelevant. They are an indication of how far the country has gone to the right in the past decade. They are an indication of how important rebuilding a socialist current and a revolutionary spirit really is in America.

The job of socialists is not, therefore, to concentrate on the elections, but to build an organization for the future—a future when there can be a genuine socialist alternative. Today this means relating both to the new generation of radicals, particularly in the new anti-draft and anti-war movements, to the new black movement which is rising slowly from the ashes of Miami, Orlando and Chattanooga, and to the struggles of working people—whenever and wherever they develop.

Cal Winslow

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## Ghastly brood, good advice

Pro-monarchy and anti-Corrie, liking Thatcher but not the cuts, advertising products criticised in feature articles, publishing stories that perpetuate the myths it explodes in advice columns, with even the cookery features regularly contradicting the slimming and health articles. Such is *Woman's Own*.

Yet I must confess that I am an *Woman's Own* addict (yes, there are quite a few of us, even among the readership of *Socialist Review*) and hardly ever read any other similar magazine. Only when there is a picture of Prince Charles on the cover, I sometimes buy its twin sister *Woman* instead for a week.

The most appalling things about *Woman's Own* are the Royals, the Rich and the Reactionaries. In order to remain Britain's model family, the Queen and her ghastly brood have done some moving with the times, at least in the imagination of *WO* writers. The description of Princess Anne as 'a working mother' is bad enough; but an alteration to one of the Queen's dresses (so that she could wear it twice) has actually been described as 'just one example of her clever budgeting'!

*Woman's Own* publishes a lot of articles about the Rich, from the Titled Rich to the simply Filthy Rich. They are always about rich people's problems: 'It is hard, but we have to learn to accept our duties,' says a Duke; 'Money causes terrible problems and worries,' sighs the wife of a 'self-made' millionaire.

Among Reactionaries featured by *Woman's Own* have been Mrs. Ian Smith of Salisbury, Rhodesia, and ex-Empress Farah of Iran. Maggie Thatcher follows as a matter of course ('The tension of No. 10 and how I cope'). But an interview with Sally Oppenheim last year actually raised quite a storm of protest when she told all about her housekeeper and her £50 a week housekeeping money.

Film stars, though very rich and always having enormous problems, are treated with less awe. Many of the articles printed are by hack Hollywood writers who set new standards in bitchiness and degradation: John Travolta, the subject of constant drooling for over two years, was recently depicted as paranoid, unpleasant, and sure to flop with his new film. Occasionally articles on 'the stars' are different: a recent feature on female pop stars—including Lene Lovich and Annie Lennox of the Tourists—put a very positive view of women performers.

By contrast with the personality features, most of the fiction published in *Woman's Own* is really unreal. The favourite work situation is still the advertising office, though 'having one's own accounts' has replaced having a super boss as the pinnacle of this career. The plain and homely girl who gets (or keeps) her man despite competition from a more beautiful/glamorous/career woman rival is still a favourite theme. A surprising number of short stories are writ-

ten by a woman as though from a man's point of view: these men are most unrealistically obsessed with love and marriage—they are pure wish-fulfilment.

Occasionally, there are exceptions to the general run of fiction: a weird short story by Philip K. Dick, the science fiction writer; a feminist one by Maeve Binchy of the *Irish Times*. But most continue to peddle the myths of love, motherhood and 'a woman's place' which are looked at with a critical eye in advice articles.

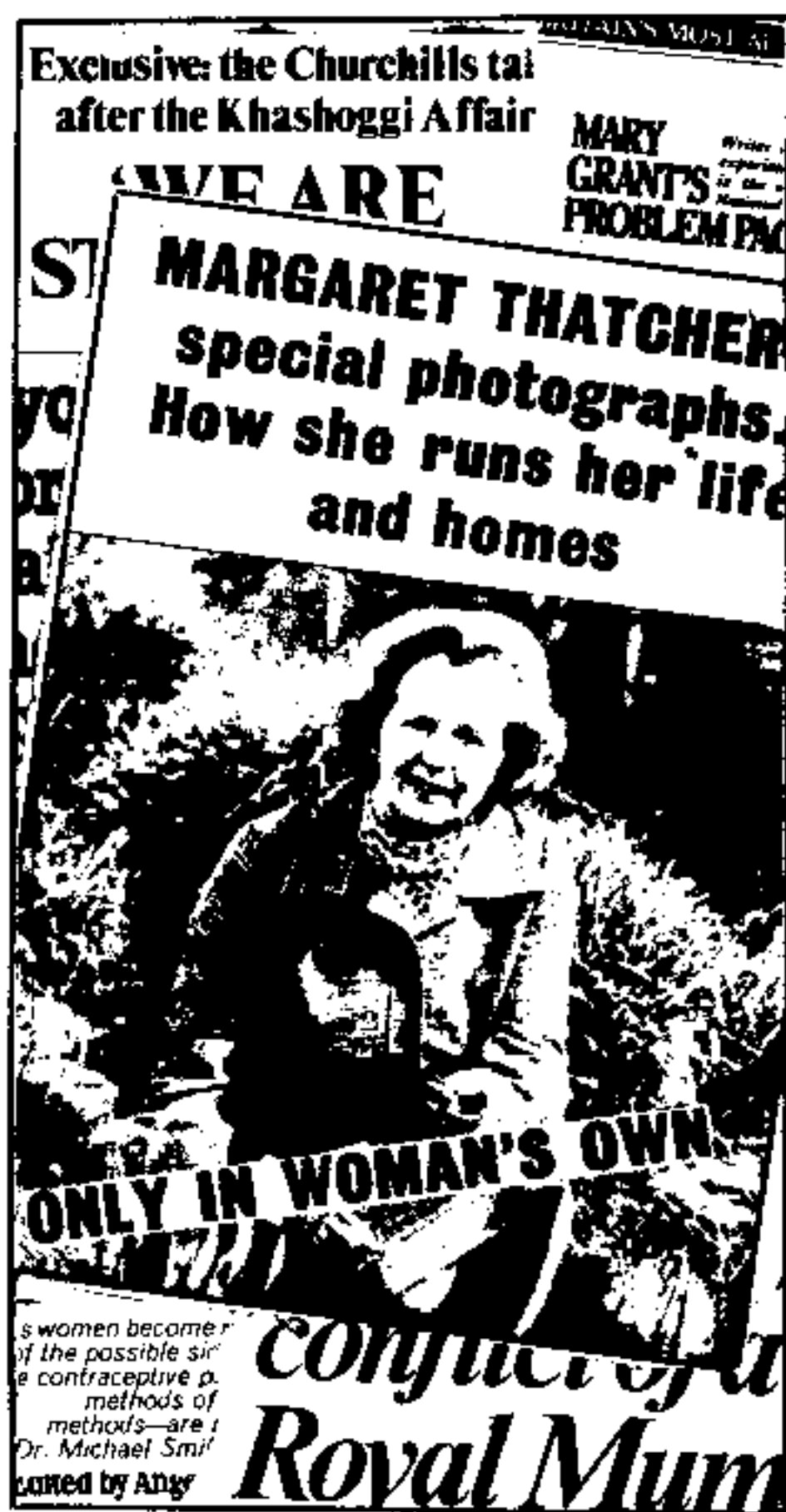
Most of the advice published by *Woman's Own* is very good indeed. Its coverage of health is a big plus: readers are repeatedly advised not to put up with sexism and ignorance from doctors and hospitals, and the regular writers have some admirably sensible views. The misuse of tranquillisers is criticised, contraceptive methods are examined for disadvantages as well as advantages, and it is explained that children's colds are caused by germs and not by inadequate mothering. In dealing with matters of health and sexuality, men are not ignored by *Woman's Own* (certainly more men read it than read *Spare Rib*): a recent feature dealt with 'Sex Myths that Worry Men'. The attitude to female sexuality is generally positive and encouraging, except for an almost complete embargo on lesbianism. Masturbation is not only mentioned but approved of.

Advertising is not a direct barrier to good advice: regular writers have expressed scepticism about fads such as vaginal deodorants, deodorant tampons and unnecessary hair removal. The ads still appear, long after the article has gone.

Nor are the ultra-conservative politics of royalism and Toryism incompatible with a firm stand on some really important questions of women's rights. During the campaign against the Corrie Bill, the magazine's 'counselling team' were allowed to express their own views: all except the male GP were against the Bill. On the eve of the third reading, it was *Woman's Own* which published the opinion poll showing that two-thirds of the adult population opposed the Bill.

With a stream of generally well-informed articles on matters such as education, housing and children's welfare, *Woman's Own* cannot avoid criticism of the cuts. The furthest this goes seems to be 'Have we got our priorities wrong?' Sometimes opposition is deflected into self-help: mothers on housing estates running their own playgroups, parents raising money for school equipment, and appeal funds for axed medical research projects. If the worst comes to the worst, we are offered advice on home nursing and packed lunches.

Feminist may sneer at the fashion and beauty features: this cuts them off from a very large number of women (especially working class and especially young) who accept the position that dressing up and



making up are fun. 'Make-overs' are a special feature of this magazine: a number of readers—of all ages, shapes and colours—are shown before and after 'improvement' by hair, make-up and fashion experts. All haggard and miserable before, all radiant and confident after—or did some of them look nicer before?

There are also snippets of invaluable practical advice. I can park a car in a tight spot and open screwtops on which I have seen men break their teeth. If I learn anything half as useful in the next twenty years I can skip Prince Charles's wedding when it comes (if it comes).

Who are the women *Woman's Own* is aimed at? A lot further down the social scale than the models offered for imitation, for example, in Polly Graham's middle-class-housewife column. Any woman who feels she is already middle class or intellectual thinks she is 'too good' for *Woman's Own*, buys glossy magazines for fashion and household advice and reads something else on sexuality. The correspondence columns bear out the impression that the readership is predominantly manual and white collar working class, with a fair sprinkling of students and teachers.

The contradictions in *Woman's Own* may reflect a desire to incorporate some sort of feminist consciousness into the system; or it may be that competent women journalists completely untouched by feminism are hard to find nowadays. I am more inclined to think that it reflects a massive change in the consciousness of the expected readership over the past ten years or so, a readership who will no longer swallow the traditional women's magazine diet without at least a flavouring of militancy. And this, it seems to me, is a good sign.

Norah Carlin

# Still going strong

The 31 August agreement between the Gdansk strike committee and the Polish authorities has not brought the ferment in the country to a halt. It has merely led it, for the time being, into other channels than those of all-out strike action.

Even the strikes are not completely over. The success of the Gdansk workers was immediately followed by strikes in one area after another as workers demanded similar agreements and objected to attempts to keep them under the control of the official unions. Just as the *political* strike in Gdansk has grown out of *economic* strikes, so it in turn prompted a further wave of economic strikes. The pattern of elemental working class upsurge first described by Rosa Luxemburg in her pamphlet *The Mass Strike* 75 years ago was being repeated in her homeland.

In order to end the strikes the authorities have been forced to more or less accept the new independent unions, to increase wages, to shorten work hours and to end the most unsocial shift systems (in the mines, for example). Yet the concessions have not stopped the ferment.

Reports indicate that 'productivity has fallen sharply as workers spend much of their time engaged in political discussion' (*Guardian* 1 October), with 'a continual inability to get back to full production as workers organise themselves on the factory floor, mines and shipyards...' (*Financial Times*, 1 October).

The potential strength of the new unions was shown at the end of September. They threatened a general strike because half the country's workforce had not received wage increases that had been promised. Within hours the authorities announced that general wage increases were being brought forward. And even that did not stop the call for a one hour strike to show the strength of the new unions.

As Anna Paczuska's article below shows, the worker's movement has drawn other social groups behind it. 'Journalists, lawyers, teachers, students and many other sectors of society are busy arguing the case for self managing unions of their own' (*Financial Times*, 1 October).

This can only *deepen* the crisis of the regime. For these groups are precisely those the regime has traditionally depended on to browbeat and brainwash workers and peasants into accepting its rule.

So far the top bureaucrats have chosen to run before the storm, hoping to buy off discontent with wage increases and recognise the new unions now in order to bureaucratise and emasculate them at a later stage. They have chosen the top policeman Kania to preside over the process, hoping that he will be able to stop the iron fist growing rusty under the velvet glove it has to wear for the moment.

But they cannot concede indefinitely.

Over one shoulder the Russians are looking apprehensively, speaking with a tone increasingly reminiscent of that of the months that led up to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968: they know it would be counter-productive to move in now, but will be ready to switch options in the winter or next spring if Kania cannot bring the workers to heel.

If that weren't bad enough, over the other shoulder is the stony gaze of the Western bankers, increasingly loath to lend money to a regime that is being forced to pay out to workers funds meant to service its past debts. The miners' strikes have already cost £147m in lost exports; the abolition of anti-social shifts in the coal and copper mines will cost still more. The bankers are patient men. But not that patient. The day the threat of the general strike was issued, the Austrian banks refused an additional £700m loan.

The unease of Eastern and Western interests is matched by unease from the bureaucracy's own base. It depends for social support upon hundreds of thousands of petty bureaucrats in the factories, the ministries, the schools and colleges, the police, the armed forces, the press. These live a privileged and comfortable life amidst the general shortages and queues through bullying subordinates, creaming off 'social funds' for their own benefit, cornering the best houses and the higher quality meat, sending their chauffeurs and their char ladies to the front of the the queues for food. Such people

will be directly in the firing line of the worker's anger harnessed in the new unions. And they fear any purge of 'corrupt' elements directed from above with the aim of finding scape-goats for the system's failure.

The contradictory pressures on it are producing wide divisions within the top bureaucracy. Twice the small directing body, the presidium, has had to postpone calling together the wider Central Committee (where all different wings of the bureaucracy are represented) because it could not arrive at agreement within itself. It has been afraid that unless it imposes a line, too wide a discussion within the larger body will disorient people and fragment the ability of the bureaucracy as a whole to impose its will on the rest of society.

Any splits in the leadership can only further deepen the crisis of society as a whole.

On the one hand, they will provide further leeway in which the worker's movement can develop as a force in contradiction to the regime, drawing behind it other social groups. On the other they will spur the Russians and powerful sections of the Polish bureaucracy to be attracted to the notion of military intervention. It is doubtful if the agreement signed on 31 August will be able to survive the clash of these opposed forces. The new Polish worker's movement could well be forced to take on the structures of exploitation and oppression, not only in Poland, but throughout the Eastern bloc.



Lech Walesa and friends celebrate

# The student dimension

A revolutionary change in society can only occur when the most radical sections of the workers and intellectuals understand what is needed in order to achieve that change and fight together to win the mass of the workers to their ideas. The workers are central because they are the only section of society which has the economic and political power to overthrow existing society.

But intellectuals are important too. The ideas that form the movement for change come not only out of worker's activity. They are influenced and cross fertilized by the ideas of radical students and intellectuals.

In Poland the growing strength of the workers movement over the past decade has created a space in which other elements of the opposition could grow. An important development in that has been the emergence of a student movement which has set up breakaway student committees in most Polish universities and has helped to organize the alternative education projects 'the flying universities'.

The growth of the student movement has paralleled that of the worker's movement. In the early 60's when the worker's movement was weak, dissent was confined to limited, occasional strikes and to a small number of intellectuals and Party members who concerned themselves mainly with censorship and internal reform.

1968 saw the first public signs of discontent when student protests in March led to demonstrations on the streets. The demonstrations were confined mainly to students, but it was reported that in Krakow workers had marched with them.

The workers were to erupt into many spontaneous strikes and into the momentous actions of Szczecin in 1970 and the demonstrations of 1976. But the organized student movement did not emerge until after the setting up of the Workers Defence Committee in 1976. The Committee which had been formed to raise support for workers victimized for their part in strikes against prices rises in 1976, was composed mainly of intellectuals, many of them veterans of the 1968 student movement. It gained support right across Polish society. This included a large measure of support from students—1,600 petitioned the Polish parliament in support of victimised workers.

One of the leading supporters of the Workers Defence Committee (KOR) was Stanislaw Pyjas, a student at the Jagellonian University in Krakow. On May 17th 1977 his body was found in the doorway of a block of flats with his head battered in. The authorities said he had died after falling down the stairs drunk.

Pyjas had been the subject of a campaign of anonymous letters. Five of his friends had received letters in April insinuating that he was a police informer and urging them to 'settle with this nasty character once and for all by any means at your disposal'.

The Requiem Mass for Pyjas was atten-

ded by some 2000 students. They formed a procession after the funeral and marched across the city's main square to the place where his body was found. A boycott, almost wholly successful, was then declared of the annual student rag for the weekend following the funeral.

The death and the behaviour of the official student organizations led to the formation of a Committee for Student Solidarity, which announced that it 'allies itself with the Workers Defence Committee'.

This led to the formation of Student Solidarity Committees in almost every university. These published bulletins reporting on student life and on action taken by the university authorities and the police against them, with the aim of making repression more difficult.

Last year 14 members of the student Solidarity Committee at Wroclaw University were suspended. They had protested against the circulation of a broadsheet attacking one of them and carrying the forged signature of four others. Following appeals on their behalf nine of them were reinstated. This success can only have been due to the growing respect the authorities have gained for opposition groups balanced as they are on the back of the increasingly confident workers movement.

But it is not just their identification with wider movements and their desire for independent student organizations which brings the students against the authorities. Students have begun also to organise against the content of education itself.

## The flying Universities

All education in Poland is controlled directly or indirectly by the Polish authorities. The state decides what is taught. There is one exception to this—the Catholic University of Lublin. Otherwise the Polish education system is monolithic. Syllabuses are prepared centrally. The political views of teachers are checked. Those who are too liberal or controversial are moved or sacked. But this has not killed independent academic thought. Individual lecturers often have a considerable international reputation which to some degree protects them, and the establishment of a wide range of unofficial publications provides a platform for alternative and critical ideas.

In 1977 a group of intellectuals in Warsaw began a series of lectures in various peoples flats attended mainly by university students, these lectures dealt with social sciences and history. This initiative proved so popular it was extended and formalised. 'The flying university', as it was popularly known, had an enthusiastic band of teachers and discussed a wide range of topics. By the end of the first year's activities Adam Michnik's 'Elements of the Political History of People's Poland' was mobbed out. Many of the people had been harassed by the police. But few were actually imprisoned. And the Flying

University published its programme for 78/79 with confidence.

Then reprisals took a more violent form. Jacek Kuron was beaten up during a search of his flat. Thugs broke up a lecture being given by Adam and numbers of students were beaten up. These and other attacks were organised by members of the official Polish youth organizations.

Lectures for 1980 were limited by the repression that had taken place. But the existence of the flying university has already influenced the official education system. Certain topics can now be introduced and discussed.

## Free Student Unions

Following the workers strikes, students are making demands for Free students Unions.

In August a group of students at Gdansk issued an appeal for the founding of a Committee for an Independent Students Union at the local university. They declared their solidarity for the workers' actions and at the same time made their own demands: autonomy for higher education, the right to elect their own professors and the right to form independent student organizations.

They wanted a say in all aspects of university government, and an end to censorship and the banning of certain texts. They also demanded higher grants. In conclusion they pointed out that:

'Higher education, instead of being the centre of an intellectual and cultural movement, is rather an absurdly bureaucratized factory which produces specialists'.

The students have learned to organise in the style of the workers. Following the beginning of the university term we can expect to see more exciting developments. The ideas debated in the shipyards, transferred to the flying university, and influenced by support from abroad can begin to push the opposition movement in a new direction.

Anna Paczuska



Jacek Kuron

## THE MOVEMENT

Ireland have, all be it belatedly, taken up the case of the prisoners and have condemned their treatment has found an echo throughout the whole of Ireland that goes far beyond the confines of the Republican movement. It contrasts sharply with the failure of a campaign on British withdrawal to have a similar impact.

For two years the plight of the prisoners, who were protesting against the withdrawal of political status by refusing to wear prison uniform, was ignored by all those outside the Republican movement. This neglect was transformed into attention by a number of related factors. It became clear that the special Diplock courts through which prisoners went in order to become 'criminalised' were nothing more than conveyor belts to Long Kesh. Eighty per cent of convictions were on the basis of 'confessions' to the police; there was no jury; military personnel did not have to be identified in court when giving evidence and the judge was not only responsible for giving the verdict but was also responsible for sentencing. The prisoners consistently claimed that the 'confessions' were extracted under torture and gradually their claims began to be substantiated.

Amnesty International reported, 'mis-treatment of suspect terrorists . . . has taken place with sufficient frequency to warrant the establishment of a public enquiry to investigate it.' Even more damningly, prominent police surgeons admitted they had had to deal with prisoners who had been subject to torture. Cardinal O'Fiaich, the leading Catholic churchman, described their conditions in the H Blocks as an abuse of human rights after he had visited the men there, and the rest of the world gradually began to wake up to the truth. Public opinion in the South was particularly aroused by the publicity given to the recent book by Tim Pat Coogan: *On the Blanket: the H Block Story*.

The Tories see the threat that the H Block campaign could have on their overall policy of splitting off the Republican movement from the rest of the Irish population. They have reacted with a number of minor concessions: the minister of state responsible for prisons, Michael Allison, announced that the protesting prisoners would in future be able to receive one visit a week, be able to take recreation without wearing uniform and be eligible for compassionate parole. In addition he has been in negotiation with Cardinals O'Fiaich and Daly.

Although it is conceivable that the Provos might accept more substantial concessions in the future, for the moment they are supporting the prisoners' demands—for the right to wear their own clothes, to refrain from prison work, to free association with other prisoners, to organise their own educational and recreational facilities, to receive one visit, one parcel and one letter a week, to full remission of sentences.

The Provos have established a National H Block Campaign to fight for the demands, involving those who would not necessarily



Tenth anniversary of British troops in Ireland—August 1979

## Ireland: finding an echo

'If only a settlement were achievable in Northern Ireland as it was in Rhodesia.' Adam Raphael's display of wishful thinking (*Observer* 21.9.80) typifies the attitude of the British ruling class. From their point of view the Irish 'problem' remains as intractable as ever and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The stalemate that exists at the level of 'respectable' political life is mirrored by a stalemate at the level of military struggle. When the then Brigadier Glover (now Major General and Commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland) conceded in his 'secret' study *Northern Ireland, Future Terrorist Trends* that there was no hope of a military victory against the Provisionals, his assessment was echoed by Gerry Adams, the Vice-President of the Provisional Sinn Fein, who told the Provisionals' last Ard Feis (Annual Conference) that there could be no military victory for the Provisionals either.

Despite this clear understanding on both sides the war goes on. The Provos are capable of continuing their present level of

military activity indefinitely, largely because they have become more selective and sophisticated in their operations as well as having a measure of support in the Catholic ghettos. The British Army are similarly becoming more selective. Their harassment of known Republicans has been intensified while they are attempting to transfer as much of the responsibility for patrolling the streets back to the RUC. This policy of 'Ulsterisation' has, however, met with only partial success since the RUC are as far away as ever from being regarded as acceptable by the Catholic community. Their murder of 16 year old Michael McCarten who was shot as he ran away from painting the slogan 'Provos' on a wall in the Ormeau Road particularly angered Catholics and reinforced their traditional mistrust of the sectarian police force.

The issue that has put the British government under most pressure in recent years is the campaign for political status by the prisoners in the H blocks of Long Kesh and the 50 women prisoners in Armagh jail. The fact that the two leading Catholic churchmen in

## THE MOVEMENT

support their military activities.

How do socialists in Britain react to these developments in Ireland? Irish politics in this country has been trapped in a ghetto inhabited by a handful of revolutionary socialists and Irish exiles for some years, and it is only recently that real progress has been made in breaking out into the working class movement. It is not an easy transition. British workers have swallowed government propaganda about Ireland for years, and the battle of ideas has so far been ridiculously one-sided.

It is not good enough to make a pious statement of principled support for the self-

determination of the Irish people and the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Of course, these demands are the basis of our politics, but we have to make the connection that will win workers to these positions.

To this end the SWP has been involved in two campaigns on Ireland that address themselves to different aspects of the same problem—the Charter-80 campaign for human rights for Irish political prisoners, and the Campaign for British Withdrawal from Ireland. They are both an attempt to maximise potential support, particularly in the trade union movement.

active on the Irish issue in the heyday of the civil rights campaign and in the aftermath of internment are now keen to get involved again. The campaign has organised another major demonstration for November 15th.

The Withdrawal Campaign has a more obvious focus for activity in this country in view of the fact that it is Britain's army that is occupying the North and that recruits to that army come predominantly from working class areas, particularly areas of high unemployment. There is scope for anti-recruitment activity and for propaganda in the trade union movement based on the role that the army has already played and will increasingly play in industrial conflict in this country. It is no secret that the army is testing out techniques in Ireland that will eventually be used here.

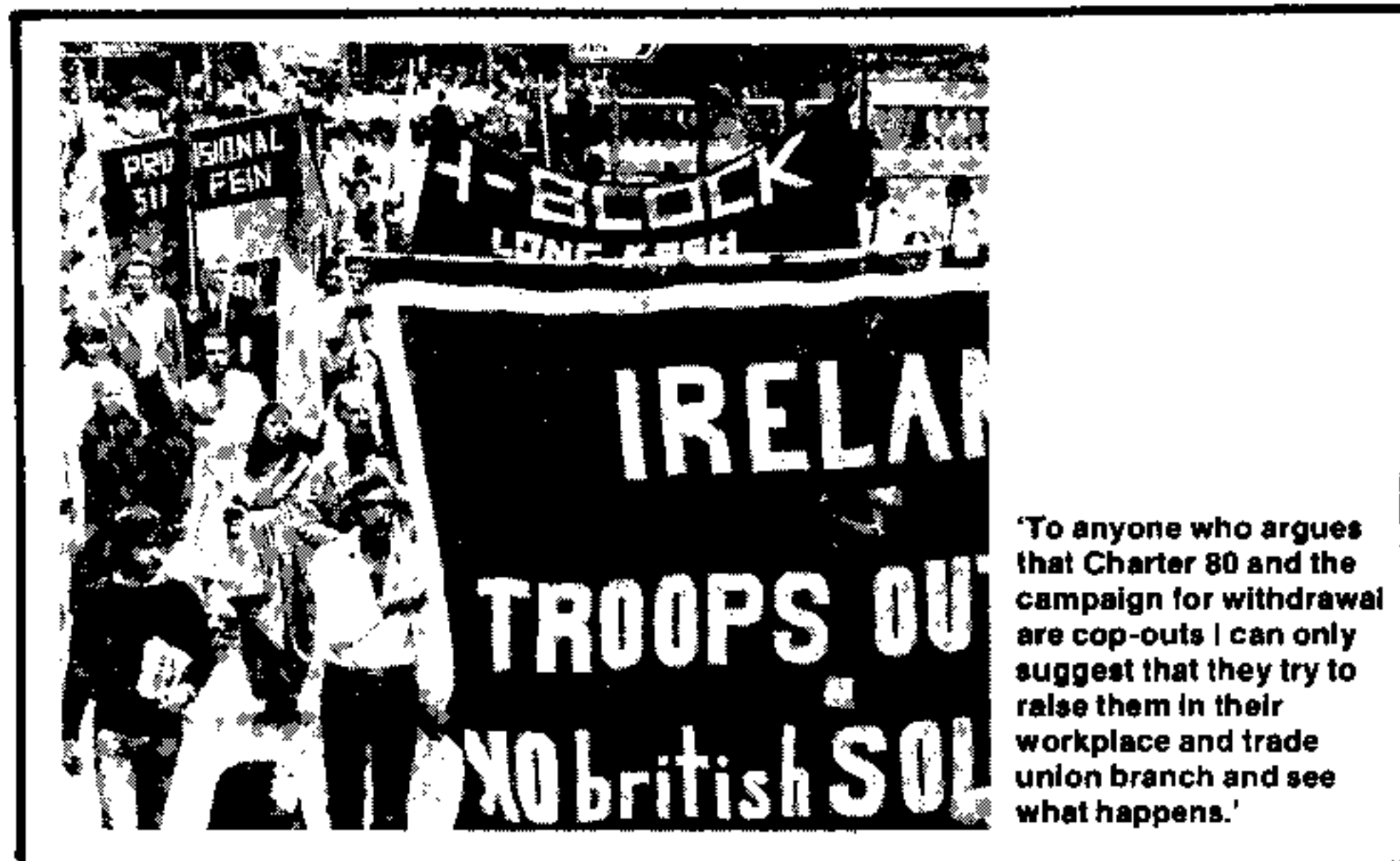
More ambitiously, the Troops Out Movement, which has been recently won over to supporting the two campaigns, organised a dramatically successful delegation to picket army forts in West Belfast to take part in the annual demonstrations to mark the introduction of internment. The delegation was well received by the people of the area, less well received by the many members of the army who were confronted by a variety of English, Welsh and Scottish accents telling them to get out of Ireland. Hopefully the precedent created by this delegation will be repeated.

Finally it is important to answer the criticisms of those who argue that involvement in such broad based initiatives will necessarily involve a dilution of our politics and an abandonment of our position of self-determination for the Irish people and immediate withdrawal of the troops. The reason that revolutionaries engage in united fronts or movements based on minimum demands is to draw others into struggle. Political consciousness is more likely to be developed in activity around specific issues, particularly if revolutionaries engaged in that activity recognise the importance of raising issues in debate which go beyond those demands.

Any debate on Ireland inside the trade union movement will involve us in arguing the historical, economic, social and military aspects of the struggle even if the starting point is something as seemingly innocuous as human rights. To raise support for Charter 80 is far from being a cop out. It involves us in arguing why the legal system in the North is part of the apparatus of repression and why men and women are forced to take up arms in the first place. Reformists and liberals who have involved themselves on the humanitarian basis are exposed to arguments that can take them further along the road.

To anyone who argues that Charter 80 and the Campaign for Withdrawal are cop outs I can only suggest that they try to raise them in their workplace and trade union branch and see what happens.

**Shaun Docherty**



Charter 80 is based on winning support for the five demands of the prisoners. Our approach has been similar to that of the Anti-Nazi League. We are attempting to win the widest possible support for these demands and to sign up as many leading figures of political and cultural life as we can. The climate is less favorable than that which faced the ANL—to a certain degree the ANL was cutting with the grain of anti-racist feeling in a way that Charter 80 is not. But the technique of winning broad support for a minimum programme is the same.

The founding conference of the Charter had an array of speakers representing a spectrum of political opinion including the Communist Party, Young Liberals, National Smash H Block Campaign, Socialist Workers Party, progressive churchmen and Labour MPs. This spectrum is reflected in the signatories to the Charter petition who include Tony Benn, Jill Tweedie and Lawrence Daly.

There is no clear focus for activity like the

ANL demonstrations against the Nazis. The National Front is very visible and obvious target. Although we will have to engage in demonstrative activity of some dramatic kind it will not be easy to get the same publicity and response as the ANL to it.

The first task of our supporters is to ensure that the arguments for the Charter are put in their workplaces and union branches. To get Ireland discussed at all is often a minor victory in itself. Needless to say, this activity will almost certainly be carried by revolutionaries and republicans in the movement, but they will be aided by the verbal support of the reformists and the big names.

The campaign should seek to expose the hypocrisy of the Tories who are quick to call for human rights in other parts of the world, but who are persistent in denying them to those on their own doorstep. The connection with Czechoslovakia that is implicit in the title of the campaign is vital in exposing these double standards.

### The campaign for withdrawal

The campaign for Withdrawal from Ireland addresses itself to the same constituency as Charter 80 and is based on four basic demands—an end to partition; opposition to Tory policies on Ireland; for a British withdrawal; for Irish unity.

It has been established rather longer than the Charter, held a very successful demonstration which attracted 10,000 people in August 79 and an equally successful Forum in March 80. The Forum in particular demonstrated that many of those who were

# A decaying Eldorado

Oppression and exploitation can sometimes force the aspiration to freedom, the vision of a different and better world, to hide in private dreams or timeless myths.

For any Latin American novelist, living amid the unrelieved horror of torture chambers and military dictators, the problem is how to avoid a general pessimism, a righteous indignation that offers very little hope.

Yet Garcia Marquez, author of *100 years of solitude*, has managed to write a funny book about all that. And it is that humour that injects this allegorical history of the ravages of imperialism with its humanity and its hope.

Like all his novels, *100 years* is set in the village of Macondo, a decaying Eldorado 'somewhere in the jungle'. Its inhabitants live in a solitude that is never broken, enclosed by rain and mist, in a world where it 'is always Monday'. There is a world outside, but those who go there never return to tell the tale. When the gypsies pass through Macondo with the circus, their elderly wise man Melquiades brings with him all the latest miracles of modern technology—ice, false teeth—which amaze and astonish the inhabitants of Macondo. Melquiades, the intellectual, knows and understands things; he has been 'out there', and has seen change, progress. In other words, he has experienced history, and has acquired culture.

Change, progress, time itself occur outside Macondo. Within the village, everything is repeated in endless cycles. The ruling family, the Buendias, produce successive generations with the same name; in the end you are never sure which Aureliano is which. And that is part of the allegory, because Macondo lives in a kind of prehistory, unable to participate in the march of humanity towards its fulfilment. In Macondo, no-one can act to change his or her world; they are all stuck at the Beginning, at the Creation, in a tarnished and decaying Garden of Eden.

When an expedition does go out into the jungle in search of civilisation, it finds only the wreck of a Spanish galleon hundreds of miles from the sea. The galleon is a reminder that the foundation (or Creation) of Latin America was also the moment when it ceased to be an actor in world history, when it became integrated into the history of a distant metropolis—Spain. From then on, Latin America—Macondo—became a victim of its own history, its object but never its subject. History, knowledge, culture, happened outside and appeared to the people of Macondo as unexplained curiosities, as circus miracles. All its own wealth, its own resources, were taken away and used outside. Like the working class in capitalism, the products of its labour appeared alien, strange and powerful.

History does enter this world—as tragedy (the massacre of the banana workers) or as farce (false teeth). In its curious state of

suspended animation, Macondo does not move. But outside it Spanish imperialism gives way to the more direct exploitation of North American capital. The murder of the striking banana workers, of course, appears absurd here; so Macondo, struck by a sudden plague of amnesia, forgets what it has seen—just as the Mexican regime blandly denied the hundreds of students murdered before the 1968 Olympics, or the Chilean junta refutes the dead of 1973 onwards as the figment of some fevered 'international communist' imagination. For Garcia Marquez, writing in Colombia in the 1960s, this must have been doubly poignant; for Colombia had just lived through a period of Civil War, called 'The Violence' which left 200,000 dead to no apparent purpose.

If this were all, *100 years* would be just one more grim account of the savagery of capitalism. What makes it funny, what humanises the book, is the constant refusal at the *individual* level to accept these constraints passively.

Aureliano and Jose Arcadio fight a hundred futile but heroic battles; Jose Arcadio the elder strives all his life to find the philosopher's stone that will turn base metal into gold. Amaranta Ursula levitates straight out of this oppressive and unsatisfying world; Pilar asserts her humanity, with Aureliano, in joyful gigantic sexuality. Their efforts are constantly frustrated, their world slips time and again out of their control and refuses to let itself be explained—and yet they persist in dreaming of something different and better, and trying to make it happen.

As yet there is no movement, no collective force that can seize hold of this world and give it a conscious and desired form. So the dreamers of Macondo can only imagine it changing through some magic or miracle. They have no sense of their power to change things—and yet they know it is within them. In another of his novels, *Nobody writes to the Colonel*, the Colonel (another Buendia) sells everything he has to feed his fighting cocks—his symbol of defiance and optimism. His wife complains that they have no food left: 'You can't eat dreams', she says. 'No', says the Colonel, 'but it's dreams that keep you going'.

The community has a grandeur and a human dignity—but it cannot become the subject of its own history until it breaks out of the lie, the myth of its own origins. It cannot act until, like every oppressed class, it sees that the way things are is not the way they have to be, is not the product of some Original Sin, but the product of human actions.

The book ends on an odd note. The last of the Buendias reads the last page of the manuscript (which is the novel itself) in which Melquiades has told the story of Macondo. As he reads the final pages, Melquiades, who has seen the other world, solves the mystery of Macondo and shows how



its stagnation has been the other face of the dynamics of an alien history. The Buendias knew it could be explained; but they had felt it as a peculiar sense of guilt, expressed through a fear that one day a child would be born with a pig's tail. When it happens, Macondo dies.

That end is also a beginning. The Buendias are one of the oligarchic families, powerless themselves and yet benefitting from that Other Power (after all, they are the undisputed governors of Macondo). When that world dies, they must die with it.

Yet you are left wondering at the end who will bring that change about. The only conscious character in the book is Melquiades, the intellectual; the people, the oppressed classes are absent—or silent. In this world, ideas and knowledge are the only force that can change the world.

Later, in his many articles on Angola and Nicaragua, Garcia Marquez obviously came to realise that change comes only when ideas inform action—that it is only real, living forces that can change the world.

*One hundred years of solitude* brings into focus the oppressive reality of a Latin America born into alienation, unconsciously playing the role of object of someone else's history. But it also shows, if idealistically, the contradictory striving for creativity, the drive to become the subject of history, that will finally consign both the Buendias and the Macondos to the history books of a future, much more creative world.

**Mike Gonzalez**

*100 years of solitude* is published by Pan for £1.25  
Pan have also published his other books:  
The autumn of the Patriarch £1.25  
Leaf storm £1.50  
No-one writes to the colonel £1.25  
Any of these can be obtained from Bookmarks 165  
Seven Sisters Road, N4, enclosing 25p postage.

### A bit saucy

The article *The World on the Dole* (SR 1980:8) epitomises many of the failings of the prevailing attitude of the left towards unemployment.

It is a bit saucy to say that the National Unemployed Workers' Movement 'could only permanently organise a small percentage of the unemployed.'

At its strongest the NUWM had almost 400 branches and a paid up membership of at least 50,000. No other 'mass' movement of the period had such numbers. There must have been thousands of marginally involved workers, people prepared to chalk slogans on pavements, attend socials, help to raise funds.

Nor do facts support claims that the NUWM showed that the unemployed are powerless. Take the examples of Edinburgh and Birkenhead where the unemployed succeeded in raising the level of benefits paid, with little or no trade union support. Clearly the alliance between the employed and the unemployed is potentially very powerful. But how is it to be achieved if there is no permanent organisation of the unemployed?

The core of the NUWM was made in part from Communist Party activists (although the twists and turns of the 'line' made that a dubious asset) and in part from ex-shop stewards who had been sacked right at the beginning of the 1920s. Hannington and McShane, the leading figures, were arch-typical ex-engineers who joined the CP because of its activity over unemployment.

The conclusions of the article were quite inadequate. The recent round of redundancies are throwing on to the dole many workers with strong traditions of trade union activity for the first time in decades. It is unlikely that existing unemployment campaigns will succeed in attracting such people. No doubt the experience of the last 4-5 years will prove invaluable in appealing to the younger unemployed. But dances, discos and demos are not enough to build a movement capable of organising older, ex-trade unionists. The NUWM is becoming more relevant than the article implies.

Paul Cunningham.  
Norwich.

### Cooling the mob

I've nothing against Edinburgh—the person I love was born there. But I see one of the Edinburghers, or Edinbourgeois as they're known in French, are still having a go at Roland Muldoon and *Full Confessions of a Socialist*—I would have thought the mob would have cooled off by this time.

Steve Faith, (SR 1980:7) clearly a reincarnation of John Knox, concludes by saying Roland's 'a fucking disgrace'. Fair enough, but why? Is it because he isn't funny? Apparently not, since one of his major crimes is that people, and a lot of socialists especially,

have to be carried out laughing after his performances. Is it because he doesn't make people think? No—anyone who's watched the *whole* of the play (unlike some burgers from Edin) will have seen the lunacy and horror of the system that is Roland's chief target. And they might have seen the connection between someone who's screwed up by the system and the system itself.

That's what the row's about; because it appears that Citizen Faith (and Hope and Charity as well no doubt) wants to suppress humour which talks about people as they are and about the world as it is, the people they might be and the world as it might be—because (and I quote) it might 'offend other radical viewpoints.'

Anything that causes offence has clearly got to be stopped. Why? Why do we have to protect people from hearing a character saying he hates his wife? Presumably either because it offends wives in the audience (sounds a bit unlikely) or because the men will say to themselves, 'That Muldoon's got a good point there; I do hate my wife; I'm going to kill her.' A new theory of mass hypnosis?

The really sad thing about those who howled down Roland and now want to vilify him is that they seem unwilling to take risks. They don't want to risk some mythical purity and would rather Roland told good, clean anti-capitalist jokes with *clear moral purpose* than he tried to produce a convincing, complicated character—at once comic and pathetic. Above all they don't want Roland talking to people who might not understand all their good socialist principles. We could extend the principle and avoid arguing with anyone who had 'backward ideas'.

Roland's humour is about argument and about change. That's why it's socialist. I hope he gets bigger and better audiences and that after the revolution he insists on offending every radical viewpoint he can think of.

Dave Beecham  
London

### Working class twit

In Roland Muldoon's interview in SR 1980:6, he said that people who attack HP Muggins 'show their ignorance of art and socialism'. Perhaps people like me who have much to learn about both subjects may nevertheless offer an opinion.

Muldoon himself is clearly not ignorant of either art or socialism. As a one-man show, his performance was very capable. He kept his audience entertained for an hour and his slipping from one character to another, his changes of scene and time, were all skilfully managed. He says CAST does not 'come over with the SWP line'. Even so, the message of the piece is definitely pro-revolutionary socialism, and the slides at the end showing some of the struggles of the last few years with shots of *Socialist Worker* being sold could mislead the audience into believing that the piece was an attempted

advertisement for the SWP. The original title, Muldoon says, was to be '*Confessions of a Socialist Worker salesman*'. If Muggins sells *Socialist Worker*, can we be blamed for thinking he was intended to represent a SWP member?

Muldoon claims that Muggins is an archetype. An archetype should be a unique, original creation, one which is generally agreed to be a departure from previous tradition, perhaps establishing a new one. But Muggins is hardly original. Not only have all his jokes been heard before, the characterisation of a working class twit has certainly been done before. The drunkenness, the lack of communication with his family, the sexual fantasies about girls unaware of his existence, the wretched housing, the dreary food he eats, the attitude to foreigners, these are stereotype characteristics, familiar to us all from Andy Capp, Alf Garnett, Pete and Dud, part and parcel of comedians' acts in music hall and on radio shows for most of the century.

The creator of Alf Garnett succeeded in showing his audience that Alf's prejudices were ridiculous because there was continual exchange between Alf and more sympathetic characters whose views were different. Alf's narrow-minded opinions continually led him into situations where he came off worst. But Muggins is surrounded by people who are even bigger twits than he is and the only time he gets the worst of a situation is when he loses his job. Since he doesn't lose his job through being a twit but because of technological innovation, the audience is surely asked to sympathise and identify with Muggins. But we cannot identify with Muggins—he is not a three-dimensional character, but a stereotype caricature, a working-class twit.

It is for this reason that *Confessions of a Socialist* appears confused both artistically and politically. But there is another reason why I find it politically unacceptable: the fact that CAST uses the concept of the working-class twit at all. It is difficult enough for working class people to shake off the idea, introduced at school, reinforced by attitudes at work, perpetuated by the media, that to be intelligent, to have talent and artistic sense, it is necessary to be middle-class and university-educated. It is not difficult to see why television comedy shows feature the image of the working-class twit. But for a theatre group which calls itself socialist to invent another of these characters, so completely in accordance with what the middle-class would like us to believe the working-class is, I find completely indefensible.

Jacqueline Mulhallen

To the great relief of everybody, Rolls Royce Motors have announced their new range of cars. The 'Silver Spirit' will cost £49,629. The 'Silver Spur' £56,407. The Editorial Board of *Socialist Review* have decided to launch an appeal to readers to buy one for the Editor.



### Tales of a black militant

#### Indignant Heart, A Black Worker's Journal

Charles Denby  
Pluto Press £2.95

This new book just off the press from Pluto is not to be missed.

Part One, originally published in 1952, charts Denby's life in the openly racist American South and his move off the land to the industrial North and its more subtle racism. It is the story of thousands, if not millions of blacks; their oppression and struggles for freedom, unlike many recent biographies of revolutionaries in Britain, which tend not to tell of everyday life from the 'grassroots'. Charles Denby is not a 'professional' writer, but this is an advantage in the sense that it is a book of the 'uncultured' working class.

Born into a society where slavery had been abolished in name only, Denby recalls conversations about early slave trading, which to whites in Britain may seem many ages distant. Unlike the general view, Denby shows that throughout the era, up to the Second World War, Blacks were far from submissive. Not only did they plot schemes of playing one landowner against another; their day to day activity involved ways of getting away with doing less work eg by sabotage. The state apparatus was controlled by racist whites but this created its absolute opposite, a collective black consciousness.

Denby is no superman and most of the time in the early part of the book his opposition was as 'futile' and 'individualistic' as was the struggle of any other black.

Moving north, hoping to escape racism and make some money, he found it in a different sense. The Northerners were two-faced; even some of the socialists would avoid him when they had 'company', whereas in the South at least he knew where he stood.

Working in the auto-shops of Detroit, Denby became a militant. Whilst living in the South, he had heard of the unions, and they seemed a great achievement, but when he went to the car factories in the Second War, he found a no-strike pledge in operation, totally supported by the Communists with their obsessive defence of the Soviet Union. After the War was over this was not revoked, and the union became paralysed, useless in fighting for workers' rights, as the bureaucracy sold out to the bosses.

He never left the shop-floor, fighting for rank and file rights and for a rank and file organisation. Through his daily struggles he became a revolutionary socialist, and joined the Trotskyists, but realised that theory was divorced from their practice. They claimed to

support an autonomous black organisation in the famous 1948 Johnson-Forest resolution, but then turned tail and ordered the black comrades into the spineless National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples, which was then rapidly declining. Denby was not willing to accept the party dictum 'party member first, negro second', or the idolisation of white leaders such as James P. Cannon. He left the SWP (USA), but this did not mean that he bowed out of the struggle.

The second part of the book opens with the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott; the new mass form of black rebellion for freedom at its very inception. The civil rights movement is covered from then right up to the present day, detailing the landmarks, from desegregation of schools, boycotts of segregated restaurants, the Freedom Riders, through to the great marches of the early sixties, especially the 1965 Selma-

Montgomery march, which 'changed the entire history of the country, and raised the consciousness of the blacks like nothing that had ever happened before.'

Written twenty-five years after Part One, in this section Denby has become a Marxist-Humanist, editor of a Detroit workers' paper, *News and Letters*. Despite still being personally involved in these events, he realised that it is vital to link theory to practice, to work out a philosophy of revolution, based on freedom.

We do have criticisms of the book, especially of the second section, which seems to cover events without enough detail. Perhaps this is inevitable in a life of such richness. These criticisms, however cannot outweigh the value of this superb book, in which treatment of Denby's life in the autoworks is outstanding. When automation hit the shop-floor and the trade union bureaucracy sold out, the rank and file initiated a new form of struggle, the wildcat, demonstrating the continuing resistance of the American worker to capitalism. For those who think that America is a capitalist paradise, this book shows the other side of the coin. At £2.95 it is a bargain.

Jon Murphy and Nigel Gibson

### Grousing about grouse

#### Freedom to Roam.

Howard Hill,  
Moorland, £5.95

Now that the Glorious Twelfth has passed and the aristocracy are slaughtering thousands of harmless grouse on British moorland, it is a good time to reflect on the state of access to open spaces in this country. *Freedom to Roam*, written by Howard Hill, who died this year, enables us to do just that. It traces the fight by mainly working-class people for breathing space in the countryside after a five or six day week at the factory.

Most of Howard's research deals with access to moorland in the industrial north—in particular the most trodden section of all, the Peak District. It is this marvellous collection of bog and gritstone, that thousands of working-class families have sandwiches on, fall into, or get lost upon, that attracts most of his attention.

If this were a book published by the British Mountaineering Council or the Peak Park Planning Board, we would be guaranteed that the politics would be glossed over or shoved into an embarrassing corner. Not so with this author, an ex-CP district organiser. He had a fund of knowledge of the characters who told the gamekeepers and landlords where they could stuff their grouse. And he knew little paths that even those, like myself, who spend so much time in the area are forced to admit ignorance of.

Basically, in the words of the campaigners of the '30's: 'Our grouse is about grouse.' By stealth and brute force, various lords etc.

acquired the Peak moorland in the last century, and then turned it into prime grouse-land. Before then, it was common land—much like the English villages before the enclosures. Slowly it all became 'private'. It wasn't until the Great Depression that the major struggles for access began.

When the demands grew more vociferous, landowners argued that rambling over the moors would decimate the bird population and hinder breeding. The ramblers said that this was rubbish, and they have since been proved right. They were incensed that in the times of greatest hardship the cheapest form of leisure was denied them for most of the year. And it was all because the class enemy wanted to gorge itself on the slaughter of birds. Indeed, on one day in August 1913, 2800 birds were shot on Broomhead Moor alone.

The Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout almost reminds us of a feudal version of Saltley Gates. In 1932, groups of ramblers, many of whom were unemployed, set off from Hayfield near Glossop to meet up on Kinder Scout with another group coming up from Edale. Gamekeepers knew of their intentions but their big sticks (literally) were no match for these men and women, who reached the top. Police had tried to stop the march but had failed to do so and, typically unfit, were left behind sweating and groaning up the hill. Much more could be said of this marvellous chapter, but readers will have to discover it for themselves.

In short, Hill shows that it was the pressure of working people using mass trespass which brought into being the 1949 'Access

to Mountains Bill'. It was opposed by the gun-shooting fraternity, by water authorities who feared that drinking supplies would be contaminated by the odd spam sandwich dropped in a stream, and by anyone who loathed the idea of working people having the right to sit on a clump of heather free of charge.

But the story does not have a happy ending. Readers of *Socialist Review* may think that the battle is over. Witness the many books on long distance footpaths in your library. It is a chilling fact that only two per cent of open country is legally accessible—the remainder is done on the nod. There have been setbacks: even within the past

year new signs have appeared on the Penine Way saying: 'This moor is private—keep off'.

There is still much to be done. Many days will be lost during the grouse shooting season when we can't set foot on the moors. Who would have thought that heather and smelly peat-bog could arouse such strident class antagonism?

So, for those who have not yet plucked up the courage to venture further north than Watford Gap, order this book from your local library and see how politics insidiously spoils the recreation of thousands each weekend.

Malcolm Cottam

## Fear of foreigners

### COLLAR THE LOT!

Peter and Leni Gillman  
Quartet £8.95

As the Public Records Office begins to release more and more material that has been held longer than the normal thirty years, so we begin to be able to see into more of the rotten episodes of the Second World War. This book is about the internment and deportation of foreigners resident in Britain during the war.

The story is one of governmental cruelty and hysterical nationalism. Apart from one or two minor figures, the only people to emerge with any credit are the internees themselves who suffered deprivation, the splitting of families and finally, for some, death.

The story begins really in the 'phony' war period. Thousands of trades unionists, Jews and socialists fled Germany and came to Britain to stay with relatives. In addition, Italians, chiefly in the catering trade, had been here for generations.

Initially, internment was ordered by the British government only for the severest security risks; those with fascist sympathies and those with knowledge that might be useful to an enemy, such as those in armaments factories. The rest were merely registered.

Then came the fall of Norway and the cry of 'fifth columnists' and 'Quislings' resounded round Whitehall and came to be direc-

ted against 'foreigners'. Churchill issued the famous phrase 'Collar the lot' and within weeks 30,000 were interned.

Most were kept in the north or on the Isle of Man which virtually became a giant camp. Although not treated as prisoners, their meals were meagre and conditions stark.

Then began deportations to Canada and Australia. One of the first ships to leave for Canada was the *Arandora Star*. It was torpedoed and 750 died. Others endured dangerous passages round the world, faced sinking by submarines and endured overcrowded ships.

Not only were the physical conditions degrading. Looted of their most personal possessions by their guards, mistreated and uninformed, many who would gladly have fought for the Allies found themselves lumped together with submarine crews and merchant seamen faithful to the fascists.

Only towards the end of the war were some released, conditions improved and compensation made.

The Gillmans are to be congratulated for bringing to our attention this episode, particularly relevant today in the light of Thatcher's warmongering. Although they rightly place internment in the context of the times, even a generous interpretation of the government's actions cannot hide the fact that it denied thousands to the most basic of human rights.

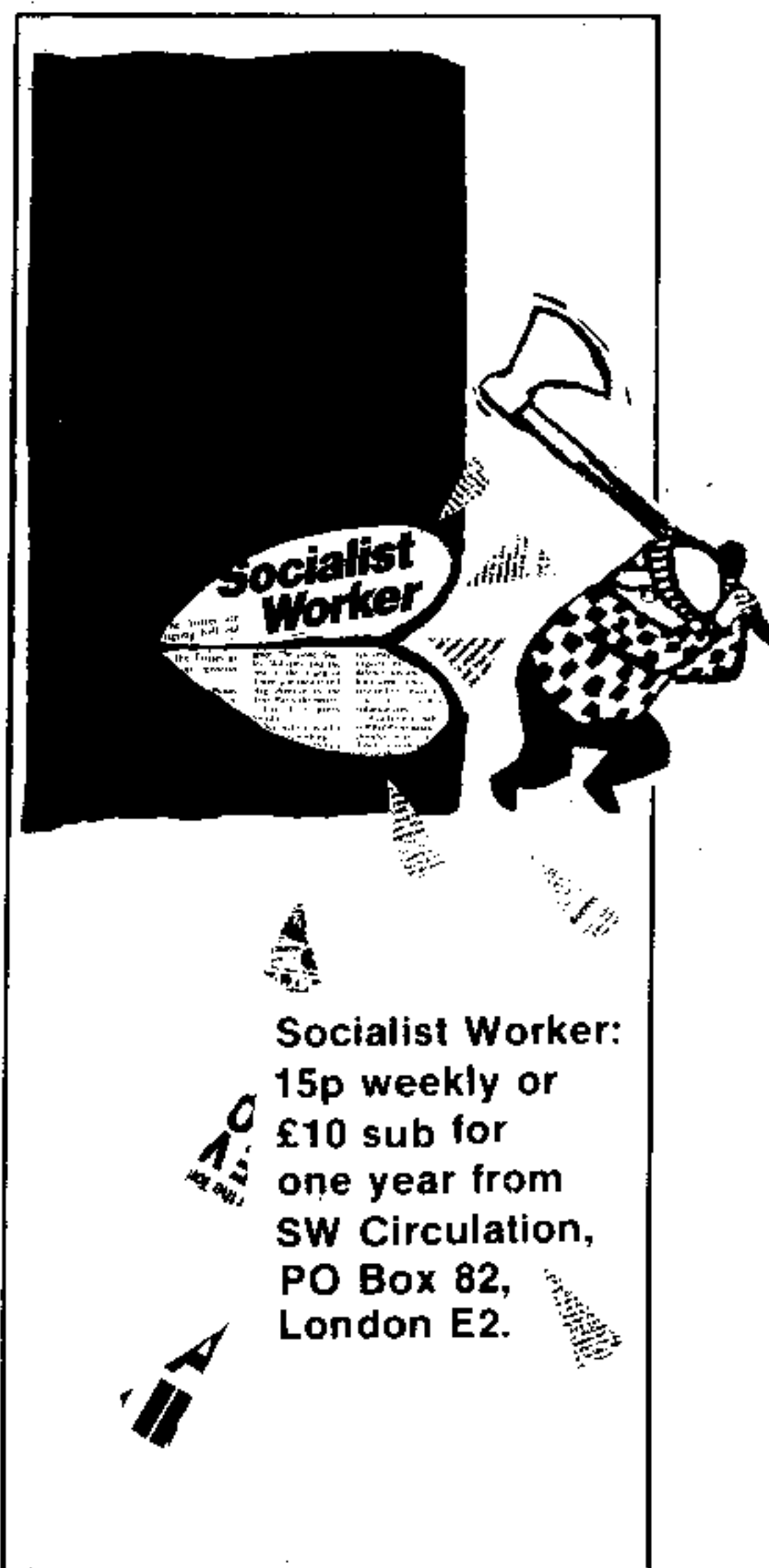
Steve Pinder

are not just there to be read like any other paper but also to organise as well. In that sense, two or three sales to the people you work with every day are politically more important than twenty or thirty anonymous sales through a newsagent.

Again, while local radical papers are a valuable challenge to the Tory torpor of much of the established local press, any initiative which is exclusively local must, of necessity, miss the main enemy. Political and economic power in our society are centralised and must be fought centrally. To deny this is to hand over the struggle against national priorities to other forces. And, given the weaknesses of the revolutionary left, that in practice means reformist forces.

So far, the work of the Minority Press Group speaks to the concerns of generals without an army—those radicalised intellectuals who work hard producing papers and magazines but who, because they reject party organisation, find it hard to get an audience. There are two ways out of the that dilemma. Either you swallow your pride, throw away your general's stars and become a party footslogger like the rest of us, or you dream up some way of persuading the state to subsidise your projects. Unfortunately, they seem to be heading in the latter, reformist direction. That is to be regretted. The enthusiasm, talent and energy is too valuable to be wasted on such a vain and inglorious cause.

Colin Sparks



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## Generals without an army

### Here is the other news

C. Aubrey et al.

Minority Press Group, £1.25

### Where is the other news?

D. Berry et al.

Minority Press Group, £1.25

These are interesting and useful books. *Here is the other news* is a study of attempts to set up and run local radical papers. *Where is the other news?*, written by members of the PDC group, looks at the magazine circulation industry and some of the problems this causes for radical papers. It is much the most

interesting of the two. The authors show how 'W.H. Smeznies' dominate distribution and how they use this control to exclude most radical publications from wide circulation to newsagents.

A good number of workers could buy *Socialist Worker* every week but decline to do so because they don't like, or don't care about, our politics. This may be regrettable, but it is true. And even if, as in France, there was a legal obligation on distributors to carry all papers, it would create new problems. One of the key things about the publications of a revolutionary party is that they

## FILM REVIEWS

### Appetizer

**McVicar**  
Director Tom Clegg

I went to see the film *McVicar* after being greatly impressed by the book. As far as it went the film appeared to be authentic. Dialogue and performances were professional. And for me the sound track sung by Roger Daltry conveyed some of the book's feeling.

But totally absent is the environment in which *McVicar* was brought up. Its different morals and codes encouraged him to adopt a criminal way of life—a way of life that is promoted by the establishment not only to add credence to its need for a police force, but also to initiate those from a working class background into the 'Fuck you Jack', 'Grab what you can' mentality that is one of the basic attitudes in capitalist society.

Instead the film deals only with the violence and macho glamour of East End villains—a view which I feel is opposite to the spirit of a book in which *McVicar* tries to burst this illusion.

For example, when asked how he managed to avoid capture for two years after his escape, he said that the image created for him by the press, of being a big, powerful, extremely violent man, with an 'obsession with body building' helped him a great deal, considering that he is only 5 foot 8 inches and weighs only 11½ stone.

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On the whole what is shown in a shallow way is faithful to the book. But the shame is that so much is ignored of the insight into the circumstances which made *McVicar* what he was. The film should be seen only to whet the appetite for the book.

Jimmy Clark

without real depth. Carolyn (Sissy Spacek), on the other hand, is the best developed character. We hear her voice-over narration throughout the film and the action, to a large extent, is shown through her eyes.

Director John Byrum has adopted a late 50s B-Feature format for the film which in parts works very well. Especially in the presentation of 'Bob and Betty Bendix', those archetypal, nouveau riche, all-American characters that were so familiar in those old soap opera imports of the 1960s.

Unfortunately, this treatment is taken too literally and we never get the grainy feeling of seedy Jazz-club, West Coast hip-life. The dirt is there but it looks so obviously painted on. However, some of the camera work is very pleasing, particularly some set-piece reconstructions of Edward Hopper paintings.

The sad thing about this film is that the contradictions and frustrations of trying to break away from the norms and expectancies of capitalist society yet still wanting to remain 'in the system' are touched upon but never become its focus.

At best, it is a fairly oblique look at confused and idealistic literati who want to create a new art and life-style, but not a new society. Hope and rebellion are transformed into 'success'—resulting, as has so often been the case, in personal tragedy for those who make the first moves and despair and cynicism for those who follow them.

Perhaps it would be asking too much from a Hollywood film to penetrate this very deeply, but the subject demands a better treatment than is offered by *Heart Beat*. It's still worth seeing nevertheless.

Howard Porter

### Off the road?

**Heart Beat**  
Director John Byrum

As the atom-bomb explodes at the very beginning of the film, so, in reality it marked the beginning of the post-war American Dream. A dream turned nightmare in Vietnam and now looking altogether empty as the world economic recession bites deeper.

*Heart Beat* is about—or at least, tries to be about—the romantic modern generation of Americans who kicked out at the relatively affluent but monotonous suburban mundanity of the post-war boom years. Their sub-culture of drugs, booze, travel, unconventionality and Jazz-club rebellion was, and still is for many, epitomised in the writing of Jack Kerouac. His book *On the Road* was one of the first statements, and later became the model for the 'beats' and the 'hippies'.

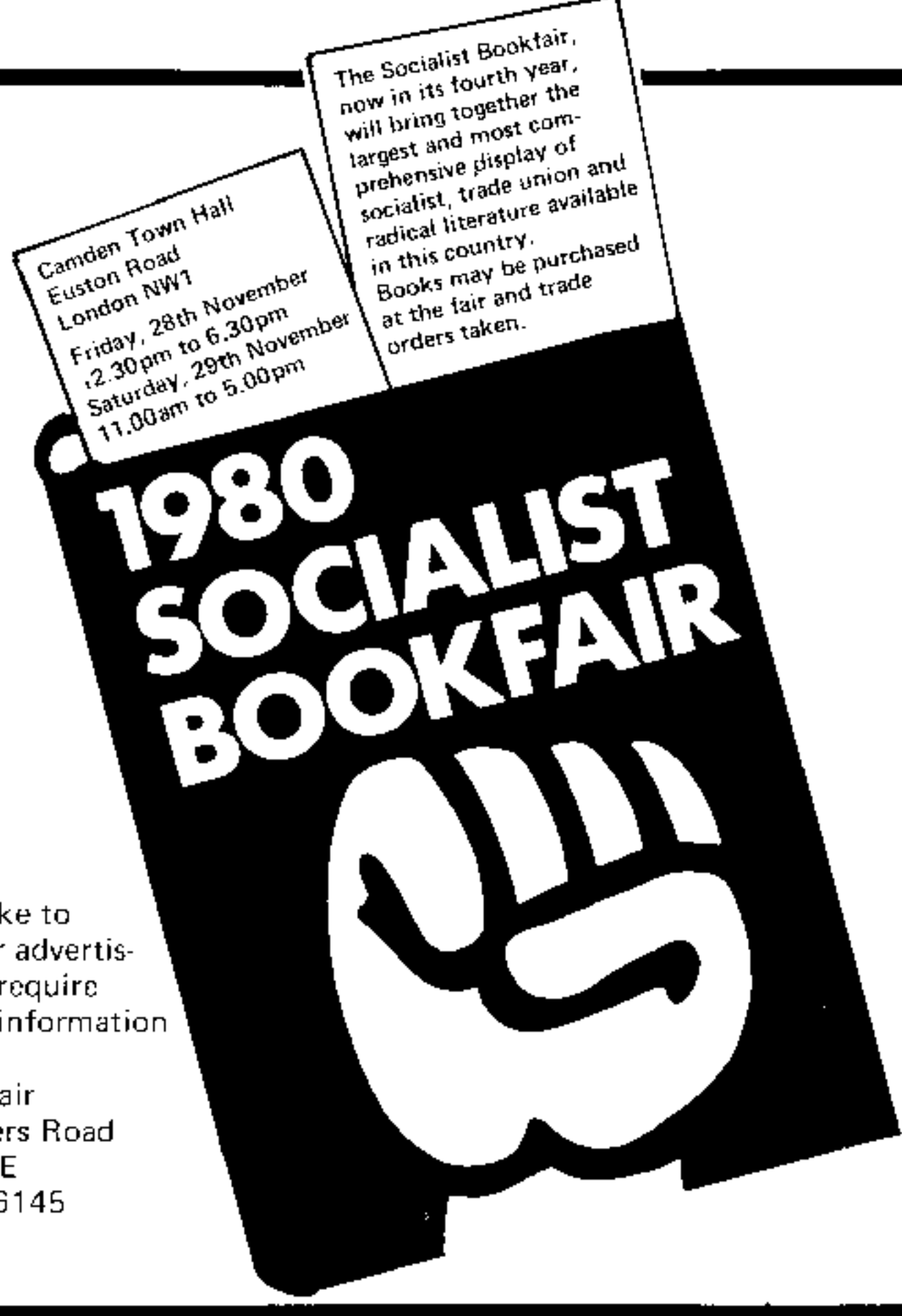
Kerouac's friend, Neal Cassady, as the central figure, 'Dean Moriarty' in *On the Road* was portrayed as a new type of hero. Bold, energetic, with a burning-up asphalt highway vision of freedom, new experiences and the never ending search for the ultimate 'high'. All twentieth century, but strangely harping back to the early wagon-train pioneers of the old 'West'.

The contradiction in the position of half accepting, half rejecting capitalist society taken by many of the beat poets and writers can be seen in the tragedy of Kerouac's own life with his loneliness, frustration and eventual alcoholism. In fact, despite his outward radical appearance, Kerouac was deeply conservative and, especially as he got older, his political views were out and out reactionary. He supported the Vietnam war for example.

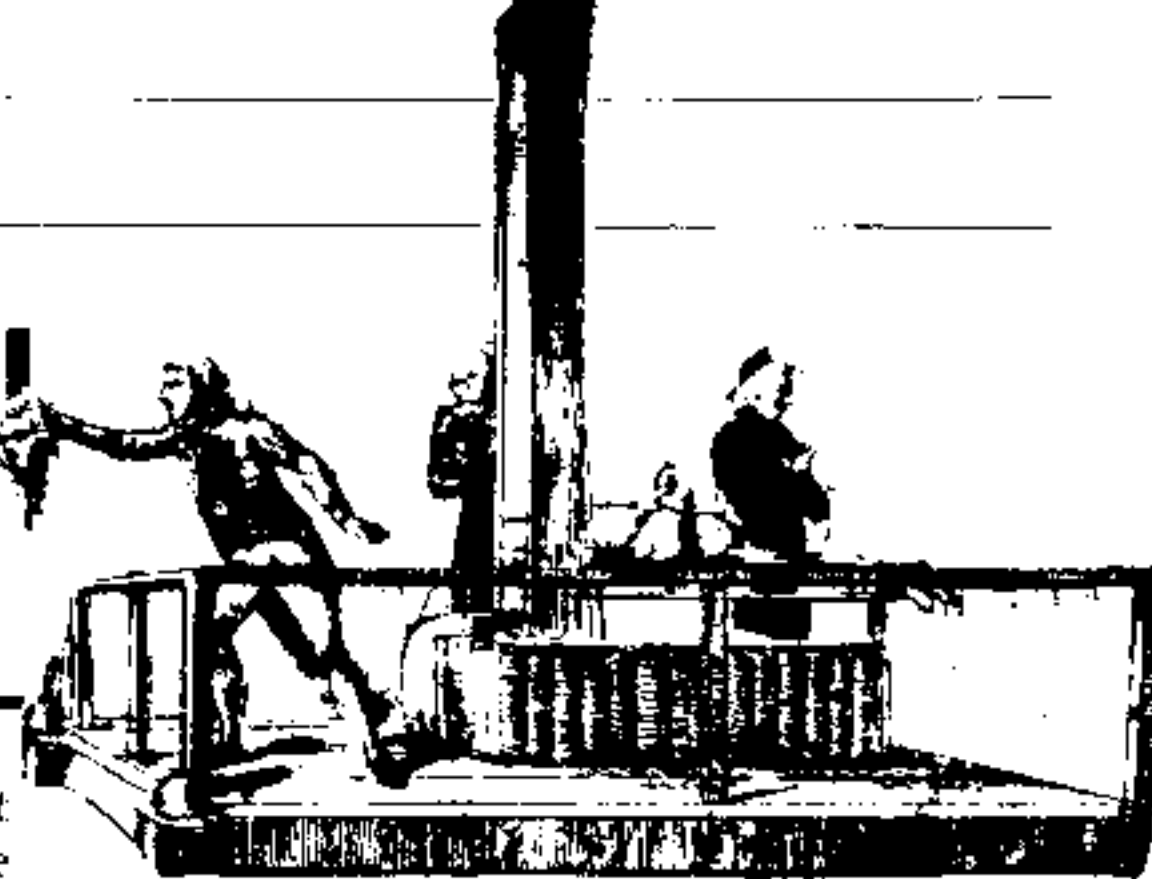
Unlike some of his friends, most notably Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac always kept away from overt political activity and he never shared their anarchistic leanings.

*Heart Beat* is loosely based on the autobiography of Carolyn Cassady, Neal's second wife, which covers the years between 1952 and 1956 when Kerouac lived with the Cassady's in California. The film, however, is more ambitious and deals with a much longer time-scale. Right up until the 1960s in fact. Consequently, the distance between events is too great and the treatment of the characters, as they change over two decades, appears somewhat hollow.

Cassady (played by Nick Nolte) is seen as something of a goofy buffoon, while Kerouac (John Heard) is rightly seen as a shy, introverted voyeur, but



# Q is for Quid Pro Quo that we'll deal out so well and so soon



The execution of Louis XVI.

**Quid pro quo:** 'One thing (or action) in return for another; tit for tat.' *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*

The identification of revolution with endless bloodshed, of Red Republics with Red Terror, of the overthrow of the established order with universal insecurity and fear. The technique is probably as old as class rule. It is none the less effective for that.

Most socialists react, quite rightly, by pointing out that the 'terror' dealt out in period of great revolutionary upheaval is on a much lower scale than the hum drum toll of factory accidents and premature death that normal, peaceful, run-of-the-mill capitalism churns out day by day, let alone the mass barbarism of periods of open counter-revolution.

The October revolution in Petrograd caused 11 deaths — fewer, it is said than the number who died in accidents when Eisenstein made a film of the event ten years later. The Paris Commune of 1871 was subject to vicious abuse because, in its last desperate days, 64 hostages were executed by revolutionaries; the counter-revolutionary army that conquered it received praise from the press of the whole of Europe as it murdered 20,000 or more communards. Even the bloodiest event in the calendar of revolutionary terror, the September massacres of the great French revolution, only resulted in 1089 deaths — a figure surely less than the number of Parisians who died as a consequence of malnutrition whenever the price of bread shot up.

Such examples are necessary. They put the question of 'Red' terror into perspective.

The violence that is exerted by a revolution of the majority of society against a ruling minority is less than that of a minority that seeks to restore its untrammelled rule. A rising revolutionary class does not seek to wipe out the individual members of preceding ruling classes, still less those among the masses who are beguiled into supporting them. It merely seeks to force them to accept the end of their privileged position. There is a *qualitative*, not simply a *quantitative* distinction between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence.

Yet that cannot be the end of the matter. It is necessary to add that in any thorough-going social revolution there has to be an element of 'terror', just as there has to be an element of armed force. Indeed, the mistake of most revolutions is to begin by being too kind to their opponents.

In the early days of the October revolution, the revolutionaries released

the white general Krasnov who had just led an army against them on the promise that he would not do so again. They lived to regret it: he built a new army with German money to wreak havoc against the workers' republic.

In the case of the Paris Commune, the mistake was not the taking and execution of the hostages, but that in the early weeks of the Commune its leaders insisted that no repression should be directed against those who wanted to overthrow the Commune. Their abhorrence of 'violence' meant they refused to march against an army being prepared against them only 20 miles away at Versailles. Their disdain for 'terror' meant the bourgeoisie inside Paris could without hindrance send money and recruits to join this army. The end result was the defeat of the Commune and 'violence' and 'terror' on a horrific scale.

The great French revolution of 80 odd years earlier was equally pacifistic in its earlier stages; the sections of the bourgeoisie who led it believed that with a little pressure the King would agree to rule in their interests. But no ruling class abdicates peacefully, and the French aristocracy grouped around the King was no exception. While the moderate sections of the bourgeoisie conciliated with them, they prepared to drown the revolution in blood. By the summer of 1792 there was a counter-revolutionary army marching on Paris from the eastern border, uprisings in the western provinces, the generals sent to fight off these armies were deserting to the enemy, those captured and brought back were released by judges who sympathised with them.

It was only then that 'terror' was imposed upon the leaders of the revolution by an elemental movement from the bottom of society. A band of two or three hundred 'sans culotte' revolutionaries from the poor parts of Paris invaded first one prison and then another, seized the Royalists awaiting trial, dragged them before improvised tribunals of hardened revolutionaries, and executed on the spot those suspected of plotting to restore the monarchy.

The spectacle of 'revolutionary terror' has been used since to frighten generation after generation of the young and not-so-young, in popular novels from *A Tale of Two Cities* to the *Scarlet Pimpernel*, in films, even in one of the Dr Who TV series. Yet what is not often mentioned is that it was effective, that it safeguarded the revolution and ensured the eradication of feudalism from all Europe.

A proclamation penned by Marat explained the logic behind the massacres: 'These acts of justice have seemed by the people indispensable in order, by terror, to restrain the legions of traitors hidden within its walls, at the moment when it was about to march on the enemy.'

It was from this point onwards that the story of the revolutionary armies became one of astounding victories, rather than successive defeats.

At the time when the Russian revolution was fighting for its life Trotsky insisted that what applied to the great bourgeois revolutions applied to the workers' revolution as well.

'The problem of revolution, as of war, consists in breaking the will of the foe, forcing him to capitulate and to accept the conditions of the conqueror...'

'It is only possible to safeguard the supremacy of the working class by forcing the bourgeoisie, accustomed to rule, to realise that it is too dangerous an undertaking for it to revolt against the dictatorship of the proletariat, to undermine it by conspiracies, sabotage, insurrections or the calling in of foreign troops. The bourgeoisie, hurled from power, must be forced to obey...'

'The question of the form of repression or of its degree is not one of principle. It is a question of expediency. In a revolutionary period, the party which has been thrown from power which does not reconcile itself to the new ruling class and which proves this by its desperate struggle against the latter, cannot be terrorised by the threat of imprisonment, as it does not believe in its duration. It is just this simple but decisive fact that explains the widespread recourse to shooting in a civil war...'

Most of the time revolutionary socialists are opposed to the use of terroristic methods directed against individual members of the ruling class. They serve only to disorganise the workers' movement and to justify repression directed against it. But in a situation where a mass revolutionary movement is in the act of taking power for itself, for it to refuse to employ violent means is to provide its enemies with opportunities to prolong the struggle and to increase the overall toll of violence.

Stuart Morgan