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GRENADA



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AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT

PLUS: Belgium The American economy The 'new look' Labour Party

Women and the workforce

The idea that women are the first people driven out of the workforce in a crisis is an article of faith for some on the left. **Sue Cockerill** argues that the figures show this is no longer true.

Women have always worked, but a role outside the home in paid employment has only recently become the normal circumstances for a majority of women, married as well as single. On average, women are only out of the workforce for a total of seven years between the ages of 20 and 59. Women now comprise over 40 percent of the workforce.

This hasn't just happened in Britain, but in every advanced economy. Total employment in the OECD countries rose by nearly 32 million between 1970 and 1981, and 24 million of these jobs were filled by women.

Part-time work

But is this a temporary phenomenon, created by the boom?

The answer seems to be, no. It appears that the new role for women and the widespread changes that it has brought about in terms of the family are permanent changes. The argument that women workers as a section of the workforce are a reserve army of labour for capitalism — to be pulled into employment in booms and kicked out in slumps — does not seem to fit the facts.

In the first place, the proportion of women in the British workforce continued to rise during the 1970s when the recession had already begun. The figure for 1961 was 36 percent; by 1971 it had risen to 38 percent and reached 42 percent in 1980.

There was a particularly sharp rise in the work rate of married women aged between 25 and 44.

In other words, the increase in the numbers of women at work is related not just to a boom in output, to economic growth in the abstract, but to particular features of capitalist development. These do not necessarily disappear with growth, and may even have been encouraged by the emergence of recession.

The first such feature is one that is often cited: the shift within the advanced economies towards the service sector and away from manufacturing. The enormous expansion of office work, and the increase in public sector employment meant a much bigger growth in jobs which were traditionally female.

But there is another change which is not so often mentioned, and that is the increase in part-time jobs. Everybody knows that many women work part-time (over a third of those at work) usually because of childcare responsibilities.

But all these part-time jobs had to come



from somewhere, and strangely enough, the place of part-time employment in the economy isn't often looked at.

Between 1971 and 1980, the total number of employees at work grew by 360,000 but the number working full time fell by 800,000. The number of part-time workers rose by over a million. The proportion of part-time workers in total employment rose consequently, from 15.5 percent to just over 20 percent. Most of that rise occurred between 1971 and 1975, during the first recession.

This growth was nearly all accounted for by the rise in the number of women working part-time.

The increase in part-time jobs was undoubtedly connected to the growth in the service sector. The areas of greatest employment growth in the seventies — banking, insurance, professional and scientific services (including health and education) and the distributive trades — all had the fastest growth in part-time employment as well.

Detailed figures only exist since 1971, but what they show is that while female full-time

employment in services grew by only 265,000 between 1971 and 1978, part-time employment grew by more than 900,000. In manufacturing the number of women employed full-time fell by a quarter of a million, while there was a small increase in the number of women employed part-time.

While the sectoral shift partly accounts for the growth in part-time work — service occupations calling for shift work and part-day working, like school helpers and cleaners, and catering workers — there are other factors.

Part-time workers can be quite a lot cheaper than full-timers to an employer — for example, in 1980-81, an employer could save an amount equivalent to 13 percent of the paid wage of a worker who earned below the level on which national insurance is payable. There are likely to be other savings as well.

Employing part-timers to work less than 16 hours a week was also a way round the legislation which was introduced in the mid-seventies giving certain rights to workers who worked over this number of hours.

This included redundancy pay, notice periods, short-time pay and maternity leave. There is evidence that reductions in hours to below 16 did take place between 1975 and 1979, so that the number of part-time women workers in the unprotected category rose from 20 to 30 percent in manual jobs.

One response to the recession by employers seems to have been an increase in the employment of part-time workers, mostly, though not exclusively, women.

Since the beginning of the 80s total female employment has been falling, along with male, but part-time female employment has remained almost stable.

Division of labour

All this seems to indicate no particular attempt to push women out of the workforce. While women are a *distinct* part of the employed working class — paid less than men, burdened with domestic responsibilities in addition to paid employment, employed mostly in low-paid, low-status jobs — they are very much a *part* of it. The trend to paid work playing the same central role in women's lives as it does in men's seems permanent.

Alongside this, there has been a shift away from the 'family wage'. Far from being a luxury, the woman's wage is essential to most households. It has been estimated that four times as many households would be below the official poverty line if the woman did not work.

It would obviously be wrong to argue that capitalism is moving inexorably towards abolishing the sexual division of labour. The process is contradictory. While women remain in the workforce, they are being asked to carry more and more of the burdens of the family as the welfare state is cut.

Yet in some ways capitalism is limiting the scope it has for exploiting the sexual division in the working class. By pulling the majority of women into the workplaces and keeping them there it is increasing the possibilities for class unity in struggle.

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Next stop Managua?

The invasion of Grenada has led to a good deal of hypocritical posturing by both the Tories and the Labour Party. But socialists' reasons for condemning the invasion have nothing to do with the sorts of arguments coming from various wings of the establishment.

The US invasion of Grenada was such an outrage that even Margaret Thatcher, staunch ally of Reagan, has almost denounced it. We find ourselves in a curious position: for once we do not have to fight against the deluge of the press distortions in order to persuade people of the iniquity of an imperialist adventure.

But of course we are arguing from quite different premises than Thatcher or Denis Healey, and we want to draw quite different conclusions.

First of all, revolutionary socialists condemn the invasion on quite different grounds to the representatives of other classes. For us there is no abstract principle in this issue or in any other. We do not believe that the US would have been justified if they had been invited in by someone posing as a legitimate government. And we do not believe that the approval or disapproval of the 'people', expressed before or after the event, is

grounds for such action.

The issue for us is quite simple: does the invasion advance the interests of the working class either in Grenada or internationally? And the answer is quite simply and obviously: no. And therefore we condemn the invasion quite irrespective of any other considerations.

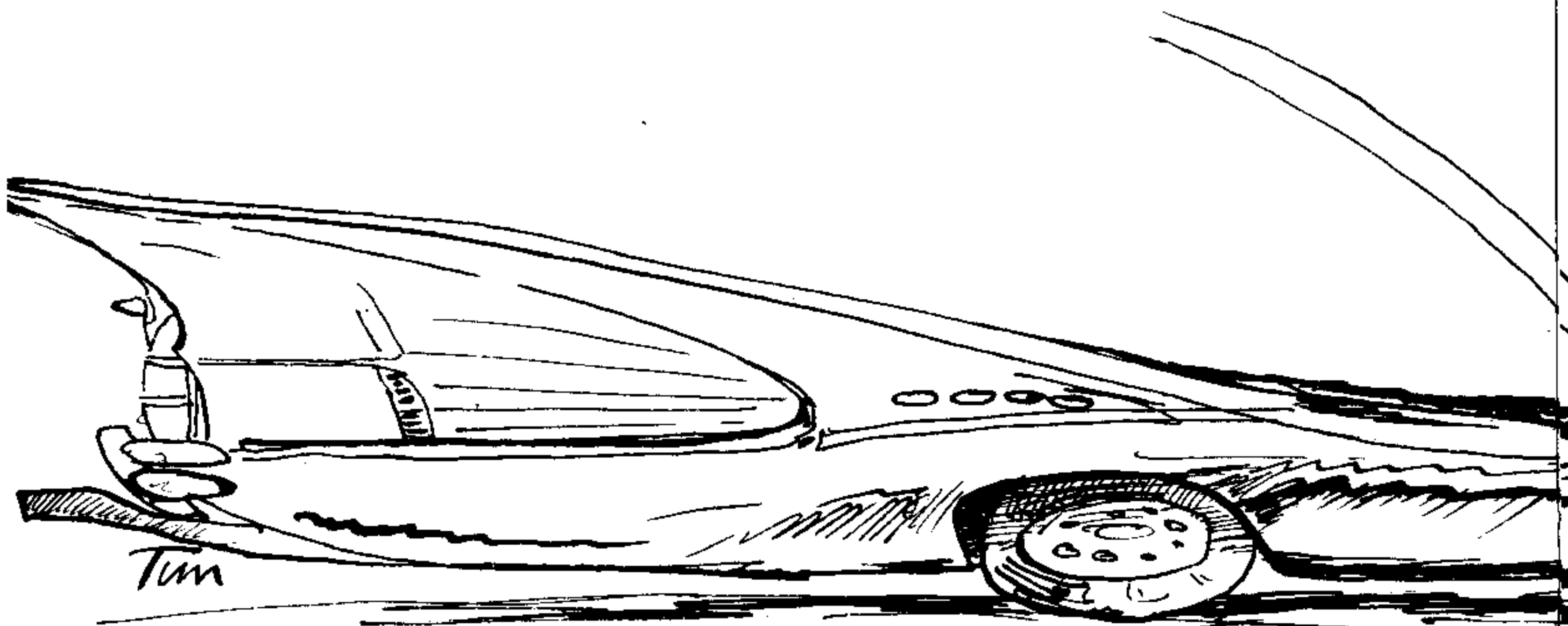
In fact, this is the only position of opposition which it is possible to hold without self-contradiction. We do not believe that the interests of the working class are bounded by the borders of the national states set up by the bourgeoisie. Back in 1919, the Ambassador of the infant USSR, the bolshevik Joffe, was expelled from Berlin by the Social Democratic government because his baggage was found to be stuffed full of pamphlets, in German, urging the overthrow of the then-existing German government. Joffe the revolutionary internationalist was undoubtedly interfering in the affairs of a

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sovereign state and was quite right to do so. His mistake was getting caught.

The concrete reality is what matters and in this case it was and is clear: the invasion of Grenada was a blow by US imperialism against the attempts the New Jewel Movement to act in what they believed were the interests of Grenada. As such it strengthens reaction and weakens the opposition.

The various reasons advanced by the US government for the invasion are of no worth in themselves but it is valuable to look at them in some detail since they reveal a great deal about the reality of the invasion.

The first argument advanced by the USA was that the 600-odd US medical students were in danger. This was dropped pretty soon when it became obvious that the only time they were actually likely to get shot was during the fighting that followed the invasion. And it is a rotten argument in itself: US citizens have been imprisoned and held without trial in a dozen barbarous systems, like Chile and El Salvador, and slaughtered out of hand, without provoking US intervention.

Dress rehearsal

It is a convenient argument and one that has been used elsewhere. The Russians, for example, argued that their citizens were being skinned alive in Afghanistan as one of their justifications for invasion.

Curiously enough, the US dress rehearsal for this invasion, part of the operation 'Ocean Venture 81', called for an operation in response to a seizure of US hostages. Two years before they got round to doing it, the US government was already planning their excuses.

The second line of excuses was that the US had been invited in by neighbouring states. Again, very like the argument used for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and again absolutely false. The little states which issued this 'invitation' are heavily dependent on the USA economically and militarily. Eugenia Charles, Reagan's chief front-woman for this claim, has long been an opponent of the Grenadian government, as has Seaga of Jamaica.

As it turned out, nothing could have given the lie better to this claim than the fact that the fighting has been done entirely by US

troops. The token force from the other countries was kept safe from action and decision making. The US military and political officials are deciding what happens during and after the invasion. That is exactly what they did before it took place.

The next, and perhaps most disgusting, line of defence was that the US intervened in defence of 'democracy' after the collapse of law and order. We will deal with what was going on later. But to take just one example, Haiti has had nothing remotely resembling law and order or democracy for half a century but it has never been favoured with the sharp end of the US Marine Corps. And that example could, of course, be endlessly multiplied.

The US government has nothing against butchers providing they do what they are told.

The governor general then got dragged in to the argument. After having nearly been killed during his 'rescue' and then being held incommunicado on board the USS Guam for 48 hours, Scoon was claimed to have asked for intervention. The Russians, too, found someone who, after 48 hours in protective custody, claimed to have asked them to go into Prague.

In this case, Scoon has a long record as a loyal servant of the British empire, the Gairey regime, and the NJM, and so was probably only too ready to agree that he would have asked the US to invade had he got round to it.

Then came the matter of the Cubans. It was suddenly revealed that there were Cubans on the island, that they had fought back, and that they were building an airport. This was all true, but it is difficult to see how it justified an invasion.

Everybody knew the Cubans were there. The Cuban government had discussed their situation with the US government less than 48 hours before the invasion took place. And there is no doubt that they were construction workers...they were actually building the airport foundations.

It also transpired that they were armed and capable of self-defence, which came as a surprise to the US. Judging by the scale of the fighting, it does not look as though they were primarily a military unit, although, given the fact that the US did actually invade

Cuba 20 years ago there would have been good reason for the Cubans to send military engineers to what looked like a dangerous posting.

The airport is a different matter. In the first place, the head of Plessey Airports, a Mr Devereux, demonstrated that the airport his company was building with funds from the British government and the EEC, was designed to specifically civilian standards, without protected fuel stores, aircraft parks or control facilities.

In fact, the airport could not have come as a surprise to Reagan. The US government had been denouncing the project as a Cuban plot to take over the world since before the first bulldozer rolled. Despite the fact that its construction had been recommended by the colonial British (1969) and twice by the World Bank (1976 and 1977), the US has always claimed that the airport is too big for the island's needs. Six eastern Caribbean states have airports of the same size or larger.

Lastly, there is the argument that the US government was so shocked by the recent coup and killings that it invaded out of philanthropy. This, of course, is nonsense. The most recent and spectacular US intervention in the region was being caught organising a coup against the vicious right winger Rios Montt in favour of an even more vicious set of generals in Guatemala earlier this year.

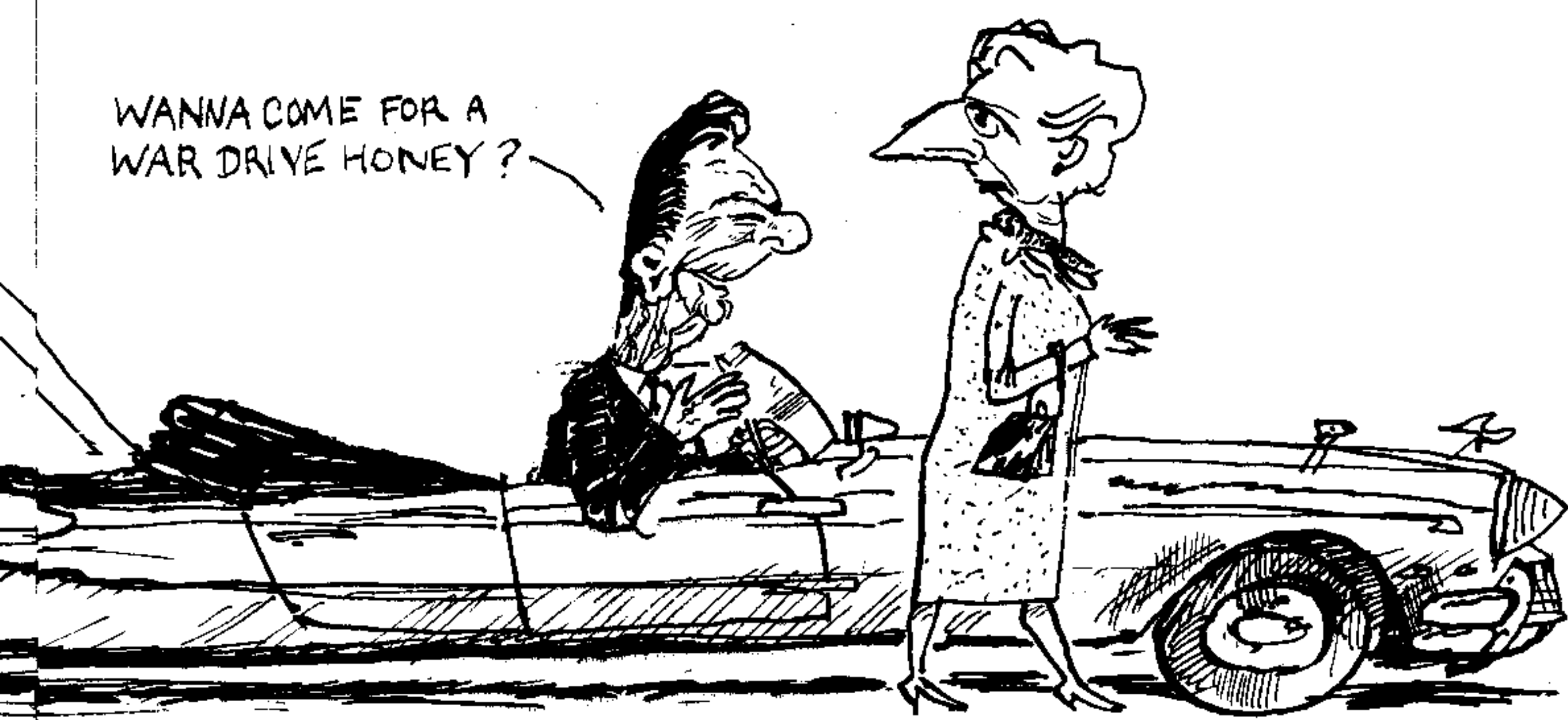
More substantially, sending the marines into a Caribbean island is as American as apple pie. This invasion was no startled reflex but part of a chain of operations stretching back over the century.

Reagan's Falklands

And it could not have been a response to the coup. The first dress-rehearsal took place way back in 1981 with the massive operation Ocean Venture. They have consistently organised economic sabotage against the Bishop regime.

In March 1981 the US pressurised the IMF into cutting its agreed aid to Grenada from 6.3 million dollars to a short term 4 million. Immediately afterwards they acted to keep Grenada out of the World Bank's scheme of long term aid. In June of the same year the US offered 4 million dollars to the Caribbean Development Bank, on condition that none

WANNA COME FOR A
WAR DRIVE HONEY?



of the money went to Grenada.

The only possible explanation for the US intervention is the most brutal one: it was dictated solely and simply by the needs of the Reagan government and of US capitalism.

It must have looked as though it had many advantages and few risks. In the short term it would distract people's minds from the horrible disaster in the Lebanon. A short sharp military victory, Reagan must have thought, would do the same for him as the Falklands did for Thatcher.

In the longer term it would obviously act as a warning to the Cubans and Russians and a threat to the government of Nicaragua. It would be a simple and easily achievable way of nailing a keep out sign to the door, and it would discourage any other local movements for self-determination.

Thatcher's reaction

The shape of future US plans surfaced just a week after the invasion. They plan, in the near future, to use their army of 'contras'—rightists and gangsters of various stripes—for an open invasion of Nicaragua and the capture of a local town. In this town a 'provisional government' will then be set up. This will be entitled to call on neighbouring states like Honduras for direct military assistance. And the sovereign state of Honduras will, of course, be quite free to use US military aid and 'advisers' for any purpose it wishes. In short the US wants to stage manage an invasion of Nicaragua.

In the event, it seems that Reagan and company miscalculated and their beautiful plan went adrift. In the first place, despite the commitment of massive military forces, 5,000 combat troops in action and 10,000 at sea in reserve—rather more than 10 percent of the entire population of the Island—they did not win a quick military victory. What should have been over in hours stretched out to more than a week.

The initial press statements spoke of US troops being out within a week and handing over to their Jamaican and Eastern Caribbean lackeys. They look like staying for a lot longer than that.

They also miscalculated internationally. Even Thatcher did not approve of the plan, and all but the most dependent of states have

condemned the invasion. As words, of course, it does not matter that much, but the words themselves are symptoms of a deeper US problem. They no longer have the political muscle to drag other states behind them in unquestioning obedience.

The new cold war is in part an attempt by the US to use its unquestioned military superiority over its allies as a weapon to bring *them*, rather than the Russians back into line.

Thatcher's reaction, too, is quite understandable. Of course she has not suddenly been converted to anti-imperialism, and short term embarrassment over the siting of cruise missiles, while certainly real, is not the whole story.

The Labour Party, left and right, love to portray Thatcher as Reagan's 'poodle'. It suits their politics nicely to be able to prance around as the most patriotic party. Indeed there are some, like Tony Benn, who would even claim that Britain has become a colony of the US and thus justify almost any 'anti-imperialist' class alliance.

They are wrong. Thatcher acts in the interests of *British* capital as she understands them. When there is a clash of interest she puts the interest of British capital well before the needs of any 'special relationship'. The invasion of Grenada was one example. The row over the John Brown's contract to supply the Russian oil pipeline was another.

In this case one of the considerations that was going through Thatcher's mind was the likely impact of supporting US moves on Britain's trading position. This has nothing to do with sentimentality about the 'Commonwealth'. An earlier example was her U-turn on Zimbabwe. When elected she intended to sell out to Smith's puppet, Bishop Muzorewa. After a little delicate arm-twisting, largely by the Nigerian government, she changed her mind. Exports proved more important than kith and kin.

Another reason is that Thatcher, along with the rest of the EEC, has substantial reservations about aspects of US policy. The Middle East is one example, where the EEC is much readier to talk to the PLO than is the US government. Another example is Central America, where they have been trying to organise some sort of compromise solution between the military dictators and popular

revolt.

Or take the case of their greater readiness to continue talking to, and even assist, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. They were also willing to provide finance and technical assistance for the Grenadan airport against the US economic boycott. Their opposition to the invasion fits this pattern.

Neither Thatcher, Mitterrand or Kohl are sudden converts to liberation struggles. They are all quite ready to use their own armed forces when it suits their interests. It is simply that they have a different assessment of how to deal with a particular situation.

Those ruling class interests also explain why the Labour leadership in general, and Denis Healey in particular, were so keen to denounce Reagan. There is nothing anti-imperialist about them. When it was British imperialism at stake, in the Falklands, they were super-jingoists. This time they perceive the interests of British imperialism as different from those of Reagan.

Fake outrage

It fits very nicely with their longer term plans, too. It was after all, the reformist parties, particularly the West German one, who launched the attempt at compromise in the Caribbean and Central America.

As it happened, the pathetic performance of the Tories also allowed Healey to engage in a little bit of water muddying. He could fake outrage that Thatcher had let the Queen down, since that person is still head of state in Grenada. The Labour Party is more royalist than the Tories. And he could turn the argument about nuclear weapons away from any discussion of British unilateral nuclear disarmament (Labour's official policy) into a set of rows about the introduction of cruise and whether or not there should be a dual key system now that Ron could not be trusted to seek British government agreement before frying us all.

The invasion of Grenada was an outrage. But it was an outrage which revealed the true shape of our world with extreme clarity. The US is happy to use military force to gain its ends, and it uses exactly the same arguments as the USSR does whenever it intervenes. The symmetry between the two systems has seldom been more clearly demonstrated.

Paradise Lost?

The first duty of socialists is to oppose US imperialism. That much is clear, but the nature of the regime the US overthrew is much more confusing. **Darren O'Grady and Colin Sparks** look at its background and record.

For Reagan and his gang, Bishop and Coard were the leaders of a 'Marxist' state. The reality was different.

Prior to the 1979 coup which brought the New Jewel Movement (NJM) to power, Grenada was run by Eric Gairey. This gangster and eccentric in fact started out as a trade union leader but even before independence he had often been caught with his fingers in the till.

Winning 13 out of 15 seats in the 1972 election his Grenadan United Labour Party ran the island as a profit maker after independence in 1974. Gairey had his own secret police force, the Mongoose Gang, who regularly tortured and murdered any opposition. So bad was Gairey that the British government cut its aid programme because of his 'financial and accounting irregularities'. About his only firm friend was General Pinochet.

Clandestine elite

The New Jewel Movement developed in opposition to Gairey. Its base was largely amongst middle class intellectuals trained in Britain and the USA. Not only were they understandably revolted by the Gairey regime's methods but it seemed to have no perspective for development. They felt themselves denied their true role in running the country.

The NJM rapidly began to gain support and did well in the election of 1976, winning six seats, but Gairey's grip was irremovable. Matters came to a head in March 1979 when, with Gairey out of the country, NJM sympathisers in the police leaked a plan to round up Bishop and Co and murder them. The NJM coup was a response to that.

Led by Hudson Austin, 30 odd members of the NJM's armed wing stormed the main army barracks. So great was the demoralisation that only two soldiers were killed in the resistance, which was all over in half an hour. At the same time other members of the NJM seized the members of Gairey's government. Bishop found himself in power.

There is no doubt that the coup of 13 March was popular. There was mass support for the attacks on police stations and vast demonstrations rejoicing in the fall of Gairey.

But it is also clear that the coup was the work of a tiny clandestine elite which then called upon the masses the support them. In no sense was it an example of workers and

small farmers liberating themselves.

Nor was it a particularly radical government. The NJM, transformed into the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), had as its main slogan 'stop squandermania' and announced on 23 March that there was 'no immediate need to nationalise British, Canadian and American banks', and that: 'We will plan for a mixed economy, but it will be development orientated.'

That stress on the mixed economy was to remain part of Bishop's view of the world. In July 1981 he told the Cuban paper *Granma* that this was the 'national democratic, the anti-imperialist stage' of the Grenadan revolution.

In his view, everything was subordinated to the task of national development:

'We feel that at the same time the state sector is built we must stimulate the private sector in order to boost production. The state sector alone cannot develop the economy, given the very low level of technology available, the limited human resources, the lack of capital, the lack of marketing expertise, the lack of promotional capacity. So we must stimulate the private sector in business generally, but also of course in agriculture, and in particular among the small and medium farmers.'

The new government built its own army, but took over and restructured the police and civil service of the Gairey regime. And despite an extensive programme of 'consultation', power remained in the hands of the PRG, untrammelled by any elective principle at all, let alone workers' democracy. The 'Parish Councils' had no power over the PRG.

The aim of the PRG was defined strictly in national terms. In March 1981 Bishop argued:

'Grenada seeks no quarrels. Grenada seeks no interference, for we have firm belief in peaceful co-existence, in good neighbourliness, in mutual respect for all...'

No clarion calls to anti-imperialist struggle there.

There can be no doubt of the good intentions of the PRG. They sincerely wanted to raise the living standards and cultural level of the masses. They did do whatever they could, in the fields of women's rights, of health care, of literacy, and even, to a very limited extent, of land reform.

But good intentions are not enough. The PRG was not the concrete embodiment of the rule of the workers and had no perspective for spreading the revolution. It was a tiny petty bourgeois group that wanted to develop the country and to break with imperialism. The seeds of the disaster of 1983 lay in that perspective.

The PRG was not yet a fully-fledged state capitalist class. It had not, for one thing, smashed the private capitalist class. Although the local Coca Cola concession

was taken over after a long strike by workers, it was only managed by the state. Ownership remained in the same hands as before. Other capitalists, from Barclays Bank through the tourist trade to the small traders, did not even find themselves subjected to state management.

Relations with the working class were determined by the same conception of the national interest as dominated other areas. The regime fought strikes by dockers, power workers and public sector employees. This latter, in 1981, saw the government issue 70 disciplinary warnings to strikers, and the message that they wished to 'resolve this dispute speedily and in the best interest of all concerned'.

PRG justification for their strike-breaking was that many of the leaders of these unions were CIA-funded stooges. That was true, but there was also a genuine element of working class discontent in the strikes.

In very similar terms the PRG had justified closing down the right wing newspaper *Torchlight* soon after coming to power. But there is a better way of fighting reaction than by intervention from above, and that is by mobilising working class discontent to prevent it being exploited by the right.

That would have involved a strategy for seeing working class *self activity* as central. In the docks that would have meant rank and file strike committees embracing all workers, instead of divide and rule tactics which pitted unorganised against organised workers. In the *Torchlight* affair, that would have meant getting the newspaper workers to occupy and remove the owners' control over the content.

Internal contradictions

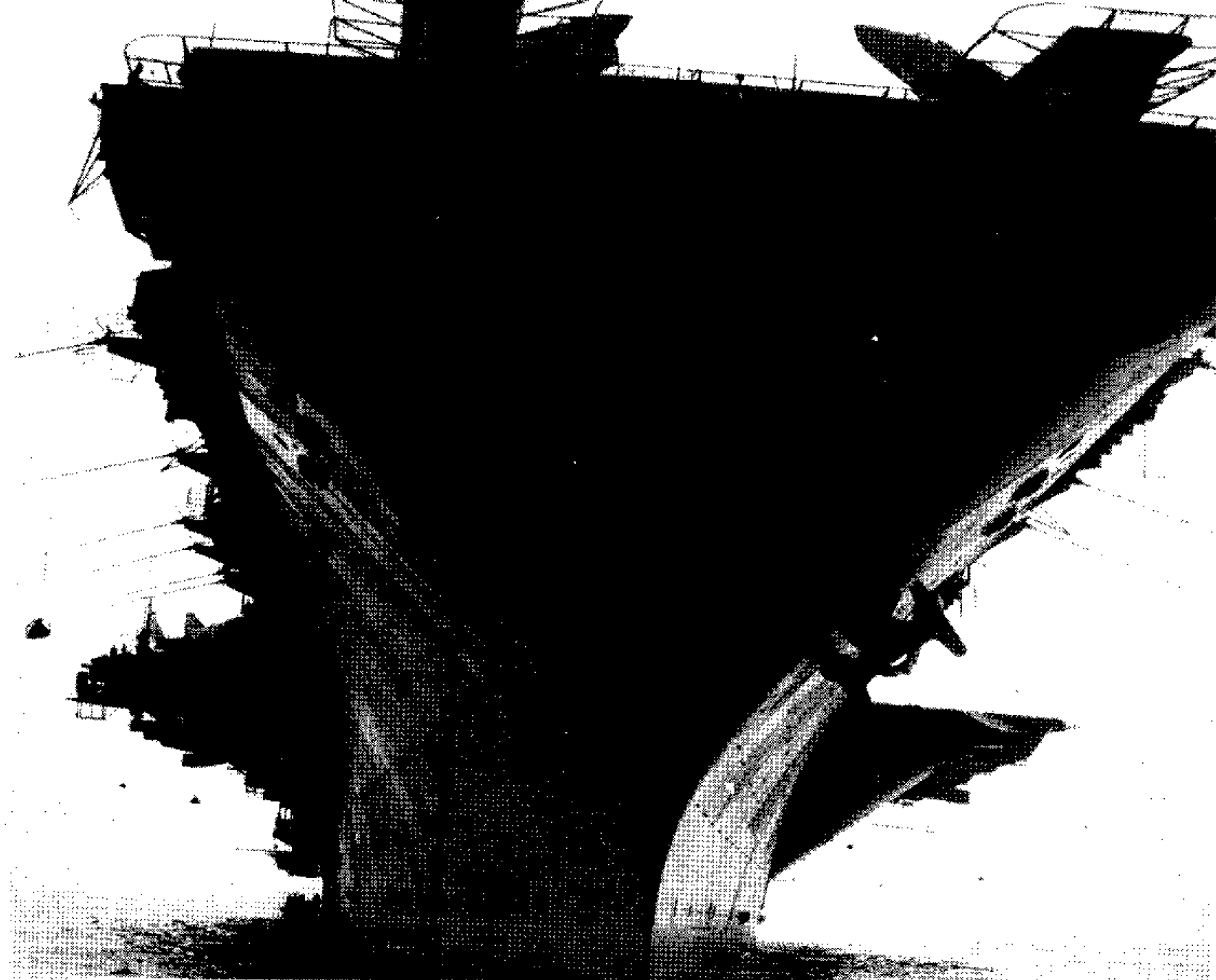
Regrettably, the PRG had no such perspective. Their model was much closer to that of 'progressive' Labour councils: reforms from above, together with large doses of consultation and decentralisation — but no dismantling of the old structures of government.

So they saw no point in smashing the old state regime. The regular army was not disbanded and replaced by workers' militias. There was no setting up of workers' councils; the parish councils were used to draw in workers, primarily to implement government programmes, not for workers to exercise direct control.

Only on the land did the PRG make any serious effort to organise new groups of workers. But this was because the only popular base of support for Gairey had been among the most backward sections of the population, the estate labourers.

No doubt, given Grenada's encirclement by US imperialism and its hangers on, workers would have had to make sacrifices. They did, on a massive and heroic scale, in the early Soviet republic. But the only condition for that must be that workers themselves control society. They cannot be asked to make sacrifices by self-appointed guardians, however well-intentioned.

The PRG suffered from the lack of direction that its internal contradictions landed it in. On the one hand, it knew it



needed to mobilise the masses as the only way in which dependency on world imperialism could be broken. On the other, it recognised (confusedly) that only by intense exploitation of its labour resources did it stand any chance of creating an independent, viable national economy.

Sometimes, therefore, it saw itself as a progressive force; at other times, it behaved as an employer which needed to get tough with its workers. But the point was never reached where the demands of accumulation forced a decisive choice.

The Bishop government was not a fully developed state capitalist class. It proved by its deeds that it could not exert a total control over the national economy, it could not subordinate everything to the need to accumulate.

On the other hand, it did contain a group which had a clear view of how to become a state capitalist class. The group around Bernard Coard, the Organisation for Revolutionary Education and Liberation (OREL) was a self-conscious group of proto-state capitalists.

It was this division that lay behind the coup of 19 October 1983. We can draw a very limited analogy with the divisions inside the Russian bureaucracy in the period after 1924. The Bukharinites hoped to escape the problems of backwardness by linking steady economic development to growth in the peasant sector. The Stalinists realised they could only do so by using the state machine for forced accumulation. They therefore

turned on their former allies, the Bukharinites.

Bishop can hardly be counted as a Bukharinite, but Coard's violent overthrow of his former partner roughly represents the Stalin solution to the problem of national economic development.

But there is a major difference — in the USSR of that period there were the vestiges of workers' power and that has never existed in Grenada. As a consequence of that absence there was no wing corresponding to that represented by Trotsky in the 1920s, arguing for workers' democracy and revolutionary internationalism. That, perhaps, was the final nail in the coffin of the whole movement.

Final crunch

For in the USSR it looked plausible to argue that, given the vast size of the country and its enormous resources of population and raw materials, it was possible to cut the economy from the world market and develop 'socialism in one country', that was never on in tiny Grenada. It was obvious that it had to remain locked into the world market — that, after all, was what the notorious airport was about.

But tourists, and other goods, could come from Odessa as well as Miami. So arguments about the pace and nature of internal developments inevitably spilled over into rows about foreign policy, and in particular the extent to which there should be a

direction towards Moscow.

When the final crunch came in October, and we still do not know why it came then or over what exact issue, the real nature of the regime was exposed for all to see.

The fact that the country was ruled by a tiny minority of people was clearly demonstrated by the nature of the coup. There was no discussion of it before hand, no votes, no elections, nothing but a decision taken behind closed doors.

The fact that the governing group had its own state machine was demonstrated by the murder of Bishop. Although he was freed by a mass demonstration, many of whom must have been members of the famous militia, the army could disperse them easily. This was because the army held the weapons of the militia; the crowd was not armed.

The Coard group was clearly unpopular and the murder of Bishop, who was a popular figure, undoubtedly caused mass revulsion. The US timed its intervention well to avoid popular resistance. But such swift change of mood is yet more evidence that the mass of the Grenadian population were outside the driving centres of the revolution and, with Bishop dead, could apparently see little reason to resist an invasion by US marines.

There is no doubt that time and the nature of US policy will turn that around, but the tragedy is that the limitations of the politics of the leaders of the 'Grenadian revolution' led directly to their own defeat and the re-enslavement of the people they wanted so much to help.

A left blessing on Kinnock—the born-again Wilson

In 1959 Labour, under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, lost its third general election in a row. There was much speculation about whether it could ever win another: *Must Labour Lose?* was the title of one of the best known political tracts of the early sixties. The line of argument was one with which we are not totally unfamiliar today: a decline of the traditional working class, hostility of newly affluent workers to many of Labour's traditional shibboleths, and so on.

Gaitskell, just about the only Labour leader to come from the open right wing of the party, had spent years fighting the left. After the 1959 election defeat he made a rather clumsy attempt to give the party a more 'classless' image by trying to get rid of the famous 'socialist' Clause 4 of the constitution. Against the opposition of the bulk of the union leaders he failed.

Left move

The left now took the offensive with apparently spectacular success when they won the 1960 conference to unilateral nuclear disarmament. The bitterness of the argument in the party was intense—at least as intense as that around Tony Benn a couple of years ago—it seemed the party was tearing itself apart. Gaitskell vowed to 'fight, fight and fight again' to reverse unilateralism and, with the help of the bulk of the union leaders, he did so at the 1961 conference. The right was firmly back in control, but with a considerable legacy of bitterness among many party activists. Little over a year later Gaitskell died and was succeeded by Harold Wilson.

Wilson won the leadership contest (then conducted among MPs only) as the candidate of the left. Partly he won it because his main right wing opponent George Brown had a reputation (well justified!) for insensitivity and instability. Partly he won it because the hard-nosed right wing approach of Hugh Gaitskell seemed to some Labour MPs to have been just a little too costly in terms of party unity.

It is worth examining the credentials that made Wilson the left candidate. He had not begun his political life on the left but had become a cabinet minister under Attlee as a rather faceless technocratic whizz-kid. What formed the foundation of his left reputation was that he had resigned from the Attlee government in 1951 along with Aneurin Bevan in protest against prescription charges. For three years he was more or less a 'Bevanite'. But in 1954, when Bevan resigned from the shadow cabinet over its slavish support for American foreign policy, Wilson

What sort of a job can Neil Kinnock do on the Labour Party? Pete Goodwin finds some very useful clues by going back twenty years and looking at the job that Harold Wilson did on it.

stepped in to take the place Bevan had vacated. By doing that Wilson had effectively broken from Bevanism. And in 1955 he supported Gaitskell against Bevan for the leadership. Nevertheless he was able to live off the capital of those three years for another ten, being regularly elected near the top of the left dominated constituency section of the National Executive until he became leader. But his distance from Bevan meant that he was regularly able to combine this with a good showing among the predominantly right wing MPs in elections to the shadow cabinet.



Wilson did just one other thing to maintain his left reputation. In 1960, after the conference had voted for unilateralism and Gaitskell had vowed defiance, he stood against Gaitskell for the leadership. Not that Wilson ever even claimed to be a unilateralist—far from it—but he felt strongly that the issue would have been better dealt with by verbal manoeuvring rather than Gaitskell's head on approach. By standing against Gaitskell, Wilson temporarily lost friends on the right of the party—but he ensured that the votes of the left would completely be sewn up two years later.

That then is the *real* substance of Wilson's

left reputation. But there is also another aspect of it, well described by Paul Foot in his excellent book *The Politics of Harold Wilson*:

'Ruthlessly Wilson played on the Left's most fatal weakness: its sentimentality. Wilson knows that the Labour Left responds more enthusiastically than the Right to calls for party unity at times of crisis (especially at elections) to vague phrases about public ownership and moral crusades and helping the starving millions. In the generalised sloganising of the Labour Left Harold Wilson has always been an expert, and he never scrupled to wrap it in the shroud of Aneurin Bevan. Both before and after his accession Wilson deployed a familiar, but highly successful rhetorical technique, attaching the name of Aneurin Bevan to the most banal clichés.'

Bevanisms

Paul goes on to list a whole string of examples. Here are just a couple (and not by any means the most banal):

'Why, Aneurin Bevan asked, look into the crystal ball when you can read the book?'

'We know, as Nye Bevan said, that politics are about power.'

It all sounds a bit pathetic in retrospect. But it worked like a dream. From the moment he won the leadership until well into actually running a government Wilson kept the left entranced. Michael Foot, then the epitome of the principled Labour left MP (he later declined to serve in the 1964-70 Labour government) had this to say of Wilson just after his election as leader in early 1963:

'(He has) not only qualities of political acumen, political skill and survival power which no one denies him. Other considerable qualities too for a Labour leader—a coherence of ideas, a readiness to take unorthodox courses, a respect for democracy ... above all a deep and genuine love of the Labour movement.'

The adulation went beyond the Labour Left. The marxist mandarins of the *New Left Review* in particular seemed to become quite fixated with Wilson. Here is one of editor Perry Anderson's considered pronouncements on the question:

'Wilsonism emerged as a precise response to the new situation: the slow crisis of English capitalism and the transformation of the Cold War. In many ways it has been a creative response, which has made the Labour Party into the dynamic left wing of European social democracy.'

It took several months of Labour government for any serious disillusion to set in, and eighteen months, and the removal of the excuse of a small majority, before it became the norm on the left.

What seems remarkable in retrospect is how little Wilson had to commit himself to in policy terms to so successfully shanghai the left. It is difficult to see how the platform on which he fought the 1964 election was significantly different from that on which Gaitskell would have fought it had he lived. But there was sufficient there for the left to latch on to with enthusiasm. For example the one hangover from the first upsurge of CND (by then almost totally exhausted) was a pledge not to go ahead with the new Polaris system (because its 'not independent and not a deterrent'). It was a very limited promise and was broken within three months of office, but it did the trick of mobilising disarming enthusiasm for Wilson.

What is also remarkable in retrospect is the new, youthful, dynamic image which Wilson successfully projected not just to the ranks of Labour Party members but way beyond. His keynote speeches in 1963 and 1964 were collected together in paperback under the title *The New Britain*. They make extraordinarily banal reading today, not least the passages on the 'white heat of the technological revolution', Wilson's favourite theme. And even though 'charisma' is a much overused word it seems difficult today to stretch it to cover Harold

Wilson at any time in his life.

But that is not how things seemed in 1963 and 1964. As the political and economic accidents started happening to the Tories, all could be blamed on their patrician, amateurish way of doing things. The meritocratic, technological Wilson image began to click. The party that had looked to some after 1959 as if it would never win another election actually went on to win four out of the next five.

How does Kinnock 1983 compare with Wilson 1963?

Rapid amnesia

Kinnock, like Wilson, finds himself elected leader as the left candidate who is perfectly acceptable to the right. He is acceptable to the right precisely because of all the things that should irreparably tarnish his left wing image—refusing to vote for Benn in 1981, consistently supporting the witch hunt, and so on. They *should*, but they don't. Just as virtually everyone on the left was quite happy to forget that Wilson had broken with Bevan in 1954, and actually supported Gaitskell against him as leader in 1955, so they can quite easily have amnesia about Kinnock's systematic opposition to the Bennites over the last two or three years.

How rapidly the amnesia is taking place can be seen from the leadership election results. When Foot resigned it seemed entirely logical to have a 'hard left' candidate

for leader. Of course Heffer was a poor substitute for Tony Benn, and of course he couldn't win. But he would show that there was a significant body of reservation about Kinnock, particularly among the constituency activists. However as events showed, scarcely anyone wanted to make reservations, certainly no one of any significance in the left union bureaucracy, Heffer was a complete non starter there. But at the end of the day majorities of only 36—less than one in fifteen—constituency parties voted for Heffer. The division between 'hard' and 'soft' left, which had only recently seemed the fundamental divide simply disappeared.

The leadership result also has a snowball effect. The adulation is so great that the most of the remaining critics feel that they have to 'tactically' adapt to it. So Ken Livingstone discovers that Kinnock has previously unacknowledged strengths, Chris Mullin of *Tribune* writes him an open letter of congratulations and comradely advice, and *Militant* reminds us that 'workers participating in or observing events in Brighton, could clearly feel that Labour is now more united and poised to undertake a serious struggle against the Tories.'

The parallels with what most of the left were saying about Wilson and Wilsonism in 1963 and 64 are striking. And now, just as then, it is difficult to distinguish just where the ranks of the 'tactical' critics end and the ranks of the cheerleaders begin.

AIRER, BETTER BRITA



But isn't this just a honeymoon? That is what most Fleet Street commentators are saying. It is also what many of the remaining 'hard' lefts in the party claim. There are, however, a number of reasons for believing that the 'honeymoon' will last a very long time—right up to the next election in fact.

There is, once again, the experience of Wilson. Elected leader in January 1963 his honeymoon with the party lasted untroubled until he became Prime Minister in October 1964. It is true, of course, that Kinnock probably has rather longer to endure before the next election than that. But who is going to try and shatter the dream in the meantime? Certainly there is not the slightest possibility of the 'hard left' taking the offensive in the foreseeable future. It is now totally marginalised where it is not being absorbed, and there is no reason to believe it will be able to revive before Kinnock himself breaks the spell.

Interpret and adjust

But the prospects of him doing that before he actually attains office are remote. For the whole of the Labour left, even those most cynical about Kinnock, are convinced that the party remains fundamentally transformed by the internal battles of 1979-81. This is how *Militant* argues it:

'The election of the so-called "dream ticket" of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley was a pointer to the tremendous desire for unity which existed. This indeed was the main factor in the scale of Roy Hattersley's majority for the Deputy Leadership, which was not at all an endorsement of unity at any price or a watering down of Labour's radical programme. Labour still is committed to support unilateral nuclear disarmament, a 35-hour week, a guaranteed minimum wage, and an increase in state expenditure in key services such as housing, health, education, etc. Mandatory reselection of MPs and the election of the Party leader still remain firmly engraved in the Party constitution ...

'The mood for unity, therefore, cannot be interpreted as an overall swing to the right and the rejection of radical measures. Moreover, any attempt to roll back these policy gains will meet with the ferocious opposition of Labour's rank and file.'

It is questionable just how 'ferocious' the opposition would be if Kinnock makes a frontal assault on Labour's 'radical' programme or constitution. But the important point is that he doesn't need to. He has not the slightest incentive to change the electoral college which gave him and Roy Hattersley such massive majorities, and especially when there is scarcely any chance of either of them being even challenged in the foreseeable future.

Nor does he have to open a frontal attack on conference policies. The 'radical programme' that *Militant* outlines is essentially the same as that adopted by Labour Party conferences in 1972 and 1973. When it came to how Labour fought the 1974 election Wilson largely ignored it. The same

option is open to Kinnock. On particularly glaring electoral liabilities like the Common Market and council house sales Kinnock has already made the adjustments with the support of the overwhelming bulk of Labour activists. On other questions he can simply 'interpret' things the way he wants to.

That is the contrast between the Wilson approach and the Gaitskell one. Gaitskell made an issue of trying to get rid of clause 4 and came a cropper by doing so, Wilson in contrast simply proclaimed his belief in clause 4 to the party activists, his belief in a mixed economy to the outside world, and kept both groups happy and convinced that nothing inconsistent was going on by bluster about the 'commanding heights of the economy'.

Kinnock will adopt the Wilson approach, perhaps with even greater success than Wilson in that he can sound just that little more left wing. He can probably even carry off that approach on the most thorny problem he faces—unilateral nuclear disarmament. It is quite possible that unilateral nuclear disarmament will remain on the conference books but eventually be unnoticed by anyone outside the party faithful. That after all was the case in the 1974 election. Admittedly the problem for Kinnock is rather bigger now—conference commitment to unilateralism is far more visible after the last election, and Kinnock was clearly a little over eager in trying to get the 'awkward' Transport and General Workers' Union resolution remitted at this conference.

Tortured emptiness

But when it came to the CND demonstration he could still 'interpret' Labour policy as he did. He did not mention unilateralism and specifically advanced the multilateralist policies of 'no first use' and 'putting Polaris into the negotiations.' And he got applause for doing so. As CND itself moves to the right Kinnock should not have much difficulty in *effectively* distancing the party from unilateralism while allowing conference to keep its sacred text.

So Kinnock can shift the party to the right while maintaining the appearance to Labour activists that the party is a fundamentally changed animal from the Wilson/Callaghan years. Like Wilson, the illusion will only break down once office is attained.

Labour activists' honeymoon with Kinnock is not only likely to be a very long one, it may well turn out to be surprisingly passionate. The tortured emptiness of the Welsh Windbag's rhetoric is capable of more than just deluding Labour leftists: it is also capable of enthusing them.

Not that there is anything magical in it. It uses some very tired old techniques: including Harold Wilson's trick of quoting Bevan at every possible opportunity, no matter how banal the quote may be. Kinnock's very first speech after he was elected leader had one—on the need to 'recognise reality.' Thinking of Paul Foot's book I found myself chuckling on the press benches, but sure enough the speech brought the conference promptly and enthusiastically to their feet with applause.

And at the CND rally in Hyde Park three weeks later easily the biggest applause for any speaker came when Neil Kinnock was introduced. In 1963 and 64 Labour activists were enthusiastic about Wilson, in 1983 and 84 they will be enthusiastic about Kinnock.

Actually they may be even more enthusiastic. For a cadre is forming around Kinnock of some size and with some theoretical equipment. It is the cadre of ex-Bennites whose text book shift to the right is obscured (even to themselves) by a good dose of Eurocommunism plus a dash of *Beyond the Fragments*. There are a lot of them about. And their role in Kinnock's party will not simply be left wing window dressing, because Labour does need to seriously bolster its electoral machine. So there is plenty of opportunity to indulge in 'campaigning in the community' so long as that campaigning is strictly geared to getting votes come election time.

And can Kinnock get those votes? Long term fundamental social changes, we are told have undermined Labour's electoral base. How on earth is Kinnock going to get out of that one? Wilson, however did succeed, without making any of the fundamental changes to the party which Gaitskell had thought necessary. Instead he stuck to the tried and tested methods of keeping the party together, looking like a credible alternative government and prepared to build upon the declining fortunes of the Tories.

Kinnock's task of course is bigger. Labour's electoral fortunes have sunk that much lower. But the months since the election have revealed that the Tories do make mistakes, a lot of them, and that the Alliance is an altogether shakier construction than it looked in the election campaign. All the opinion polls taken after Kinnock's election as Labour leader indicated a very big shift to Labour from the Alliance, with Labour regaining its position as very clearly the electoral alternative to the Tories. No doubt opinion polls will shift again, but I doubt very much whether this recent set will prove to be a complete flash in the pan.

Kinnock may very well end up Prime Minister. And then of course he can complete his parallels with Harold Wilson. In the meantime, however, there are going to be a lot of people about who think even the vaguest suggestion of such a comparison is sacrilege.



Selling Services

Attempts to fight the Tories' plans to privatise public services have been largely unsuccessful. Ann Rogers examines the reasons why.

The Tories are pressing ahead with their election promises to privatise sections of public services, from hospital laundries to street cleaning. They undoubtedly feel that it is one of the few 'radical' promises on which they can deliver (the other two—tax cuts and large reductions in wages having been quietly abandoned).

Several local councils have already pushed through privatisation schemes. Although the level of service they deliver is generally abysmal, and public sector unions have been wholly opposed to such plans, all attempts to stop them have been miserable failures.

The reasons for this failure have more than a little to do with the romanticism with which the public sector has been treated, by succeeding generations of Labour Party supporters. Where there have been fightbacks against privatisation the 'public opinion' argument has been seen as central by the trade union bureaucrats which have sought to control the action.

Assumption

Such arguments rest upon the assumption that the public services are fundamentally different from private enterprise, even that they arise from a different political system—private enterprise for the Tories, public services for Labour. In this sort of thinking the public sector is identified with socialism, and the position of the workers within those industries is seen as being fundamentally different from workers in the private sector.

The roots of these beliefs are not hard to trace—the welfare state is held up by the Labour Party, both left and right as proof that electing a Labour government improves the lot of ordinary workers.

The truth is, of course, that the creation of the welfare state had as much to do with ruling class fears as with Labour hopes. Many British workers were still under arms in 1945, and were demanding 'no return to the '30s', thus putting the ruling class in a rather worrying position. Some of the more far-sighted Tories had no substantial disagreement with an increase in welfare provisions. Indeed, some saw positive advantages—a healthier, and better educated working class had the potential to create greater profits.

The institutions born of the welfare state had nothing whatsoever to do with workers' control. In all cases managers were drawn from the same class as they had always been. Rigid disciplinary structures were kept, pay was low and working conditions were poor.

But if the '45 Labour government had failed to introduce socialism it had succeeded in stopping a mass outbreak of working class struggle, such as that which followed the first world war. The welfare state was permitted by the ruling class for two reasons—because it fitted the demands of capitalism at the time, and it was a small price to pay if it stopped workers fighting for socialism. If you could convince them that this was socialism then so much the better.

Throughout the long post war boom both Labour and Tory governments were quite willing to leave the public sector alone—at that time its benefits outweighed its costs. As soon as the boom ended both Labour and Tory governments began to look around for ways to cut.

Labour governments have cut regretfully—insisting that nothing can be done at the moment, that the only way to maintain services is by greater efficiency and the like. The Tories, however, particularly their Thatcherite wing, have developed an ideology which positively glorifies in cuts and privatisation.

At the centre of this ideology lies the mythical and reactionary beliefs in self reliance and the dynamism of the small capitalist—the whole Victorian values nonsense.

So, the argument goes, large scale public industry is unprofitable. Only the self interest of the private investor can save it so it must be privatised. The welfare state is inefficient, privatisation will introduce the profit motive into public services, and thus make them efficient.

Of course this is rubbish. One glance at the uncleaned streets of Wandsworth, or the uncleaned schools of Merton will show that. (Wandsworth have just taken their garden-

ing contract away from Pritchards and may return it to direct labour, such was the appalling service offered by Pritchards.)

But, if privatisation does not lead to an efficient service, it has certain other advantages. Firstly it is an excellent stick with which to threaten the workforce, as we shall see later. Secondly it's an important weapon in the general argument that public spending is too high—and people must be prepared to take over the burden. 'People' in this case, means, of course, working class women, who will be forced to take on more and more family responsibilities.

So, privatisation not only cuts back on services which workers use. It also has great potential for atomising and dividing the working class, by forcing council workers to accept the ideas of competitiveness and efficiency, and by encouraging women to see themselves as homemakers rather than workers.

The Tories' attempts to privatise public services can very clearly be seen as part of the general Tory offensive to shift the balance of class forces in the favour of the ruling class.

If we look at how privatisation was forced through in Tory councils like Wandsworth it becomes clear that the very introduction of the issue had an effect upon the workers in the council.

Management

By talking about privatisation they managed to win the argument with most of the local trade union bureaucracy about the need for an efficient service. Even before they privatised their refuse collection they managed to get acceptance of a reduction of nine vehicles and 39 jobs by threatening to privatise. In other words they had managed to create a situation where any workers' attempts to defend their own wages and conditions could be met with the threat of privatisation.

Of course the threat of privatisation did not happen in a vacuum—1,000 council jobs had already been lost through natural

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wastage in Wandsworth. The general industrial climate and a national Tory government meant that Wandsworth, like many Tory boroughs, felt confident about launching wave upon wave of attacks upon council services.

Unfortunately the majority of the rank and file, and all of the union bureaucracy, were either unable or unwilling to see things this way. Instead they insisted on seeing privatisation as something completely separate and different from previous attacks on council workers. Privatisation was seen as an isolated threat.

So negotiators did deals with the council in the hope of staving off the threat of privatisation. In January 1981 they agreed to 700 voluntary redundancies in return for a promise of no compulsory redundancies. By December 1981 they agreed to a reduced labour force, and increased flexibility in their street sweeping section in an attempt to keep the service public.

In Wandsworth, in common with most boroughs where privatisation has become an issue there was action against it. Furthermore, this action was quite widespread. But its purpose was largely to convince the Tories that there was opposition to their plans. There was never a real feeling that the action could be pushed to a level which would make Wandsworth change its mind.

So although the unions mobilised over 2,000 council workers to a local meeting against privatisation, they would only call a one day strike followed by selective action.



There were attempts to spread the action by getting other boroughs to take action. But the narrowness of the campaign which the Wandsworth unions had launched acted as a block to getting support. They had said that they were prepared to discuss cuts and flexibility once privatisation was dropped.

No generalisation

Therefore they were actually accepting the need for cuts, making it impossible to broaden the campaign from the specific issue of privatisation to the more general issue of cuts. Thus only other workers who were directly threatened with privatisation were likely to join or support the Wandsworth action.

That this separation between cuts and

privatisation occurred is not really surprising. It was pushed very hard by a trade union bureaucracy who accepted the need for greater efficiency and the possibility of cuts. Instead of seeing privatisation as an efficient way of cutting public spending and weakening workers' opposition to these cuts, they saw it as a completely alien and separate threat.

Thus the workers in Wandsworth found themselves isolated and unable to make the links between fighting privatisation and defending workers' wages and conditions in general. The campaign came to a halt with refuse collectors agreeing to return to work and tender for their own jobs.

Again the tendering process was seen as something completely isolated and different from the rest of trade union activity. So again possibilities to generalise the experience, and fight against reductions in jobs and conditions were lost. Tendering for your own job is not very different from agreeing to reduce manning levels in negotiations with the council. Both accept the argument that because of the crisis, public spending cuts are necessary. The refuse collectors in Wandsworth had already sacrificed jobs in the hope that they could then avoid being privatised. Because of this, when it came to the fight on privatisation they were weaker than they need have been.

In Wandsworth the unions accepted that they could not undercut the lowest tenders which the council had been offered. So instead they argued about 'value for money', saying that this could best be achieved by direct labour.

This may have been true — indeed it probably is. But arguing in this way undermines the very strength of workers' organisation which is necessary to win. It completely ignores the fact that council workers are exploited, indeed are among the lowest paid workers, whether they are employed by the council or by Pritchards.

Arguing about efficiency and value for money of direct labour both undermined the unions' ability to fight as public sector employees and undercut the possibility of spreading a fight to workers not directly threatened by privatisation. If the fight had been mobilised around demands about workers' conditions, rather than being bogged down in a belief that public services represented socialist advance, it would have been far easier to mobilise workers' strength to defend their jobs.

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The General Strike of 1961

The recent mass strike in Belgium has reminded us that sharp changes in the level of struggle can occur very quickly. Gareth Jenkins looks at an earlier example.

The most spectacular general strike of the post-war period (before May 68 in France) took place in Belgium between 20 December and 21 January 1961.

The strike went down to defeat. Needless say, much of that can be blamed on the right wing socialist leaders in parliament and the trade unions. Yet, as we shall see, a crucial element of responsibility for its ultimate collapse lay with the *left* of the trade union bureaucracy—those who were apparently the most ardent champions of the general strike.

The immediate cause of the strike was the attempt by the right wing coalition government to put before parliament a bill called the '*loi unique*'. The purpose of the bill was to adjust the Belgian economy to the changing pressures of the world economy at the expense of the working class. The ruling class felt compelled to do so because its international competitive position had deteriorated. The crisis was aggravated by the enforced loss of its huge, rich possessions in Africa.

This was still the period of the boom that dominated Western Europe after the war and the crisis in Belgium was not—as it is today—that of decline but of failure to adapt to changing patterns of expansion.

As Tony Cliff wrote at the time:

'Belgian industry is facing severe competition. Approximately 40 percent of its output is exported, mainly in the form of steel products and textiles. And it is precisely these products that have suffered from the change in the structure of world demand over recent decades: from commodities needing relatively unskilled labour towards capital equipment and a wide range of new industries based on highly skilled labour.'

'In Belgium adjustment has proceeded much more slowly than in the other countries of the Common Market. There are a number of reasons for this. First, Belgian industries suffered much less destruction during the war than those of some other countries, notably Germany, which were compelled to re-equip with the most modern machinery. Secondly, the acute demand for basic products immediately after the war and during the Korean boom hid the necessity for developing new types of production. And lastly, Belgian capital found it more profitable to invest abroad than at home.'

(*International Socialism* 4 1961)

The aim of the *loi unique* was explained at

the time by a French revolutionary:

'The general idea is to put into practice a policy of deflation in order to produce a budgetary surplus. This surplus would serve both to regain balance of payments equilibrium and to finance a policy of aid to private investment.'

'Of course this surplus was to be raised by additional taxes, savings on public investment and other measures which are directly (eg through freezing municipal employees' wages) or indirectly (eg through the imposition of a sales tax, that is to say the raising of prices), a widespread attack on the standard of living of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie.'

(*International Socialism* 4 1961).

The parliamentary opposition, in the shape of the Belgian Socialist Party, huffed and puffed. Its trade union partner, the 'socialist' but equally right wing led *Fédération Générale des Travailleurs Belges* (FGTB), went a little further and authorised some action, largely to act as a safety valve and to avoid being accused of doing nothing.

That consisted of fixing on a 'national day of opposition', for some time in January. Its Christian Trade Union rival, of comparable size, and with connections with the Christian

Democrat wing of the government, kept its protests muted.

However, something rather more dramatic was at hand. On 20 December, the day the *loi unique* was first introduced into parliament, the municipal workers—threatened with a wage freeze—were called out by their section of the FGTB.

The municipal workers' action was highly successful. The electricity works in Ghent was occupied depriving the port of Antwerp of electricity and bringing its locks and lifting mechanisms to a complete stop. More importantly, it unleashed working class militancy on a huge scale. Spontaneously, thousands of other workers came out in solidarity, some completely unofficially, some jumping the gun on official authorisation.

By the end of the first day, metallurgical workers at Charleroi, in the industrial heartland in the south, dockers in Antwerp, in the less industrialised north, and some teachers, were all out.

Thereafter, the strike spread at fantastic speed, often helped forward by flying pickets. Railways, trams and the postal service were all rapidly affected. Three days later, half a million workers were on strike, and by Christmas Day, the whole country was paralysed.

The strike extended to miners, to the great, heavy, industrial centres in the south, and to textiles in the north.

The high point of strike activity was reached on the 29 December. By then, strike





committees covered the country, and the Belgian bourgeoisie were stunned by what their *loi unique* had provoked.

But thereafter the strike began to suffer a loss of momentum. The leading sections were starting to ask, what now? Workers had demonstrated their unity and strength. But the *loi* was still there (debate on it was to be resumed when parliament reconvened on 3 January), and the Belgian ruling class was still in control.

Before going on with the story, two things need to be said. First, Flemish workers were among the first to come out. That is important in view of the deep split between the Flemish-speaking northern half and the French-speaking southern half (Wallonia) which has always weakened the Belgian working class.

Flanders is predominantly agricultural, Catholic and reactionary; Wallonia, industrial, secular and socialist.

Secondly, the general strike was very much a rank and file revolt, initially quite independent of the trade union bureaucracy. Even the left wing of the FGTB, led by André Renard, whose power base was the southern city of Liège, with its militant traditions, was out of touch.

Its alternative to the right wing plan had been for a series of demonstrations followed by a general strike ... on 15 January! This a mere four days before the Belgian working class erupted.

As always the lesson is how quickly the mood of workers can change as a result of initiatives from below rather than by orders from above. In this case, it enabled divisions between Flemish workers (many organised by the Christian Trade Union) to be broken down because they were approached directly by rank and file FGTB members and involved in joint strike committees.

The net result of all this unofficial activity was that in the early period the strike movement completely outran the official trade union leadership. In the circumstances

the bureaucracy was forced leftwards so as not to lose all influence. It had no choice but to 'authorise' the general strike—after the event.

Having caught up, it now began to reassert its control by insisting that strike committees find their proper place in the official apparatus and with 'responsible' leaders in charge.

As the Renardist left wing of the FGTB was the only section of the bureaucracy that had emerged with any credibility (despite some hesitation it had swung rapidly behind the movement), its influence increased enormously.

Besides, the FGTB, as a whole was not disposed to call off the general strike (even supposing it could have done so). It saw in the movement a useful lever for wresting concessions from the government.

But what it could not afford was to let the movement get out of hand and challenge the very institutions it pinned its faith on. If, as a result of workers' action, parliament and the state apparatus threatened to crumble, who would there then be left to negotiate with? The trade union bureaucracy therefore did everything in its power to contain the movement.

Advance or retreat

For what the general strike raised (as the British General Strike had in 1926) was: Who rules—workers or bosses? Once its forces are committed, the working class cannot stand still: either it uses its collective strength to challenge the political supremacy of the ruling class, or its power is gradually frittered away. Advance or retreat are the only options (as *Solidarity* dramatically proved in Poland). So it was in the Belgian general strike.

The first crack in the workers' unity came on 27 December, with the Christian Union's decision to denounce the general strike as 'revolutionary'. It had been preceded by its

spiritual mentor, the cardinal primate of Belgium, in his pre-Christmas message to the faithful.

The FGTB hotly denied this suggestion, having already taken every opportunity to declare that 'its action was directed against the *loi unique*, and not against the democratic institutions'.

It also denounced the Christian Union—which was a convenient cover for its own lack of activity.

Had the FGTB shown determination to carry the action to a new level, the Christian Union leaders could never have retained their hold over their members, some of whom in the early days of rank and file inter-union solidarity even quit the union altogether.

Under pressure from their leadership and with no lead coming from the rival 'socialist' trade union, those supporting the strike began to waver.

At this point the ruling class slowly recovered from its state of shock. It mobilised its forces. Belgian troops on NATO exercises were recalled and police attacks on pickets increased, sometimes resulting in fatal casualties. Nevertheless, the Belgian ruling class did not need to crush the strike in paramilitary fashion. The social crisis was not so deep that the TU bureaucracy could not do the job.

For a while the strike wave continued to bring out more workers, even in Flanders. But as money began to run short, the question of what to do next began to loom large. From 28 December onwards, workers assembled in monster demonstrations in most of the major cities.

However much the trade union leaders tried to keep the general strike on 'unpolitical' lines, workers in taking to the streets were now raising slogans that went well beyond purely economic demands. Chants of 'Down with the Prime Minister' and 'The Bankers Must Pay' mixed with attacks on the King and the Cardinal, and

calls for a republic.

But in the context of the FGTB leadership's continuing pleas for 'calm', 'order' and 'discipline' (the better to impress the bourgeoisie) this constant activity without any progress began to wear out workers' patience.

As frustration mounted, there were even acts of sabotage—which the bureaucracy denounced as 'provocations', even though their very lack of leadership was the root cause.

One of the major slogans that began to gather support was the call for a 'March on Brussels.' However ill-defined, this demand showed a clear sense of the need to pass beyond strike action to an assault on state power. Belgian workers had fond memories of the last march, in 1950, which had compelled the previous king's resignation. As police brutality grew, it became increasingly obvious to strikers that stopping the controlled state's power of repression was a priority. The idea of marching on the capital appeared even more attractive.

Trade union leaders and socialist politicians began sending out desperate signals that if something was not done soon they could not answer for the legitimacy of the movement. Luckily for them, parliament reconvened on 3 January. Against the background of parliamentary horsetrading in amendments, rumours started to circulate about secret negotiations between the government and the FGTB.

That same day, André Renard, the undisputed leader of the left, made brutally clear his total opposition to the idea of a march on Brussels. In the course of the general strike, he had become a wildly popular figure, greeted rapturously wherever he spoke. He was the Scargill of his day. He was able, therefore, to use all his considerable reputation as a fighting left-winger to denounce the march as dangerous and premature.

Same perspective

For all his thunderous rhetoric his perspective was the same as other trade union bureaucrats: to wring concessions from the ruling class, not to overthrow the existing order. Where he differed was in his realisation that cracking the resolve of the ruling class was a tougher job than the right wing imagined and would not come about through appeasement. He therefore egged the movement on.

But at the end of the day, he did not believe in taking the movement beyond reformist horizons. That is why he pushed a programme of structural reforms for the Belgian economy as the aim of the strike movement. To the *loi unique* he counterposed what we would now call an Alternative Economic Strategy: a series of supposedly anti-capitalist measures (nationalisation, Health Service, planning, National Investment Fund, reduction in military expenditure). Like the examples we are familiar with, its aspirations were more statist than socialist and it accepted the continuing existence of the bourgeois state machine.

So Renard was bound to turn on the very

forces he urged forward. His opposition to the march on Brussels consisted in advancing a more 'radical' slogan: abandoning production if need be. This would have entailed flooding the mines and letting the furnaces go cold—a desperate, and unpopular solution. Not for the first time, more confusion was sown, not by right wing bureaucrats opposing action, but by left wing bureaucrats pushing adventurist tactics.

At the same time, he raised what in the circumstances could only be a thoroughly divisive slogan: the demand for Walloon federalism. True, the centre of the general strike was the French-speaking southern half, and it was also the case that the Belgian bourgeoisie exploited the clerical reaction that dominated Flanders to divide and rule.

Nevertheless the spontaneity of the general strike had drawn many Flemish workers, no doubt with reactionary ideas, into the movement and given them their first taste of workers' power. To put forward demands that favoured Wallonia was therefore the height of folly.

They could have little appeal to Flemish workers, and only make it easier for Catholic reaction to play on suspicions of French chauvinism—especially if this 'socialism' relegated them to second class status.

Moreover, the demand was, for its apparent radicalism, one that led Wallonian militants up another blind alley of reformism. It peddled the illusion that greater Walloon independence could give the structural reforms that the unitary Belgian state could not. The question of which class would rule was left unclear.

The bankruptcy of this kind of politics can be seen in Renard's support for a pathetic resolution passed by Walloon socialist elected representatives in the final days of the strike, begging the King, of all people, to grant Walloon self-determination.

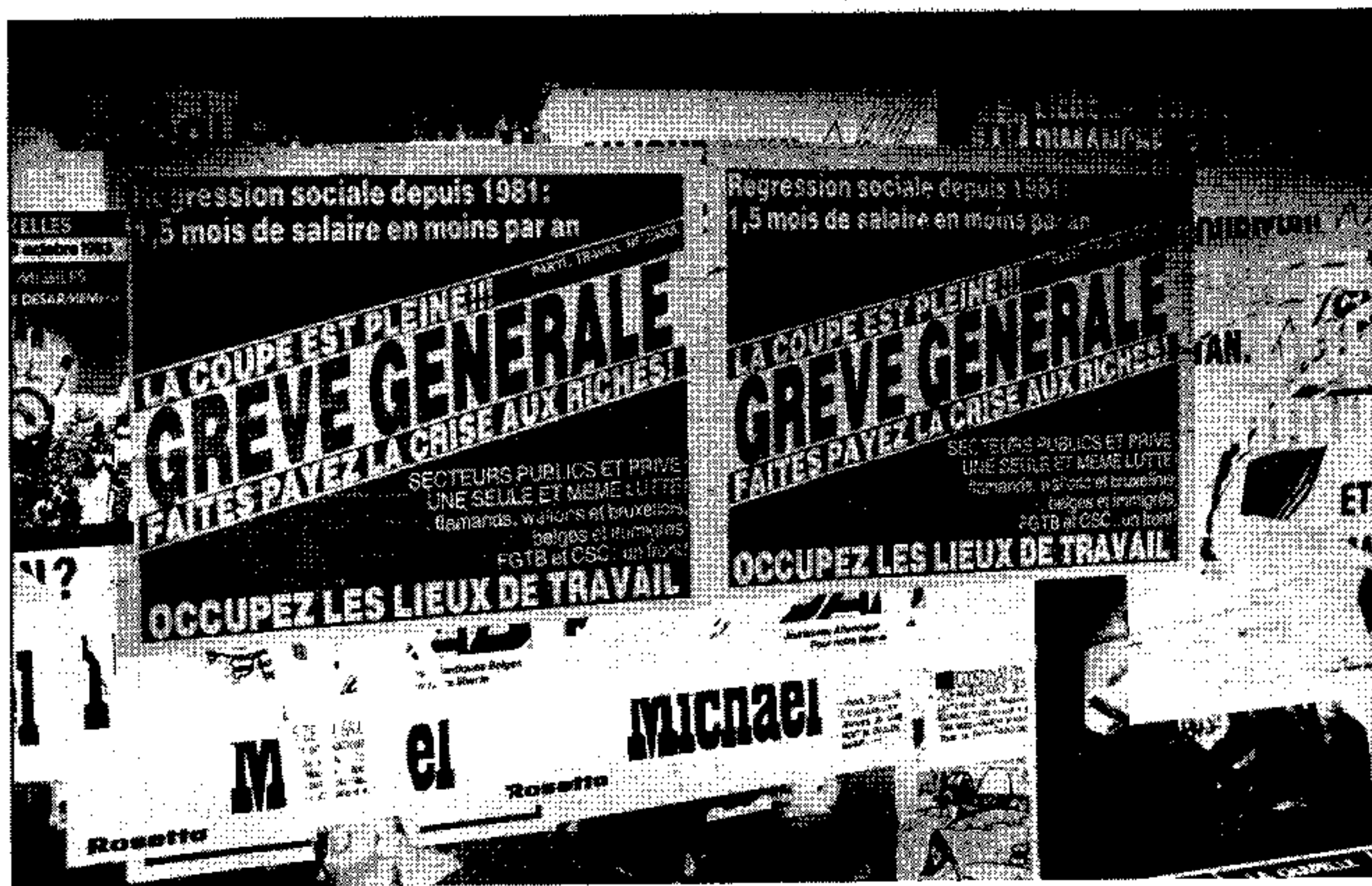
After 7 January the general strike noticeably lost support. The first large scale returns to work occurred in Brussels and amongst Flemish textile workers. On the 10th, the important Flemish towns of Bruges and Ghent went back. Van Acker, the leader of the Socialist Party in parliament, gave unequivocal support to the government in its repressive attempt to restore 'law and order', thereby stabbing the Belgian working class in the back. But it was an indication of how the power of the movement was ebbing.

Police brutality and attacks on pickets grew as the area affected by strike action shrank back beyond the language border and became uniquely Walloon. On 14 January, the *loi unique* was passed. On 21 January, the last remaining strikers, the 120,000 metalworkers in the Liege and Charleroi area, voted to return to work. The Belgian general strike of 1960/61 was at an end.

Could the outcome have been significantly different? Were there forces, specifically revolutionary forces, that could have offered an alternative?

Apart from the trade union left, there was also a left wing in the Belgian Socialist Party. This left (what we would call a 'hard' left, including leading Trotskyists like Ernest Mandel) was grouped round the paper *La Gauche*. Its influence was such that in the conference immediately prior to the general





strike it had gained the support of 25 percent of the delegates for Belgium to get out of NATO. The general strike provided *La Gauche* with a splendid opportunity to test its politics in action.

It failed. Of course, for it to have had a *decisive* influence on the course of events was unlikely. It was too small, and in the objective economic circumstances of the period, expanding capitalism could have granted the reforms necessary to avert revolution. Nevertheless, it failed in the sense that its *politics* failed. And that had to do with its relationship to the left reformist leadership thrown up by the movement.

That the left trade union bureaucrats came to dominate should not surprise us. Though strike action rapidly radicalises workers, they still carry in their heads a picture of the world shaped by 'normal' conditions, i.e. the idea that reformism can deliver the goods. In the absence of anything else, left wing reformists, less tested than the discredited right, became the natural recipients of this awakened but contradictory consciousness.

So, although the strike committees that sprang up spontaneously in the general strike were organisationally quite independent of the trade union machine, and represented real workers' power, they came rapidly under the influence of local left wing trade union representatives. Loyalty to the strikers' interests was apparently in no contradiction to loyalty to the trade union. But the pressure upwards could—and did, as the momentum faltered—be translated into pressure downwards.

What did the Belgian 'hard' left do to preserve the independence of the strike committees (that kernel of workers' power), and challenge the left-reformist leaders? Virtually nothing. They did not call for a national conference of strike committees,

which could have co-ordinated and developed workers' power, and in which the politics of workers' power as the precondition for settling accounts with the Belgian bourgeoisie and its state could have been argued.

As for the question of an 'alternative economic strategy' they did not insist that real reform was conditional upon workers smashing the old state machine and creating one of their own. They rehashed the programme, which thus gave force to the illusion that decisive change could be achieved without revolution, without workers' control.

Even Mandel, who as a self-proclaimed Marxist should have known better, fudged the issue of state power, and tried to make out that the 'programme of structural reform' could serve as some kind of transitional demand.

Finally, and most damningly, there is the question of the march on Brussels. Although *La Gauche* had been the first to raise it, they quickly dropped it. Of course, there were problems with the demand—it was vague in its intentions (what were workers to do when they arrived in Brussels? Would such a march expose them needlessly to police and army harassment?)

But instead of explaining such matters, or attempting to give the slogan some worked-out content, *La Gauche* abandoned the slogan largely because Renard and the left bureaucrats were opposed to it. *La Gauche* talked of 'party discipline', of 'unity' on the grounds that a march would divide and weaken the working class.

It is quite possible that a march was not on, but the explanation favoured by *La Gauche* indicated that it preferred a cosy relationship with left bureaucrats to fighting independently for its politics. Indeed, on many occasions, *La Gauche* simply acted as a

cheer leader for Renard, and was quite uncritical. Confusion rather than clarity was the inevitable result among the most advanced workers it influenced.

The conclusions, then, from the Belgian general strike of 1960/61 are the following:

An upturn in workers' struggle—on a massive scale—can erupt in the most unlikely circumstances. In the booming 50s and 60s, when revolution seemed to have disappeared from the political agenda, a minor crisis (by our standards) could unleash a torrent of pent-up working class fury, that put the item back on the agenda. In the downturn, despite workers' present lack of confidence, who knows what crisis can release even greater bitterness—and even greater opportunities?

The natural recipients of such an upsurge will almost certainly be the left leaderships of reformist trade union and political organisations.

In these circumstances unless socialists are organised in an independent, revolutionary party, already experienced by its intervention in whatever struggles have happened before hand, they will lack the capacity to make any effective gains since they will be towed in the wake of the left reformists.

On their ability to make such gains will depend, not necessarily a *revolutionary* outcome to workers' struggles (clearly improbable in the circumstances of the Belgian general strike), but whether the balance of class forces at the end of the day has tilted significantly towards the working class.

If workers emerge strengthened in their organisation and with a well-implanted revolutionary party, the future possibilities of successful proletarian revolution are immeasurably increased.

Receding miracle

The recent assassination of the opposition leader, Aquino in the Philippines will not solve the problems of the regime. Sue Cockerill explains.

On 21 August the leader of the opposition in the Philippines, Aquino, was shot dead seconds after leaving the plane which had brought him back from exile in the USA. Ferdinand Marcos, the man who has ruled the country for eighteen years, nine of them under martial law, denies complicity in the assassination, but it is hard to find anyone in the Philippines who believes him.

The assassination was followed by massive protests on a scale which has rocked the regime and led Reagan to call off his proposed November visit to Manila. Over a million people attended the funeral of Aquino, and there have been numerous street protests since, some leading to confrontations with the police which have resulted in deaths. A month after the assassination, demonstrators, many of them students, fought a pitched battle with the heavily armed riot police. A government demonstration on the anniversary of martial law was turned into an angry anti-Marcos protest by workers who had been ordered to attend the rally.

The importance of the events lies not in the assassination itself—Aquino was in many ways no better than Marcos—but in the possibility of the overthrow of the regime by a mass movement.

Debt repayment

The Philippines, an American colony until 1946, remains crucial to America's Far Eastern military strategy. The Clark air base and the Subic Bay naval base are enormous installations, with thousands of US forces based there. The bases are part of a military collaboration between the US and the Philippines which binds the army closely to the Americans. The country spends comparatively little on defence so the army relies on American equipment deals. The US is also the principal foreign investor with more than a \$1 billion stake in the country.

The background to the present wave of protest is the worsening condition of the economy and the austerity measures taken by the regime to try to satisfy its creditors—the Western banks, and the IMF. Like a lot of countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe the Philippines borrowed huge amounts of money in the seventies and are now faced with debt repayments at a time of world recession. The projects which the money went into are producing or will produce goods which there isn't a market for. To make matters worse, interest rates have shot up, making the burden of debt servicing

much heavier.

The Philippines' economy is presently at the level of industrialisation of Taiwan or South Korea in the sixties. It is still predominantly an agricultural country—half the workforce still works on the land, producing the main crops of coconut and sugar and rice. The coconut producers have been hit particularly hard by the world commodity slump.

Manufacturing industry has been concentrated on exports, especially with the development of export processing zones, where multinational companies take advantage of cheap labour—paying \$3 a day—without tax and other restrictions by the government. Such zones also exist in Sri Lanka, China and other parts of the Third World. The composition of industry has changed from being primarily food processing to much more diverse activities, especially textiles and electronics. But the plans for the development of basic industries

like steel, petrochemicals, paper and shipbuilding have run smack into the world crisis.

Out of eleven planned major industrial projects half have been axed or cut back. Only those which are deemed internationally viable—those that can compete with imports without protection—can go ahead.

The state has been closely involved in these projects, through the National Development Company, and recently through rescuing companies which are going bankrupt. This has upset many capitalists who see the state as a potentially dangerous competitor. They fear that in the present condition of the economy, there will be many companies which will fall under the control of the state. They also resent the control by Marcos's cronies over key companies. This is part of the reason for the increasing dissatisfaction with the Marcos regime among businessmen.

Life for the majority of Filipinos is grim. The fast economic growth of the seventies brought little benefit to them. Foreign investment was brought to the Philippines mostly by the lure of a cheap docile labour force, guaranteed by martial law, which existed from 1972 to 1981. Although finally ended then, Marcos has kept all the powers

Over a million people attended Aquino's funeral



which he had under martial law.

During this period real wages for skilled workers fell to three-quarters of their 1972 level. Unskilled workers were even worse off: their wages declined by over a third in real terms. It is estimated that 80 percent of the population live below the poverty line.

Martial law was imposed after a period in which there was extensive opposition to Marcos's rule, with fighting between the army and Moslem separatists in Mindanao (in the south) and also with the New People's Army (NPA), military wing of the Communist Party, which is outlawed. There has been a CP in the Philippines since 1930, but this group was founded in 1968 by some Maoist intellectuals.

Heavy repression achieved some successes against both guerrilla forces, and the continuing expansion of the economy helped Marcos to keep a grip on the country until recently. But long before the Aquino assassination it became clear that the regime faced serious problems.

The receding prospect of an economic miracle has led to splits in the ruling class, while austerily threatens to bring mass unrest. In the rural areas drought, falling prices for crops, the land reform failure plus the frequent killings and extortion perpetuated by the army has driven more and more peasants and rural workers into support for the NPA.

The Defence Ministry says that there are only about 3,500 NPA troops. The NDF, an umbrella group of left organisations, says there are four times that number fighting on many different fronts in Mindanao and Luzon, the principal island. What is clear is that the NPA enjoys extensive but passive support in the countryside.

Wave of disputes

The Catholic church has also moved into cautious opposition to Marcos, but the rule of the church hierarchy is as pernicious in the Philippines as it is in Poland. The head of the church, the man with the wonderful name of Cardinal Sin, tacks and manoeuvres, calling for 'reconciliation'. He would willingly deal with Marcos under the right conditions. The ordinary priests, monks and nuns often throw in their lot with the peasants and a number have been arrested on charges of sedition. Many are prepared to work with the NPA.

However, while many businessmen want to see an end to Marcos's autocratic rule, they are also aware of the tremendous dangers if such a process got out of hand. The economy is shaky and the workers are being asked to bear the cost of the crisis in terms of cuts in wages and more unemployment. A man like the dead Aquino—who some Filipinos called 'America's spare tyre' because he was seen as the US replacement for Marcos—was envisaged as a good alternative. Someone who could put a more acceptable face on the sacrifices that were to be demanded.

The opposition of many businessmen to the regime has led to the curious spectacle of demonstrations in the financial district of Manila, during which office workers threw

bottles on to the heads of police from high-rise office windows. Marcos ordered the arrest of some prominent business opponents of the regime, and sent the riot police in, but has since had to become more conciliatory because of the financial crisis. The assassination and protests led to international capitalist fears for the stability of the regime, and money poured out of the country at the rate of more than three million dollars a day.

The threat of working class action is not at all unreal. The working class has shown considerable militancy since martial law was lifted. There were only 62 strikes in 1980. In 1981 there were 260. In the first quarter of 1982, 3.4 million work hours were lost as against two million in the first quarter of 1981. Most of these strikes were in big industries. (The figure of strikes in 1980 should be seen in the context that strikes were illegal under martial law.)

The strikes led to an extension of the already draconian laws which ban strikes in industries 'vital to the national interest.' Nevertheless, the strikes went ahead, and the government's powers to issue 'back to work' orders seemed to have no effect. The new law broadened the strike ban to include all export-oriented industries, the clause being designed to reassure foreign investors.

In spite of these laws, strikes have tended to occur in precisely the areas where foreign investment is located. This isn't at all surprising, since these are the areas where workers are concentrated together in large units. The longest strike occurred in the biggest semi-conductor company in the Philippines. A wave of disputes took place in the middle of 1982 in the export-processing zone of Bataan, which is the largest such zone, employing about 28,000 workers.

The first dispute began at a Japanese-Filipino owned company, where 12 workers walked out in protest at their workload being increased without warning. Two weeks into the strike, the zone police—who have powers to arrest and detain 'disruptive workers'—were called in, following a government back to work order. The police hosed the strikers and then arrested them. This brought out 20,000 workers in the zone

on a three-day sympathy strike, in which 54 workers were detained.

The outcome of the strike, following intervention by the president of the National Federation of Labour Unions, Olalia, was that the 54 detained workers would be released, the original strikers would return to work, but would not be paid for their strike days, and the company would withdraw the increased work quotas.

This took place in June 1982. In August, Olalia was arrested on charges of subversion, and a thousand police moved into the zone, setting up road blocks and searching workers, after Marcos accused the unions of plotting his overthrow.

In October 1983, strikes were again reported to be occurring in the zone. The union's response to changes in the law designed to prevent them obstructing vehicles and people crossing picket lines 'this defeats the whole purpose of a strike' might well surprise Len Murray.

Popular Front ideas

Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be any truth in Marcos's allegations that workers' leaders were plotting a revolution. The prevailing ideas on the left—certainly in the NPA—are the ideas of the Popular Front. In other words, unity among all the opponents of the Marcos regime. Such unity is bound to be in the interests of those factions of the ruling class who oppose Marcos, at the expense of the interest of workers and the rural poor.

This is because in order to achieve unity the price is to drop the demands (and independent organisation to achieve those demands) which threaten the control of the capitalists over workers in the factories and on the plantations.

Although as one US diplomat remarked 'Marcos isn't the Shah of Iran, and he isn't Somoza' (showing that even American diplomats learn from history), the Americans are distancing themselves from him and trying to find a replacement. Meanwhile the army seems to be playing a bigger role in running the country.

Marcos's days are numbered, but not yet the days of capitalism in the Philippines.

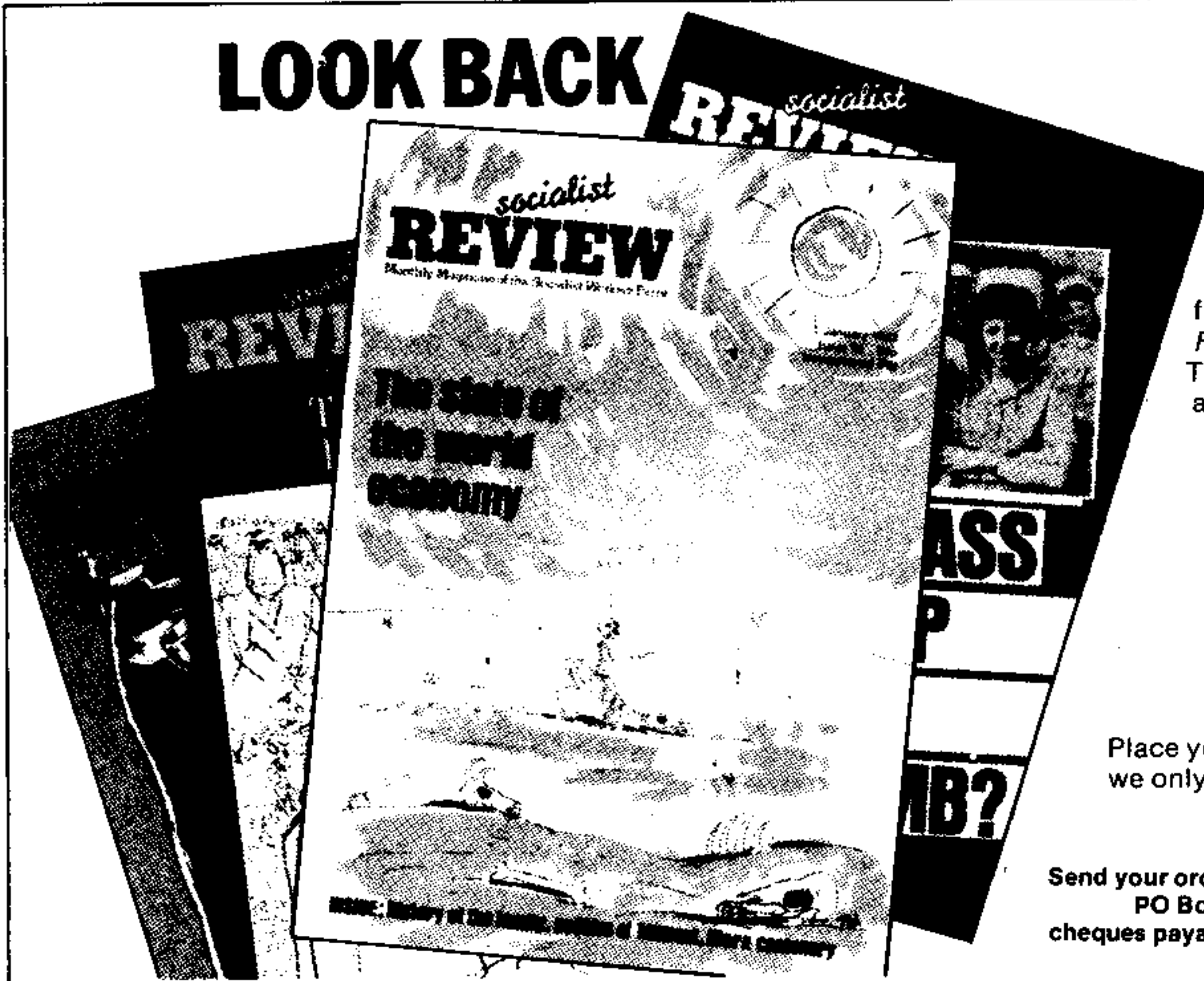
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Struggle but no focus

The Iranian government still faces war in the Gulf and opposition at home. **Maryam Poya** looks at the situation.

The Iranian ruling class have cause for relief. The government is much more stable than it was twelve months ago and it is a government firmly committed to private capitalism.

The struggle within the ruling class seems to have ended with a clear victory for the 'technocrats'. The so-called 'Iman's line' faction, statisticians who wanted to run Iran along the lines of Libya, Syria and Algeria, and were favourable to the USSR and its allies, have been crushed.

The clearest sign of that defeat is the arrest of the leadership and 6,000 members of the Tudeh Party, the Moscow-line CP. They had been backing the statisticians and were, in their own words, 'working to give a scientific framework to general vague and hazy ideas'.

And just after the arrests, the ruling Islamic Republican Party held its first congress. Speaker after speaker stressed the unity of the party and denied that the party had 'ever had any economic tendency towards Moscow'. They were signalling that the advocates of the state had been beaten by pretending that they had never even existed.

Reassuring

But the defeat of the statisticians does not mean that the Iranian equivalents of Keith Joseph are in the saddle and ready to privatise every last nut and bolt of the state machine. The state, and in particular its control over oil production, is too important for that to happen. Today in Iran it is still the case that the best way to make money is to act in conjunction with the state.

The economic primitives, the Hojatieh, may have helped the technocrats to beat the statisticians, but they too have been pushed aside. When the Prime Minister, Moosavi, introduced the new economic five year plan to the Majlis (parliament) he argued that the Hojatieh faction were: 'dangerous and counter-revolutionary because they argue that all economic progress must wait until the coming of the Mahdi' (Islamic Messiah).

Two Hojatieh ministers, of commerce and labour, were forced to resign and the group split. One faction, led by the education minister Parvaresh, now collaborates with the government but the majority, under Ebade Saleh, continue in opposition. The 'revolutionary prosecutor general', Musavi Tabrizi, recently warned them that if they did not keep quiet they could expect: 'the same as we did to the Mujahedin and the communists'.

The political logic of these developments is the attempt to win back the loyalty of the Iranian middle class and to reassure foreign businessmen and foreign investors.

The start of the campaign was an eight point decree by Khomeini in December 1982. This was designed to curb the terror that the regime itself had encouraged in its struggle against the Mujahedin and the rest of its left opponents. The security forces were now instructed to behave a bit better.

The search for the 'team houses' of political and military opponents of the regime was conducted with the greatest brutality. The 'pasdars' (revolutionary guards) often smashed into houses on the slightest suspicion, arresting, wrecking and 'expropriating' at will. On occasions they even fired rocket-propelled grenades at houses suspected of housing opponents.

So random were the attacks that even senior mullahs and government ministers began to get worried as the tide of complaints from friends and relatives rolled in.

Now the official terrorists are supposed to

than true believers.'

If the regime is reducing the ideological pressure on the middle class it is also trying to bribe them. In the bazaar the merchants are now feeling much more confident. Gone are the fears of nationalisation and the restraints of the state monopoly of foreign trade and effective price controls. Now anything can be got and sold — at a price.

If you are poor you have to rely on the official and tightly rationed supplies of necessities; if you can afford to pay three, five, even ten times the official price then there are a mass of traders who can supply you with anything you want. Government drives against the black market do nothing more than persecute the desperate street peddlars, while their big suppliers grow rich.

The regime offers the middle classes the same deal as the Shah did before them: keep your mouths shut and we will pay you very well for your services. One businessman described the new mood in Tehran:

'This is a Hitlerite regime, but we love it. Everything is fine, there is plenty of money to be made and the Pasdars and the Komitehs are ensuring our security against the armed opposition. The



Boy soldiers from the Iranian army

have a warrant for their activities.

At work too the experts and specialists the regime needs are to be given a freer hand. The Islamic Societies and Councils in factories and offices are now restricted to information gathering and security. They are no longer allowed to interfere in the management or running of the workplaces. That is now the job of the professional experts and any Islamic activist who objects is likely to get sacked.

In the school system the main watchdog organisation, the Omar Torbiati (training affairs organisation) has had its budget frozen and many of its staff transferred to normal teaching duties. One disgruntled member recently reported:

'In the time of the martyrs Rajai and Baha'nor we were a real force to combat the counter-revolutionaries and force islamisation in the schools, but now we are told to obey the headmasters, many of whom are compromising persons rather

Islamic councils and societies no longer dare interfere in managerial work. Anything, including music and video tapes and alcoholic drinks can be got at a price on the black market. We are allowed to travel abroad fairly freely and that allows us to enjoy ourselves away from the Islamic Republic with the money we earn in it.'

Making money is the other growth area of the last 12 months. The most obvious sign has been the massive import boom. In 1981 imports totalled \$14 billion. In 1982 they were up to \$18.2 billion. So great was the pressure that the regime was forced to order 10,000 new trucks from Japan, Sweden and West Germany in order to get the thousands of tons of goods off the docks.

All of this has meant the re-emergence of the foreign businessman in Iran's economic life. They too have been reassured by the changed climate. Their bills are now paid promptly — even when they date from the



days of the Shah.

This import boom has been paid for so far by oil revenues. During 1982 Iran sold oil at any price it could get, undercutting the OPEC figure by up to \$5 per barrel. In March this year matters came to a head with OPEC forcing the Iranian government back into line. Iran knows, after all, that if OPEC collapses it would lose out in a free-for-all with the Saudi giant.

In 1982 oil revenues ran at around \$21 billion and were enough to cover even the consumer boom amongst the middle classes and the costs of the war, but this year it looks as though they will be down to around \$18 billion.

Very soon now the Iranian government is going to have to face some very hard choices. If they go back to their old oil-price cutting ways in an effort to increase volume sales and thus revenue then they will be in trouble with OPEC. If they cut back on imports then they will risk alienating the middle class they have been concerned to woo. And if they go, as they might, to the Western bankers or the IMF, then they will be forced to re-shape the economy along lines familiar in Latin America.

To organise IMF inspired attacks on workers would not, however, be a radically new development for the government. The fact that they have been wooing the middle class does not mean that all sectors of society are benefitting. On the contrary, the working class continues to pay a heavy and increasing price for the regime.

The fact that the various Islamic police forces have been told to lay off the middle class does not mean that they have ceased activity. They have found new channels for their energy. One of the most popular has been the campaign against 'naked women'.

Any woman with even the slightest imperfection in the approved standards of dress can expect to be stopped, assaulted and arrested in the street. Some women arrested for wearing make-up or non-regulation clothing have been charged with 'conspiring against the Islamic Republic'.

Increase in struggles

Inside the prisons, the terrible round of torture and murder continues. Every month stories of fresh atrocities circulate. The most recent trend is to display on TV political prisoners who have been effectively broken, where they are expected to confess that 'they were traitors and are now good believers'.

Living standards too are under threat. The minimum wage has been frozen at around 600 Rials a day and all government employment is frozen. Everything is being tried to boost productivity with the same size of workforce. And a new labour law aims to force women to work only part time.

A very clear example of how the policies of the regime have a different impact on different social classes is shown by their policies on the family. In defence of 'Islamic principles' the government is cutting back on state aid to nurseries. At the same time it is quite happy to allow the number of private nurseries in the better-off areas to increase rapidly.

These policies have met with resistance. In the hospitals and schools, which bore the brunt of the witch hunts against the Mujahedin and the left, nurses and teachers are refusing to co-operate with the untrained staff sent in by the fundamentalists.

In the factories there have been strikes, sit-ins and go-slows. Workers at the giant Ahwaz Steel works organised a long strike.

The government responded by sacking all 7,000 of them, announcing that the works was a 'hot-bed of strikes and sit-ins costing \$10 million a month in wages for idle workers'.

Workers at the Toolid Daroo pharmaceutical works struck for more money. At the Ray-o-Vac battery factory they expelled the Islamic Society. In the Sipa Reno car factory they struck for a five day week.

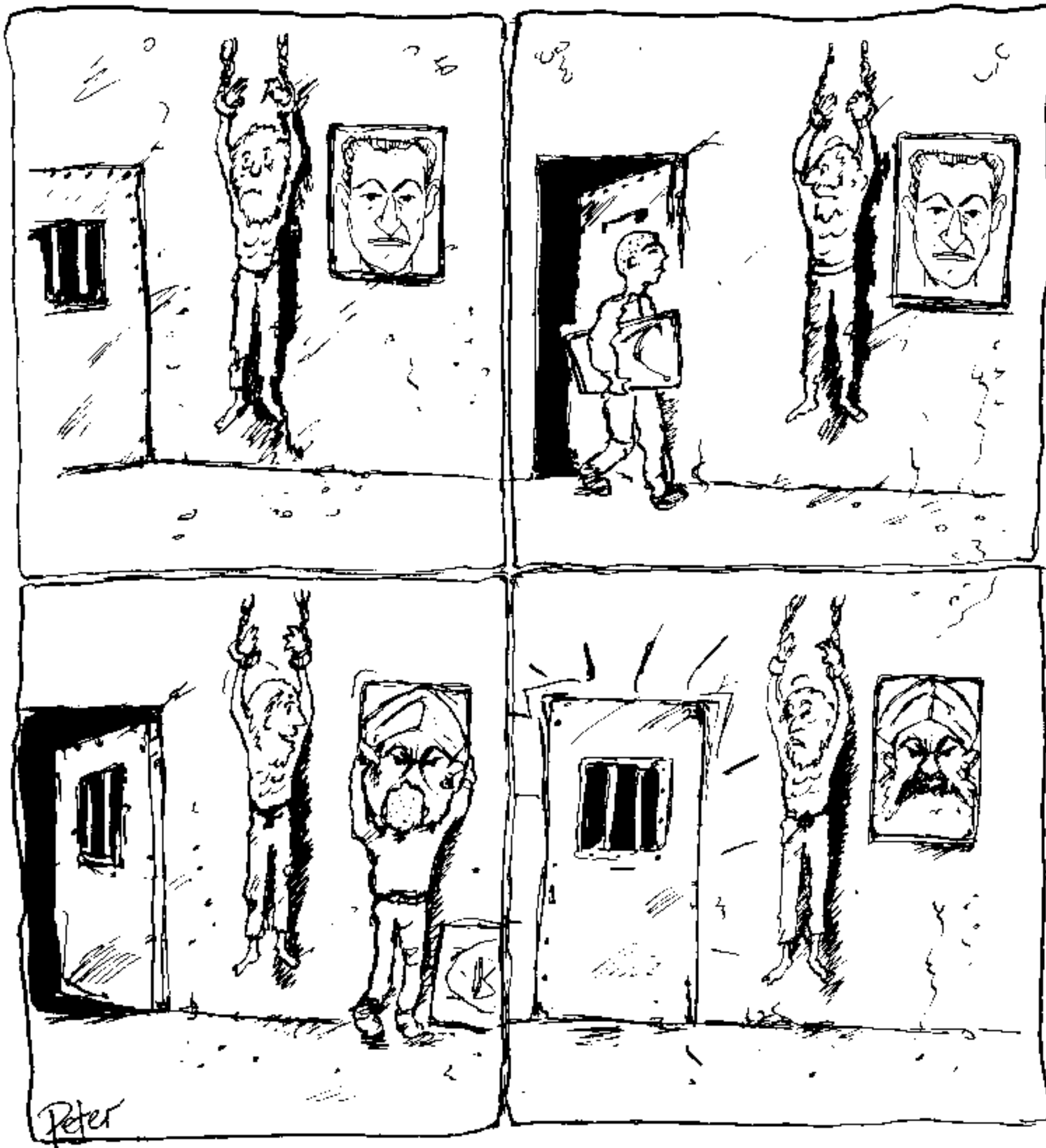
The normal response of the regime is brutal repression and many of the struggles end in defeat. There are, however a few workers who are looking for answers to the political problems their strikes highlight. A worker at the Sipa plant remarked:

'We were defeated in our long strike but we will struggle again and we must recognise what our weaknesses were. The most important of these were disunity and disorganisation.'

This sort of response is, however, only found amongst a minority of workers. For many, perhaps most, demoralisation and exhaustion are the consequences of defeat. The response is then either passive acceptance of the system with all its horrors or isolated and despairing resistance that is easily crushed by the police apparatus. An example of the latter was an incident in Afsarieh, a working class district of Tehran, where a violent clash between protesters and revolutionary guards led to 20 dead, five of them guards.

The extent of the political confusion underlying this protest can be judged from its slogan: 'Either water or the traitor Shah'. As one demonstrator put it: 'We supported Khomeini against the Shah, but at least under the Shah we had bread and water.'

The tragedy is that although there are some workers looking for a way of theorising their experiences over the last few years and



finding ways of ending the apparently endless rounds of misery and oppression, there is very little, and perhaps nothing, inside Iran that can act as any sort of focus for them.

A large section of the left opposition to the Shah lined up behind the 'Iman's line' faction of the ruling class. This included the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen majority. They were joined by other ex-Trotskyist groups in seeing the victory of statism as a

victory of socialism and the terror against all opposition as part of the 'struggle against imperialism'.

Demoralisation

Now that terror has caught up with them too. Tudeh Party leader Nurreddin Kianuri was one of those dragged before the TV cameras to say that he had not been tortured, had spied for Russia, now rejected Marxism and called on all Tudeh Party members to rally behind Khomeini.

The tragedy is that his co-thinkers who have escaped the repression refused to draw the lessons. They describe his broadcast as: 'a tactic to raise hope among the membership and send them a message in disguise that the Iman's line can be revived through some ministers like Sarhadizadeh (the new labour minister and former prison warden of Ghezel Ghale Prison under the Shah) and that, even if the Tudeh Party is smashed, Moscow will send troops one day to Iran as they have done in Afghanistan and Poland.'

But even those on the left who do not share the cretinous and self-destructive analysis of the statists are unable to provide a much better perspective. Many of the intellectual leaders of the left are now exhausted and demoralised by the succession of defeats. They have collapsed into a series of analyses of the 'sociological, cultural and psychological nature of the revolution of 1979 and

of the Iranian masses'. They end up playing with words and lack any practical perspective.

Others argue that the Islamic regime is incompatible with the development of capitalism and that, depending on what dogma they are following, it will either be replaced by bourgeois democracy or proletarian revolution as a matter of inevitability.

The idea that the fall of the regime is inevitable is an attractive one, and in the long term it is of course true. But as a short term perspective it leads directly to passivity: all you have to do is sit back and wait for history to do the work for you.

The detailed arguments that the holders of these positions use to cheer themselves up are no nearer the mark. There are numerous examples of Islamic regimes co-existing quite comfortably with modern capitalism: there is no evidence, for instance, that 'imperialism' or 'capitalism' wants to sweep away the rulers of Saudi Arabia. And there is no evidence to suggest that capitalism prefers bourgeois democracy: try telling that to the workers of Chile, or indeed most of the rest of the world.

The result of all this whistling in the dark is to deepen the gulf between the revolutionaries and the mass of Iranian workers and peasants. Talk of the inevitable fall of Khomeini is of no use in the struggles of the here and now.

There is an important job of analysis to be done, but it starts from radically different premises. The overthrow of the Shah was the result of a massive popular mobilisation in which the working class played a major role and used many of its classic methods of struggle. But the fact is that none of the political organisations which had a sizeable implantation in Iran itself saw the independent activity of workers as the centre of their politics.

From the Tudeh Party through all factions of the Fedayeen to the Mujahedin the dominant line was one of seeking an alliance with other classes and in particular with this or that section of the ruling class.

In those circumstances what occurred was what has happened in many other great popular mobilisations. The working class was dragged behind sections of other classes.

What has been special about the Iranian experience is that there have been, and still are, two factions struggling for the job of ruling Iran. In many examples of revolutions in third world countries it is clear who will win from very early on: the private capitalists as in Kenya, or the state capitalists as in Vietnam. In Iran the struggle is not over yet.

Despite the fact that the masses did learn rapidly in the course of the revolution and its aftermath the political organisations have continued to line up behind one or other faction of the ruling class.

The Tudeh Party and its allies lined up with those sections of the ruling class that saw the state capitalist road as the way forward. The Mujahedin, for all their brave opposition to the regime, remain publicly allied with the 'liberal' wing of the private bourgeoisie.

Rebuilding has to start from the independence of the working class and the need for a revolutionary party.

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The United States and the world economy

The slight upturn in the American economy has led to hopes that it can act as the engine for world recovery. Pete Green explains the problems behind such a recovery, and takes a critical look at the 'neo-Keynesian' attempt at American reflation.

1983 was to have been the year of world economic recovery—according to the academic forecasters, journalists and politicians. In reality, of the major economies, only the United States and Canada have experienced growth strong enough to produce a fall in unemployment. World capitalism as a whole remains in what is now a three-year long severe and intractable slump.

In most of Europe the rise in unemployment has slowed down but has not reversed. A barely perceptible average 0.5 percent growth is expected for the Common market countries in 1983. Governments of both right (Belgium, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany) and left (Greece, France, Spain) are still trying to push through austerity packages and cuts in public spending. Collectively these can only serve to depress the level of economic activity, and throw more workers on the dole.

Famine spreading

In most of the Third World the situation is even worse. Famine is spreading through most of Africa, in the wake of years of economic decline. The debt-ridden countries of Latin America are still sinking deeper into trouble despite a succession of emergency 'rescue' programmes orchestrated by an International Monetary Fund which is running out of funds. New names are being added to the casualty list of debtors by the month—Venezuela, Nigeria, Morocco, the Phillipines, Israel.

Reliance on the North American recovery to act as the 'locomotive', capable of pulling the rest of the world out of slump, remains for the moment mere wishful thinking.

It is true that the sheer size of the American economy (providing 20 percent of total production in the Western world) means that a recovery there still has some ripple effects elsewhere. It is also true that some of the cyclical forces which have generated a movement out of the depths of slump in the United States are also operating elsewhere. But the situation is full of

contradictions.

The recovery in the United States is threatening to lead to higher interest rates once again. That will quickly spread to financial markets throughout the world. Higher interest rates in turn will add to the strains on the Brazils and Mexicos, and depress investment levels by discouraging companies from borrowing to finance new plant and equipment. That in turn will ensure that any recovery which does occur will be weak and short-lived—certainly too weak to bring down unemployment by any significant amount.

A survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently argued that the prospects for employment in the industrialised countries remain bleak 'for the rest of the decade'. As summarised in the *Financial Times*

'It calculates that 20,000 jobs a day will have to be created within the 24-nation group over the five years to 1989, to reduce unemployment to its 1979 level. This represents some 35 million jobs. This rate of job creation would be 74% higher than that required after the first oil shock of 1973-74.' (FT 23/9/83)

In fact the organisation, despite predicting around 3 percent growth for the industrialised western countries for 1984, still expects unemployment to rise to 34.75 million by the end of that year compared to 34 million now. The effects of investment in labour-saving new technology and higher productivity will more than offset the effects of higher growth on the jobs situation.

There is no reason therefore to adjust the perspective which has been argued for in the pages of *Socialist Review* over the last couple of years. Some sort of cyclical economic recovery, or 'boomlet' has started in North America and will spread over the next year or so. But that recovery is proving to be slow, weak, and very uneven. Far from signalling that the crisis of world capitalism is coming to an end it is liable to prove merely the prelude to another equally protracted slump in the late 1980s.

Nevertheless the pace and strength of the

American recovery should not be underestimated. Between November 1982, and August this year industrial production rose by 11.6 percent. The output of cars has risen by 67 percent from its depth at the bottom of the slump. Steel production has also risen sharply although that industry remains very depressed—some 40 percent of steel capacity is still out of action. The level of output in the economy as a whole is now back to its previous peak level in the summer of 1981. The Canadian economy has in turn been pulled up in tandem with its giant neighbour.

The recovery has meant a fall in unemployment from its peak of 10.8 percent of the workforce last December, to 9.3 percent in September. Over a million and a half new jobs have been created in that period, although those scarcely compensate for the five million or so jobs lost mainly in manufacturing industry in the years after 1979.

Budget deficit

But the speed of the recovery (the economy grew at an annual rate of over 9 percent in the months from April to July) has itself raised doubts about whether it can be sustained. Some of Reagan's own economic advisors have publicly voiced fears about mounting budget deficits, rising inflation, and consequently higher interest rates cutting off the recovery. Others including Reagan himself seem to have decided that budget deficits are a good thing after all, especially if they help him win next year's election. They are claiming the recovery as a vindication of Reaganomics. The truth is that Reaganomics has been effectively abandoned for a variety of right-wing Keynesianism, which has come about by accident.

Explaining this turn of events, which contrasts most noticeably with the performance of the Thatcher government in Britain, requires a closer analysis of the sources of the American recovery and the shifts in government policy which have accompanied it.

One source of growth has been a revival in consumer spending. As in Britain a fall in inflation and lower interest rates have



Dole queue USA

encouraged a sharp increase in purchases of what are called consumer durables—cars, electrical goods, houses. Unlike Britain, wages have continued to fall but this has been offset for the better-paid by Reagan's tax-cuts. In both countries, however, the consumer spending spree has been mainly fuelled by a sharp drop in savings, which by its very nature can only have a temporary effect on the economy.

A second important source of growth is also liable to be short-lived. In a period of slump companies tend to run down their stocks of raw materials and components in a desperate bid to cut costs. Once demand starts to recover these stocks have to be replenished, encouraged by the fall in the price of raw materials produced by the slump itself. Shops start to worry about running out of supplies and start to build up stocks as well. Just as the run down of stocks tends to exacerbate the slump so the restocking process tends to speed up a recovery in its early stages. The same thing happened in 1976 when the US economy recovered equally sharply. But once stocks are rebuilt to normal levels this source of growth disappears.

Reluctance to lend

But the main reason for the exceptional nature of the American recovery is the arms race. This began under the Carter presidency and has only accelerated under Reagan. Arms contracts jumped by \$25 billion in 1980, the last year of the Carter presidency, by \$24 billion in 1981 and by \$44 billion in 1982. Total defence spending for the fiscal year 1983-84 is planned to rise by another 10 percent in real terms to a total of \$240 billion dollars, almost half the total gross national product of Britain.

As a proportion of the total gross National Product, American defence spending has risen from 5 to 7 percent. That represents a

dramatic switch from the steady decline in the share of economic resources taken by defence spending which occurred for most of the 1970s (see graph). It is nevertheless still well short of the 12 percent + levels of the Korean war and the early 1950s, let alone the period of the Second World War. But arms spending is clearly having a substantial impact, both in propping up the economy as a whole, and in sustaining the profits of some key sectors of American capital.

The remarkable return of the Chrysler corporation to profitability this year owes a lot to the acceptance of wage cuts since 1981 by its workers, and to the revival of demand for motor cars. Less well known is the fact that the US army is now Chrysler's largest customer. In 1982 Chrysler received £2 billion worth of orders for its battle tanks, with a rate of return on capital invested of 78 percent, sufficient to offset what is still a negative profit rate on car production.

In the aircraft industry sales collapsed by more than half in 1980-81. But the three main producers, Boeing, Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas have been kept afloat with military orders. Boeing's sales to the US government jumped by over \$1 billion to \$3.2 billion in 1982.

In the electronics industry more than two thirds of the massive research and development costs required for the new generations of computers and related equipment are being met by the defence department.

It is much more doubtful, however, whether arms spending even at the increased levels planned by the Reagan regime can generate a sustained expansion on a par with the permanent arms era of the 1950s and 1960s. One problem is that the nature of war has changed. It is increasingly difficult to justify expanding stockpiles of weapons when the existing array already have the capacity to destroy the world several times over. But the economic context has also changed.

Arms spending can prop up the level of demand in the economy as a whole. It can directly benefit certain powerful sectors of American capital. By diverting resources away from productive investment in new plant and equipment it can effectively destroy capital which would otherwise be invested back in the process of production. The effect of that is to reduce the pressure of a rising capital-intensity of production on the rate of profit.

The problem is that arms spending also reduces the competitiveness of American capital as a whole relative to its competitors in the rest of the world economy. In the 1960s and 1970s the productivity of the American economy stagnated whilst that of West Germany and Japan grew rapidly. In a number of industrial sectors from steel to electrical goods the American lead disappeared altogether. Arms spending lifted demand in the world economy as a whole, whilst the costs were shared unevenly with the American economy bearing the greatest burden. That long-term problem of the relative decline of the competitiveness of American capital has not been resolved.

Worthless promises

In addition to that the difficulties of financing the increased arms spending have increased. The bulk of American capital, which does not benefit directly from the defence budget, has become increasingly resistant to paying for it out of taxes as its own profitability has declined. Indeed one of the major planks of Reagan's economic programme was a massive tax-cut for the rich in particular and greatly increased tax allowances for corporations. The inevitable consequence of the combination of rising arms spending and tax cuts has been a soaring budget deficit. It is the debate over that deficit which is continuing to split the Reagan regime down the middle.

Reaganomics, the collection of proposals and promises on which Reagan came into office was from the beginning full of contradictions. Its major policy proposals consisted of—increased arms spending; tax cuts to increase ‘incentives’; a tight monetary policy to bring down inflation; and an elimination of the budget deficit or a ‘balanced budget’ so that the government would not have to borrow from the financial markets pushing up interest rates. The proposals were quite simply incompatible.

The immediate effect of the policy was that government borrowing soared. The combination of that with a squeeze on the money supply begun in 1979 by the Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker was that interest rates rose to record levels of over 20 percent. The impact on a fragile, highly debt-ridden economy was devastating.

Companies, farmers, and individuals had all been accumulating debt by borrowing from the banks right through the 1970s. The sharp increase in interest rates pushed many of them into bankruptcy. Company liquidations reached record levels. Those that did not go under were nevertheless forced into a ruthless rationalisation of their operations, closing down factories, sacking workers, paring stocks to the bone, in a desperate effort to reduce their levels of debt. The impact soon spread to the rest of the world as interest rates rose elsewhere in response to American levels. It was one of the principal factors precipitating the international debt crisis of 1982.

Rise in debt

The rise in debt of American companies had helped to sustain investment levels at a time when profits were falling (the profit-rate on American capital in manufacturing fell from 23.4 percent in 1965-69 to 16.4 percent in 1975-79). But the effect of the slump was to squeeze profits even more sharply. Profit rates on manufacturing in the United States were at an all-time low of ten percent in 1982. The combination of that with high interest rates meant that capital investment in most of industry ground to a halt. Companies with spare cash put it into the financial markets which offered a safer and higher return, especially on long-term government bonds. Companies without spare cash found it crippling expensive to borrow. Capital investment, it is estimated, has fallen by another 1 percent in 1983, despite the recovery.

The Reagan government’s response to the rising deficit was to redouble their efforts to cut non-defence spending. \$11 billion were cut from federal ‘entitlement’ programmes—60 percent of that from benefits for those officially certified as poor. Some 237,000 people in low income jobs, mostly single women with children, were deprived of benefits altogether. Another 200,000 had their benefits cut. 900,000 people lost their right to receive food stamps. The 45 percent of the jobless who were either ineligible or had run out of unemployment benefit were condemned to the discretionary welfare programmes of individual states, and in many cases to charity.

It was not enough. As unemployment rose



so did the number on welfare. One of the biggest items of public spending, pensions was deemed immune to cuts for fear of the political consequences. All this was rather similar to what was happening in Britain under the Thatcher government. The difference in response was, however, very significant. The Tories stuck to their commitment of cutting the budget deficit and government borrowing, and raised taxes instead. Reagan with some marginal exceptions stuck to his main tax-cutting proposals and watched the budget deficit soar to \$210 billion, or 6½ percent of GNP.

Instead the American government reversed its monetary policy. With the crisis in Mexico and Brazil, and the threat that posed to the major American banks, cutting interest rates suddenly became a priority. Federal Reserve chairman Volcker announced that the monetary targets had become unreliable, and abandoned his policy of restricting the money supply. The combination of rising budget deficits and printing more dollars to boost demand had all the hallmarks of that very Keynesianism which Reagan and his advisors had spent so long denouncing. A right-wing Keynesianism, with a stress on increasing arms spending and the demand of the rich rather than welfare spending and higher wages, but Keynesianism nevertheless.

Reagan’s more dogmatic monetarist advisors were enraged, but were forced to bite their tongues as the recovery gathered pace. With inflation still falling from its peak of 12 percent down to around 3 percent this summer, combined with a revival of production, that elusive goal of non-inflationary growth seemed to be at hand. Reagan began telling his advisors that he was ‘bored’ with complaints about \$200 million deficits. His complaint that they didn’t call it Reaganomics anymore, now that it was working, was, however, rather specious: Reaganomics had indeed been abandoned in the face of the slump.

Does the scale of the American recovery show that Keynesianism can work after all? The answer is yes—if working means simply the capacity of government spending to limit the scope of the slump, and provide a boost to demand which can for a while generate quite rapid economic growth. But that is not so surprising in the context of recent history. A sharp increase in the budget deficit also helped to produce a rapid recovery in the American economy in 1976, after the 1974-75 slump. But that recovery

soon ran into problems of accelerating inflation, a fall in the dollar’s value on world markets, and the accumulation of debt which made the economy so vulnerable to the events of 1979-82. Those events were merely indications of the much deeper problems of competitiveness, declining profitability, and stagnant investment which characterised the world economy as a whole through the 1970s. Keynesianism, of any variety, could not solve those problems then. There is no evidence to suggest that it can solve them now.

A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* was generally optimistic about the prospects, arguing that the cyclical recovery was entirely normal. But even its author was forced to admit that

‘To be sure the current upturn isn’t entirely unexceptional. It suffers the highest unemployment levels of any postwar recovery. Only the short-lived expansion of 1980-81 endured such high interest rates at an early stage. And, of course, no recovery has begun with such huge deficits in the federal budget and merchandise trade.’ (*Wall Street Jnl* 25 July 1983)

What the author did not stress was that capital investment remains extremely depressed. Given that the consumer spending boom, and the restocking spree, will inevitably soon run out of steam, only a revival of investment can ensure that economic growth is sustained. Yet there are a number of reasons why investment, though likely to rise a little, is going to remain slow.

Fall in dollar

Investment only occurs when companies expect a sufficient rate of return over the lifetime of that investment. Corporate profits are expected to rise by 18 percent in 1983 and by a further 24 percent in 1984. Yet that in many cases is from extremely low levels by postwar standards. For the moment companies can increase output simply by expanding production within their existing factories. Some will replace the worn-out machinery they’ve delayed replacing during the years of slump. Other will be subject to competitive pressures to introduce new types of automated equipment. But capacity levels (the proportion of potential output with existing equipment actually being produced) remain only around the 70 percent in much of American industry. In this situation companies are going to be very cautious about any major new investment, and are unlikely to expand their capacity as distinct from simply replacing workers with machines at the same level of production.

The weight of debt which still afflicts many companies is also reducing their ability to invest. Companies made a net repayment of \$2.5 billion to the banks in the first quarter of 1983. That shows that they were devoting much of their increased profits to reducing their burden of debt and interest payments. Whilst interest rates have declined to around the 10 percent mark, inflation has fallen even faster, so that the burden of payments remains very high. That in turn discourages companies from borrowing unless they can

be sure that the rate of return will be even higher. Few after the experience of the last few years are willing to take that risk. A fall in interest rates should according to the theory encourage a rise in investment. But such a fall would need to go hand in hand with a sustained rise in profits, over several years rather than months, to restore what economists fondly describe as 'business confidence'. Yet the stagnation of investment will itself serve to depress the level of demand and thus profits in many of the key capital goods industries such as steel, machine tools and construction. The effect of high levels of government borrowing on the financial markets is continuing to keep interest rates high. Attempts to offset that by printing more dollars—thereby increasing the supply of money relative to the demand for it—may work for a while. The problem is that such an expansion of the money supply only fuels expectations that inflation will soon start to rise again.



Milton Friedman, the guru behind Reagan's monetarism and expert at sitting in chairs

Already the American recovery has led to a rise in the price of some raw materials on world markets. An extension of the recovery to the rest of the industrial world would only intensify that problem. In turn lenders of money, who were caught out in the mid-1970s when prices rose faster than inflation, are now inclined to demand a sort of insurance premium against future inflation. Their reluctance to lend to the government except at high interest rates makes it more and more difficult for the Federal Reserve to force interest rates down further.

The problem of the trade deficit is if anything more serious. The American recovery has sucked in imports from the rest of the world. At the same time American exports are continuing to fall in the face of depressed markets elsewhere, and the high value of the dollar which makes American goods more expensive. Almost 40 percent of American exports go to the Third World countries suffering from the debt crisis. American exports to Latin America fell by 34 percent in the first half of 1983. The crisis in Mexico alone has led to an estimated loss of 150,000 jobs north of the border.

Despite a record deficit in the trade of goods of a predicted \$60 billion for 1983, the dollar remains high. That is partly due to the ability of American multinationals to pull in profits from their operations around the world. It is also due to the way in which those high interest rates have sucked in funds

from the financial markets of the world. But the high value of the dollar in turn means that imports into the United States are much cheaper. That keeps down inflation. It also adds to the competitive pressures on America. The cries from large and powerful sections of American capital, and unfortunately the trade union movement, for import controls have been the result.

Import restrictions on Japanese cars have helped the American car companies keep their prices up and boosted their profits correspondingly. They certainly have not prevented the wave of job losses in the car industry, or in steel or any of the other industries affected by creeping protectionism. They have fuelled a destructive trade war on a world scale. Controls on Brazilian steel have added to the pressures of the debt crisis. Controls on Common Market steel have encouraged the Europeans to retaliate by keeping out American soya and other food products.

Nor can import controls cure the underlying problem of the competitiveness of American industry. They can keep Japanese cars and machine tools down to 20 or 10 percent of the American market. They cannot stop them out-competing American goods in the markets of the rest of the world. A devaluation of the dollar now looks to be inevitable. But that will not solve the problem either. It will fuel a revival of inflation inside the United States. It is also liable to get out of hand as in 1978-79. The chaos in the foreign currency market is but a symptom of a world economy which is out of control. Not even the United States government can control those markets. Smaller national economies have even less chance of successfully managing their economies.

In the longer term, however, the prospects for American capital depend on its ability to hold down wages, and suppress the American working-class. Its success here over the last few years has been greater than that of any other Western ruling class. As the graph (2) shows, American wages have been falling since the early 1970s. The American unions where they bothered to fight have taken a hammering. In the last few years union leaders have co-operated in negotiating what are called 'givebacks', signing away gains in wages and conditions in exchange for worthless promises about preserving jobs.

In the steel industry the unions accepted a wage cut of \$1.25 an hour earlier this year, and agreed that wages would only return to 1982 levels in 1986. In the aluminium and canning industries the unions have negotiated, if that's the right word, zero basic wage increases over the next three years. Built-in cost of living adjustments, which were won in exchange for no-strike agreements when the economy was still healthy, are now being torn up by management.

Arms spending

The airline controllers strike which was smashed by Reagan in 1981 set the pattern for what followed. Less than 20 percent of the workforce are now unionised. Attempts to organise workers in the new technology industries have largely failed. Companies have deliberately closed down plant in the traditionally higher wage areas of the North and East and relocated in the southern 'sunbelt' with non-union workers.

All of this suggests a depressing picture of the state of the American working class. Yet there are one or two signs that, as in the 1930s, even a limited economic recovery could alter the situation. In particular, the return of the Chrysler company to profitability has led workers to start demanding a share of the gains after several years of accepting wage cuts in the face of the threats of redundancy. In September they were able to win a wage increase, after strike action in the Canadian plants looked like spreading. As the *Financial Times* correspondent commented 'the agreement... sent a shudder through the collective ranks of the US's labour relations managers.'

Chrysler was the company that set the pace in negotiating pay cuts in 1981 by holding the threat of imminent bankruptcy over the heads of the workers. Its concession in 1983 indicates a shift in the climate in the wake of the economic upturn. The shift should not be exaggerated. In a number of loss making companies, such as the airlines, the management offensive is continuing apace. But in the process the American bosses are storing up a current of fear and resentment which may yet explode in their faces when workers recover their confidence. Even a limited economic recovery in which unemployment falls only slightly may make a substantial difference to workers who start to notice rising profits and increased dividends.

Over the course of the next year the recovery in the United States is likely to feed through to the rest of the industrial world, although it will do little to relieve the pressure on the Brazils and Mexicos of the world. It is a recovery which indicates not that capitalism has come to an end of the long crisis which set in in the early 1970s, but that as long as the system remains alive it will continue to pass through cycles of boom and slump.

The weakness of the recovery will be further testimony to the senility of the system. It may also, as in Chrysler, provoke a degree of recovery amongst the much battered working class movements of Europe and the United States.

Super-pessimism

William Golding, author of *Lord of the Flies*, has been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Gareth Jenkins looks at his work.

When told he had won the Nobel Prize, William Golding said that he felt proud not just for himself but for the country. Such a display of patriotism is not new. Similar feelings stirred him to public utterance during the Falklands War.

Not that conferring the honour is quite the impartial act of judgement that some would have us believe. National prejudices play a large part. One of the leading academicians involved in the decision broke silence to complain that Golding wasn't really that good (a complaint the BBC clearly found shocking, but one it is difficult to disagree with).

Other commentators pointed out that if the award was to go to a British writer, then Graham Greene, with a much greater and more varied output, had a better claim.

Although less directly affected by Cold War politics than the other prizes, the literary prize is not 'innocent'. Greene, after all, has always had a jaundiced view of the value of Western-style 'freedom'.

Jean Paul Sartre, the left wing French writer, had the good sense to avoid being compromised—he turned the award down.

What, then, of Golding's writings? Probably the only one of his novels that is well-known to *Socialist Review* readers is *Lord of the Flies* (published in 1954). It made a big impact and was later turned into a film. Since neither that nor his later novels are as obviously reactionary as his support for the Falklands War would suggest, it is worthwhile spelling out what his ideas amount to.

In 1963 Golding told an interviewer about his intellectual background:

'When I was young, before the War, I did have some airy-fairy views about man, though I wasn't a Marxist (you'll find, I think, that the Marxists are the only people left who think humanity is perfectable). But I went through the War and that changed me. The war taught me different and a lot of others like me.'

On the face of it, that is an odd intellectual evolution. The war tended to radicalise people, giving rise to hopes that society might be very substantially changed. Those who were gloomy about the future (like Orwell) were so from a very different viewpoint from that expressed by Golding, or belonged to an older generation who had written off progress well before the war.

In the 50s, dissatisfaction—in the form of a sense of alienation—certainly grew. But the context was that of feeling that 'spiritual' values (of community, social purpose, etc) had been eroded by the growth of material possessions (TVs, washing machines, etc). The dissatisfaction was superficial and restricted to petty bourgeois milieux. It

found literary expression in the work of 'The Angry Young Men' (like the playwright John Osborne), who raged against 'affluence' but saw no way out and eventually made their peace with it.

The impact of Golding's first novel has to be understood against this background. *The Lord of the Flies* was an attack on facile optimism, on the notion of progress as peddled by leading ideologues. It fitted, therefore, with the feeling of dissatisfaction with the smug consensus.

But it is a distinct variant on the theme, and the plot of the novel shows why. Evacuated as a result of unspecified military hostilities (a nuclear Third World War?), a group of boys are marooned on a tropical, desert island.

Other-worldly realms

Initially order is maintained, but little by little this degenerates because of rivalries and jealousies. Fear of the unknown gives rise to superstition, superstition to worship and sacrifice. In order to placate 'the Beast', hunting turns to murder, and in an horrific ending, two of the boys are killed, while a third narrowly avoids the same fate by the arrival of a rescue party.

The main message is made very clear. Left to their own devices, human beings are incapable of preserving civilised relations with each other. They do not fight each other because material objects are scarce (the tropical island provides all the food the boys need), but because they are intrinsically 'evil'. Social conditions do not restrict human possibilities, human beings themselves are inherently limited.

However, Golding is not so daft as to turn this into an apology for 'law and order'—the traditional Tory cry against social disorder.

If Golding is ironic about ideas that human beings can act rationally and make progress, he is also ironic at the expense of the social order.

The naval lieutenant leader of the rescue party is seen as a hunter writ large, and the war that has led to the boys being marooned in the first place is simply a more deadly version of the hostilities that break out between the boys on the island.

The cure, therefore, is as bad as the disease—if not worse. Given that Golding blocks off all possible social solutions (radical or reactionary), it is not surprising that he tends to move into other-worldly realms.

Religion, in an institutional sense, may be attacked as irrational superstition (the worship of the Beast), but the one boy to see through the mumbo jumbo is seen in saintly terms and is martyred in his attempt to show the other boys the errors of their ways.

The religious element is strong in his other novels. In *The Inheritors* (1955), the supposedly pre-rational and intuitive life-style of Neanderthal people is preferred over that of the aggressive *homo sapiens* people who displace them. Once again, Golding uses his re-evaluation of 'primitives' to cock a snook at petty bourgeois ideas of human progress, but does so in such a way as to make the apparently intrinsic brutishness of the human race quite unavoidable.

Pincher Martin (1956) is a reworking of the Christian idea of damnation and punishment, *Free Fall* (1959) of individual salvation through love. *The Spire* (1964) is actually set in mediaeval times around the building of a cathedral.

Since then, the critics have paid less attention to his work. His later novels have been less well received and the earlier ones that made his name, neglected. The award of Nobel Prize will probably reverse that trend. In the crisis-torn 80s, as Tory plans and social-democratic alternatives appear more and more unable to cope, Golding's super-pessimism and religious yearnings may well make a comeback.



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Proclamation of the Commune from the Hotel de Ville

The Paris Commune

The Paris Commune forced Karl Marx to think again about the state. Rod Hudson looks at his conclusions.

Writing 66 years ago in *State and Revolution*, a work inspired by Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune, Lenin savaged the reformist vulgarisers and distorters of Marxism. They blunted its revolutionary edge, especially, according to Lenin, the revolutionary edge of Marx's views on the state.

Much has changed since Lenin's time, but not this. Hilary Wainwright has recently likened the Paris Commune, the world's first workers' government, to the GLC, whilst Eric Hobsbawm and many others have agreed with avowedly bourgeois historians in dismissing the Paris Commune 'myth' propagated by Marx.

The aim of these reformists now, as in Lenin's day, is the same. It is to fudge the issue of which class wields state power. It allows the reformists to take the bourgeois state as

given, something *they* can use and transform to bring socialism to the working class from on high.

What then did Marx say on the subject which earned such a lengthy history of reformist skulduggery?

His most developed position is to be found in *The Civil War in France*, which was endorsed by the General Council of the First International almost immediately after the final suppression of the Paris Commune.

This was the last of three Addresses written by Marx on the Franco-Prussian war and its revolutionary sequel in the Paris Commune. Together, these show the development of Marx's views on the state in the light of the greatest workers' struggle of the 19th century.

War broke out between France and Prussia in July 1870. Its pretext was utterly absurd — the brusque wording of the *Ems Telegram*, an official Prussian press release. In fact it had been deliberately worded by the Prussian chancellor, Bismarck, to cause offence and provoke a declaration of war from Napoleon III's Second Empire. This repressive and corrupt regime of the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, which had come to rely on increasingly risky foreign adventures for its very survival, duly obliged. Bismarck was

thereby provided with the opportunity he was seeking to unite Germany under Prussian dominance in the wake of military glory.

Within eight days of the outbreak of war Marx's *First Address* was before the General Council, which agreed it and speedily issued it as leaflets in English, German and French.

The Address makes rather curious reading today. In it, Marx on the one hand jubilantly hails the messages of international workers' solidarity and opposition to the war published in both France and Germany. On the other hand, he describes the war on the German side as a 'war of defence', albeit one forced on them by Prussian reaction. Implicitly, though not in so many words, he sides with Germany in the conflict.

To this position, however, he added a qualification:

'If the German working class allow the present war to lose its strictly defensive character and to degenerate into a war against the French people, victory or defeat alike will prove disastrous.'

Either way, Marx predicted (doubtlessly benefitting from Engels' military knowledge), the 'death knell' of the Second Empire had already sounded.

Mistaken position

Marx's position here is not as clear as that developed by Lenin during World War I. Marx's correspondence with Engels and others provides three reasons for his position. First, he regarded the movement towards national unity and away from numerous petty principalities as being historically progressive and conducive to the development of the German working class.

Second, he believed that a Prussian victory would lead directly to the centre of gravity of the working class movement shifting from France to Germany and, indirectly, to the preponderance of his own scientific socialism over the 57 varieties of French socialism.

Last, and perhaps of greatest significance, he thought that 'the definite defeat of Bonaparte will probably provoke a revolution in France, whereas the definitive defeat of Germany would only perpetuate the present situation for another 20 years'.

However favourably we judge these arguments, they fail to vindicate Marx's position. Marx's internationalism has gone adrift. He justifies the war from the point of view of the proletariat. Yet the war remains a continuation of the anti-socialist politics of both Bismarck and Bonaparte. Therefore, whatever Marx's subjective considerations he objectively encourages the German workers to renounce their struggle and harness themselves to the war horse of the Prussian ruling class.

What Marx has done by taking sides in the war is to abstract from its class character and get bogged down in the purely formal and scholastic question of which side started the war and for which side, therefore, the war is one of defence. Had he been consistent, Marx, like Lenin, would have urged the working class in France and Germany to use the weapon of class struggle to turn the predatory war between rival ruling classes into a civil war of the oppressed against their oppressors. He would have urged them to *welcome* the

defeat of their 'own' respective countries.

The cost of Marx's failure to develop a 'revolutionary defeatist' position on the war was a high one. Not until the outcome of the Franco-Prussian war had been determined on the battlefields did Marx have a single word of advice to offer French internationalists.

What then were the sources of Marx's mistaken position, of his belief that workers' interests could be advanced, as it were, on the back of a landed aristocratic ruling class, the Junkers, and its Prussian state?

Essentially, they stemmed not from any theoretical inferiority of Marx relative to Lenin, Trotsky and others, but from the limitations of his historical vantage point. The workers' struggle had yet to lead him to the conclusion that the bourgeois state (and, we may add here, the state of any particular interest group in society, eg the Junker state) as such was unusable by the working class. His position from 1852 to 1871 was rather that this was the case only in those countries such as France where the state had been 'perfected' into a centralised, military-bureaucratic machine.

This peculiar notion of 'perfection' brings us to a second point. It is that Marx was never able to fully free himself of an 'evolutionist' conception of historical development. Just three years before penning his *First Address* he wrote in the preface to the first (German) edition of *Capital*: 'The country that is more developed industrially (England — RH) only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.'

Marx could not have been more wrong. The path of capitalist development followed by England could not be followed by any other country precisely because of England's priority in the field, which established new conditions in which they had to develop.

Permanent revolution

It would be foolish to fault Marx on this. He simply lived at a time when, owing to the limited international development of capitalism, the law of 'combined and uneven development', as Trotsky termed it, was barely apparent. Nevertheless, an important corollary flows from this — that Marx, his embryonic theory of Permanent Revolution of 1850 notwithstanding, failed to appreciate the extent to which the uneven development of capitalism would both equip the working class and compel it to complete the bourgeois revolution in various 'latecomer' countries. Put positively, Marx harboured illusions in the capacity of the bourgeoisie to assert its own rule.

Lastly, Marx's mistaken position on the Franco-Prussian war may, in part, be attributable to the specific nature of war in the 19th century. For, when Lenin was working out his revolutionary defeatist position he did so in the context of a 'total' war, where the sheer scale of the conflict was so vast that whole national economies had to be geared to war production and where, consequently, there could be no escaping the fact that a partisan position in the war involved a complete suspension of class struggle for the entire proletariat. This was not so in Marx's

day. Russia had 15 million men under arms during World War I. During the Franco-Prussian war, however, Prussia had 500,000 soldiers in the field and France a mere 270,000.

Actual hostilities began with the French capture of Saarbrücken on 2 August. It was to be the only French victory in the entire war. One month to the day later, the better equipped, better trained and better led Prussian forces, having decisively beaten the French at Sedan, took Napoleon prisoner. On 4 August, the Second Empire was ended, as Marx had predicted, and a republic declared in Paris.

But not only were Marx's predictions realised, so were his fears. All the pious Prussian talk about limiting the war to a strictly defensive campaign against the Emperor Napoleon was now replaced by the demand for the annexation of Alsace and part of Lorraine to Prussia.

At this juncture the General Council endorsed a *Second Address* on the war, issuing it again in several languages. It too was drafted by Marx, though with Engels' assistance.



Soldiers of the Commune

Engels' influence can be found in a truly brilliant debunking of the military reasons given by the Prussians to justify their new war claims, that makes pertinent reading still:

'...is it not altogether an absurdity and an anachronism to make military considerations the principle by which the boundaries of nations are to be fixed?...If limits are to be fixed by military interests, there will be no end to claims, because every military line is necessarily faulty, and may be improved by annexing some outlying territory; and, moreover, they can never be fixed finally and fairly, because they always must be imposed by the conqueror upon the conquered, and consequently carry within them the seed of fresh wars.'

The *Address* concludes by welcoming the advent of the French Republic, whilst noting that its helm is occupied by those who helped crush the workers in 1848, and by offering two pieces of long overdue advice to French workers.

But what advice? First, in the changed circumstances of a Prussian war of aggression, he exhorts French proletarians to 'perform their duties as citizens'. That is, he gives the same mistaken advice as in the *First Address*, only this time he has changed sides.

And second, he urges them to build up their class organisation and calmly work for republican liberty and to 'not allow themselves to be deluded by the national *souvenirs* of 1792'.

Elliptical though this second piece of advice may appear today, its meaning would have been perfectly plain to Parisian workers in 1870. It was a plea for them to not be politically over ambitious and, more particularly, to *not form* any new revolutionary Paris Commune in opposition to the official government.

Marx's reasoning here, as revealed by his correspondence, is very straightforward. Any such uprising would be reckless and doomed to be crushed by the Prussians.

Events were to prove Marx only partially wrong. But was his counsel wise? Yes and no. Yes in the sense that, insofar as the Commune was a 'national *souvenir* of 1792', it was a cover for a confusing multiplicity of ideas and aims, which confusion could not but assist its suppression. But no in the sense that it would not have been better for the Parisian workers to have gone to sleep instead of taking power. To believe otherwise is to think that revolutionary victory comes cheap and does not require that we learn the lessons of defeat. Moreover, Marx's advice rests upon the spurious assumption that it is revolutionaries that create revolutionary situations.

Thiers government

From September until the end of tilting January the new republican Government of National Defence continued the war. Prussian armies laid siege to Paris, the radical manufacturing centre of France and then still a walled city. The Parisians themselves transformed the entire capital into a fortress. 350,000 men joined the already 90,000 strong, predominantly working class Paris National Guard, arming themselves out of popular subscriptions.

Only a small fraction of this National Guard were ever to see action in the remainder of the war. The reactionary government of Thiers proved to be far more interested in defending France against the threat of armed working class Paris than against the actuality of foreign invasion.

In London, whilst Paris was being slowly starved and bombarded, Marx and Engels were busy campaigning for recognition of the Republican government, organising workers' meetings and pleading the French cause in the press. Engels also drew up plans for raising the siege and was only dissuaded from going off to France to offer his services by Marx. And both Marx and Engels also tried to get the British government to intervene on behalf of the French with a force of 30,000 troops — of which the less said the better.

All this activity was to little avail and on 28 January 1871, the Thiers government capitulated to Bismarck, who by this time had had

King Wilhelm of Prussia proclaimed Kaiser of the Germans at Versailles. It did not do so, however, without one last futile sortie, that left 4,000 National Guards dead, the sole purpose of which was to subdue the armed workers.

During the armistice weeks, bourgeois and petty bourgeois Paris fled the city to recuperate in the provinces, passing on their way those who, having escaped the siege, were now returning to collect their back rents. Working class Paris was seething.

Matters were made no better when the election of a new government to conclude permanent peace terms resulted in an overwhelming victory for the ultra-conservative, semi-royalist representatives of rural, catholic France over radical Paris.

At the end of February, Thiers, again head of the government, agreed to the odious peace terms virtually dictated by Bismarck. That done, he moved the government not to Paris, but to Versailles. Then, after the victory march of the Prussians into Paris (they did not put a foot in the working class districts) and the ending of the occupation, he set about his main task: disarming the Parisian workers.

In the early hours of 18 March, the government sent two brigades to capture the canons of Montmartre which belonged to the National Guard. This they did with ease. Unfortunately, they had come without the horses necessary to carry off their booty. Soon the alerted local population were surrounding the troops and successfully agitating amongst them — so successfully, in fact, that they shot their commanding general.

Marxist classic

On hearing the bad news, Thiers panicked and ordered a total abandonment of Paris to the revolutionary workers. The following day the central committee of the National Guard assumed control of Paris, but not for long. On 26 March Parisian were at the polls electing a municipal council, or commune. The Paris Commune was born.

As we have seen, Marx counselled against the setting up of the Paris Commune — 'a desperate folly' he called it — and reckoned its prospects bleak. And, though he sent an emissary to Paris, Marx was to have no direct involvement or influence in it. Indeed, for a large part of the Commune's lifetime, he was to bitterly complain of his inability to get word from the Paris section of the International. Moreover, despite claims from the start that the Commune was a front for the International, only 17 members of the original Commune council of 92 were Internationalists (four fewer than the number of workers) and these were either followers of Blänqui and Proudhon, or else were 'independent' revolutionaries.

All the same, without a hint of sectarianism and despite ill health, Marx set to work on a third and much longer Address, *The Civil War in France*, within days of the pronouncement of the Commune. The world-historic significance of the revolutionary events in Paris galvanised Marx into frenetic activity. Whereas during the downturn years of the 1850s he was literally overshooting his

writing deadlines by years, he was now able to rush through two full-length drafts and present the final text of the *Address* to the General Council at the end of May, just two days after the Commune had been put down and whilst the wholesale massacre of over 20,000 Communards was still taking place.

The result is a vibrant and touching piece of political journalism, that passionately defends the revolutionary workers of Paris against the vile denigration of the entire bourgeois world and whose factual accuracy has withstood over a century of hostile bourgeois historiography. But more than this, it is a true Marxist classic, a balance sheet of the Commune's achievements and shortcomings, that makes it simultaneously a major advance in the theory of the state and an invaluable manual in the art of insurrection.

The Commune's great achievements, for Marx, lay in its popular organisation of political power. Returning to a central theme of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, written 20 years previously, he shows in detail how successive revolutions marking a progressive phase in the class struggle and the development of capitalist industry, had consolidated the 'centralised state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature'. And he lays stress on how this had brought its purely repressive character into sharper and sharper relief and transformed it into the 'national power of capital over labour'.

The Commune was the 'direct antithesis' of this state of affairs, the positive form of the social republic that supercedes 'not only the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself'. It was, in other words, words which Marx curiously never in fact used in relation to the Paris Commune, a *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

Marx spelled out the principal features of this workers' power, created by the workers themselves in their own defence, in a passage worth quoting at length:

'The first decree of the Commune...was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

'The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal (male — *RIT*) suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the central government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of the state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.'

This de-privatisation of public functions and the destruction of repressive state hier-

archies that formed an engine of ruling class despotism and their replacement by new institutions founded upon workers' self-activity, extended into all spheres. Not only was the physical force of the old government broken up, but its spiritual force was also smashed. Education was placed under secular control and the church was disestablished and disendowed. As Marx humourously puts it with obvious relish:

'The priests were sent back to recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the Apostles.'

Similarly, the judicial functionaries were deprived of their sham independence and made elective, responsible and revocable.

So, instead of the fraudulent parliamentary democracy which allows people to decide 'once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people', the Commune substituted a popular participatory democracy. And it is this organisation of political power under the Commune, rather than the confused political ideas of its members, that, for Marx, provides the key to its real significance:

'Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the emancipation of labour.'

The Commune

Of course, given that the Commune was the rising of a single city and that it was quickly besieged and crushed after a mere 64 days, only minimal achievements could be made towards the economic emancipation of labour. Leo Frankel, a German worker and Internationalist, became the Commune's delegate to the Commission of Labour and Exchange, which he staffed exclusively with other members of the International. Thanks to their efforts night work was ended for bakers, the system of fines operating in the factories was abolished, new unions were formed and together with those existing previously, were encouraged to reopen abandoned factories and to reorganise them on a collective basis. Wages in enterprises engaged in fulfilling contracts for the Commune were regulated upwards and an eight hour day was decreed, though this last measure remained inoperative owing to the state of emergency.

Perhaps most impressive of all achievements in this field was the strategically vital Louvre arms repair works. This was democratically organised by the workers. It was they who appointed the director, the shop and bench foremen, who they could dismiss again should conditions prove unsatisfactory. And it was they who, through their factory council, which met each evening to discuss the next day's work, and they who fixed all wages.

Even so, Marx freely admitted that the Commune's special measures 'could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people'. Its great social measure, for him, 'was its own working existence'.

Against the many different interpretations

of the Commune, and in further support of his own, Marx makes two other points. First, unless the Commune is the political form of the economic emancipation of labour its constitution is nonsensical, since:

'The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes and therefore of class-rule.'

The second point concerns life in Paris during the Commune and is somewhat reminiscent of Orwell's description of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War:

'Wonderful, indeed, was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! No longer any trace of the meretricious Paris of the Second Empire. No longer was Paris the rendezvous of British landlords, Irish absentees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serfowners, and Wallachian boyars. No more corpses at the morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time since the days of February 1848, the streets of Paris were safe, and that without any police of any kind.'

The question that naturally arises from all this is: did Marx get it right? We can fairly answer a qualified yes. The qualification arises from the fact that we have the benefit of an extra century of experience of workers' struggle to draw upon. We know now that the transitional character of Paris workers in 1871, between being artisans and being proletarians, left its mark on the constitution of the Commune and that a higher institution of workers' self-organisation exists — the workers' council, or soviet.

Proletarian power

This is not to deny for one moment the continuing pertinence of Marx's analysis of the specific features of the Commune to the struggle for workers' power. Rather, it is to complement and complete it.

For the superiority of the soviet resides in its being a form of organisation ideally suited to the exercise of collective proletarian power. The soviet is not based on electoral divisions, where workers are atomised and weak, which by their very nature necessarily enfranchises hostile class elements, but not, as in the case of the Paris Commune, working class women. Instead, it is based on where workers, male and female, are concentrated and massively powerful — the point of production.

Whatever its historical limitations, the Paris Commune remains an outstandingly successful example of workers' creativity and one which Marx quite correctly seized upon and learnt from. Not only did it help him concretise his concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', of 'the proletariat organised as the ruling class', but it also led him to a momentous conclusion regarding the state. Considered by him to be of such fundamental importance that he added it to the *Communist Manifesto*, it gives the lie to every reformist attempt to lay claim to his legacy: 'The working class cannot simply lay

hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.' It must be 'smashed', 'broken up', 'destroyed'.

A new world may have been dawning in Paris in 1871, but the old one was busy preparing its comeback from Versailles. That it succeeded was partly due to the circumstances in which the Paris Commune arose, over which it had no control. Partly, however, it was due to its mistakes. Today we would have no hesitation in attributing these to the absence of a revolutionary party and the consequently confused political leadership of the Paris Commune throughout. Marx, however, attributed them to the Commune's 'excessive decency'. He singled out two mistakes for special mention, although the second of these appears only in his private correspondence.

The first concerns the lamentable failure of the Commune to appropriate the 3,000 million franc assets of the Bank of France. Such an action would have dealt a body blow to French capital and at no cost to the Commune.

More catastrophic still was the Commune's failure to take the offensive against Versailles in the early days, when it had a clear superiority. In fact, in terms of its military organisation the Commune was a disorganised and indecisive mess. Battalions were left in their trenches for weeks on end simply because no one arranged their relief. In such conditions demoralisation and then indiscipline soon set in. As a result only about one-fifth of those on the National Guard's payroll were ever to go into battle for the Commune.

Both mistakes were symptomatic of the Commune's fear of its own illegality and of the inability of its leaders to decide whether they were fighting a civil war, or whether compromise with Versailles was still possible, until it was too late. They and tens of thousands of their fellow Communards were to pay for this error with their lives.

By the end of April, Thiers' troops had blockaded Paris. Three weeks later they

started to enter the city. Barricades were hastily erected and street fighting began, lasting for a whole week. Though they fought with courage and desperation against enormous odds, the Communards were lost. The end came on 28 May 1871.

Some 3,000 Communards lay dead from the fighting. But that was just the beginning. On that final day, 147 of the last defenders of the Commune were lined up against a wall in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise and shot down. In 'Bloody Week' 30,000 other Communards met similar fates in a positive orgy of revenge. Thousands more were soon to be deported to New Caledonia or imprisoned. Paris was 'purified'. 'Civilisation' and order were restored.

Marx concludes *The Civil War in France* with a defiant eulogy:

'Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.'

The Civil War in France was a great success. It ran through three editions in two months and was soon translated in most European languages. It made Marx internationally infamous virtually overnight. But it also led to the resignation of the English trade union moderates from the First International's general council and to a European-wide witch hunt against the International. Together, these factors ensured its practical demise.

Yet this is not quite the end of the story. For, almost half a century later, when their chance came in Petrograd and Moscow, Lenin and Trotsky were to use the lessons of the *Address* to make sure the Bolsheviks did not repeat the errors of the Commune. And in aiding their success, it played no small part in leading to the creation of the Third International. It still remains an indispensable weapon in the struggle.

Socialist Worker 1984 DIARY

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Lambs to slaughter

Title Fight Gillian E Hanscombe and Andrew Lumsdon. Brilliance Books paper £4.50.

The story of *Gay News* can be told in a few sentences, some would say in just two words — Denis Lemon. It was set up in 1972 at the height of GLF, launched as a 'non-commercial venture' and in its first editorial stated that it was to be collectively run. By the end of the year Denis Lemon had taken over from the collective editorship and was its editor (a post which is not re-elected or accountable to the gay community). By 1974 the paper was in trouble and a Richard Creed agreed to lend it £3,150 if he could buy 49 percent of the equity. As a counter-weight the editor Mr Lemon was allotted another 49 percent. None of this was made public to the gay community whose paper it claimed to be. In April 1979, Lemon 'bought' out Richard Creed to become its owner. He was given a substantial pay increase to pay for this. (Creed gets £12,500 and a guaranteed £5,000 for the next four years). In 1982 Denis Lemon sells *GN* for £216,000 to Robert Palmer (not the pop singer), in a deal (again all kept secret from the gay community and the *GN* staff). The paper is so loaded with debt to Lemon that it collapses by 1983, leaving a series of outstanding debts.

So in short Denis Lemon managed to first become editor then part owner, then sole owner and to sell *GN* for £216,000 while the gay community all thought of it as its newspaper and from its early statement to be a 'non-commercial' venture. It must be remembered that throughout the 70s *GN* was sold and helped by volunteer labour for 'our' paper and during 1977 helped by donations in its fight against the Whitehouse blasphemy trial. If ever there was a metaphor of what has happened to the gay movement it is *GN* in the end sold as any other commercial venture. So much for the alternative gay community.

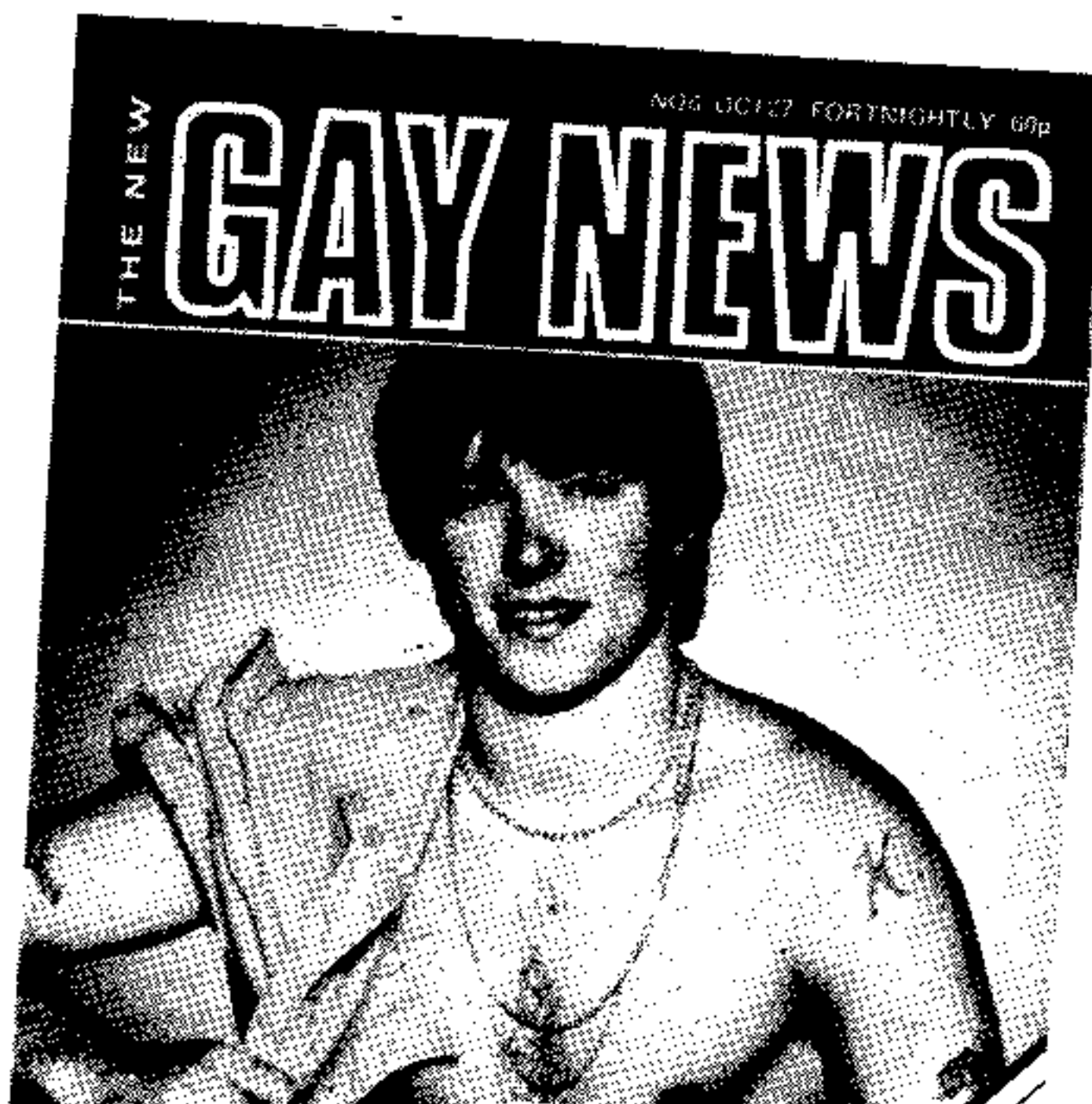
And never it seems from this book was there such a gullible and willingly exploited workforce as that of *GN*. Because it was a gay alternative venture all the workers and managers had their sexuality as an over-riding common experience. Although everyone belonged nominally to a union there was no us and them attitude, even though the staff worked long hours in awful conditions and at wage rates that varied from worker to worker. There were no negotiations over wage structures or anything like that, this was seen as so very hot and straight. The workforce were led like lambs to the slaughter. Denis Lemon must surely be laughing all the way to the bank.

But we mustn't romanticise the old *GN*. Obviously it would be preferable for it to still exist but it was always a rather reactionary old rag. When Lemon was editor, *GN* would not allow the SWP gay group for example, to go in its listings. At election times it advised its readers to vote Liberal. And there was little sign that the post-Lemon *GN* was any more radical. During the war with Argentina the paper carried a lead story about the plight of gays in Argentina, true in itself but putting the paper squarely behind Thatcher in the war.

And it was never a real campaigning paper either. It would sometimes follow a story but never take any lead. It's one moment of glory was in 1977 when Mary Whitehouse sued it for blasphemy and that was not of its own choosing. Far more typical was its creation of a 'gay sensibility'. It presented a middle-class rather well read and liberal life style as the gay way to live—all Christopher Isherwood novels and Habitat furniture. Alongside *GN* grew up the pink economy and *GN* except at the end, was always the respectable voice of that scene. To working class gays trapped in the family or people (particularly lesbians) who couldn't afford the scene it had little to say or offer, except as a window into a world from which they were excluded.

This book is a blow by blow account of the final days of *GN*. At times it reads like a cross between a soap opera and the women's page of the *Guardian*. Little commonsense, never mind socialist politics seem to have penetrated the in-fighting and confusion when the wonderful gay movement of ours was found to be little different from the straight world. The gay legal advice group GLAD actually gave advice to the *GN* owners of how to get rid of *GN* workers and avoid paying redundancy money. As a study of how people can mislead themselves year in and year out and still refuse to see class divisions, even when they're being sacked, it is sadly interesting.

Meanwhile, the world moves on. The monthly *Him* looks like replacing the old *GN*. There is no attempt to interest lesbians. During the last year the *GN* fight revealed a large misogynist layer in the gay male scene. *Him* is for men only and less political than *GN*. Unfortunately *Him* probably reflects the reality of the gay scene, nonpolitical, commercial, inward-looking and conservative. Sad but true. The new *Gay News* (the title was bought by a gay businessman) now in magazine format is worse even than *Him*. At the present it is campaigning against CHE for being too radical because CHE in a weak-kneed sort of way came out in support of PIE's



right to free speech.

All of which leads me to answer the question I am occasionally asked. What has become of the gay movement? The answer seems to be that it has been sold by Denis Lemon for £216,000 and is buying expensive drinks at Heaven disco (owned by another ex-child of revolt, or is it revolting child, Richard Branson) or it is sitting on a

GLC sub-committee in a back room of County Hall while the Labour Party drop gay rights. For the present, and things can and hopefully will change, the gay movement as such has either been incorporated into capitalism, into the pink economy, or has been added to the reformist wing of bourgeois politics.

Noel Halifax

Record of struggle

Labour and Socialism James Hinton
A history of the British Labour Movement 1867-1974. Wheatsheaf

This book is a very useful short history not only of British trade unionism, but of the Labour Party as well. In fact as the subtitle suggests it is a history of the labour movement, not in the false sense of 'this great movement of ours', but in the sense of being a record of working-class struggle.

As such, it does not make the separation beloved of reformists between politics and economics, between political events and organisations and the class struggle.

As you would expect from the author of *The First Shop Stewards Movement*, Hinton's strengths lie in his tracing of the development of the trade union bureaucracy and its relationship with the rank and file. Rather than seeing the consolidation of bureaucracy as a positive achievement, indicating the strength of the movement, Hinton shows how it has acted decisively at moments of danger for the ruling class to channel the struggle of the rank and file into reformist 'solutions'.

Running through the bulk of the book is the clear understanding, which is central to our own politics, that the struggle for socialism must be rooted in the workplaces, in collective workers' action. And that that struggle requires not merely

trade union organisation, but revolutionary socialist organisation. Those points come out particularly clearly in relation to discussion of the period before and immediately after the First World War, and the General Strike.

Unfortunately, the conclusions of the book are spelt out quite differently. Suddenly workers' struggle is branded as 'economistic', and the trade unions as representing a white, male, skilled minority of the working class. Whereas in the rest of the book there is a clear distinction made between bureaucracy and rank and file, now the distinction seems to be between the trade unions and the 'real' working class. Hope for the future is seen to lie outside the organisations of the class in the workplace, in the peace movement, the women's movement, community groups, etc.

Most of us are familiar with this argument. Quite apart from any other reply, the fact is that these movements are crumbling. What is left of them is running for cover into the arms of a rightward moving Labour Party, an organisation which Hinton would appear to have as little time for as we do.

It is a pity that the downturn should cause Hinton to draw the conclusions he does, but that shouldn't put anyone off reading his book.

Sue Cockerill

End of Rhodesia

Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia David Cauter. Pelican £3.95
Selous Scouts: Top Secret War Ron Reid Daly and Peter Stiff. Galago
 The Zimbabwean war of liberation (1972-9) was a small war by the standards of the day. A mere thirty thousand people died—a total barely worth noticing compared to the slaughter which attended the end of French rule in Algeria, or the terrible meat-grinder along the Iran-Iraq border.

Still, those seven bloody years in Zimbabwe are of interest to more than simply those who took part in it. It was a particularly clear example of the 'classical' pattern of revolutionary struggle in the Third World—a peasant war led by nationalist intellectuals against an identifiably alien enemy. These two books, otherwise very different, convey some of the flavour of the war.

David Cauter's earlier books have displayed an interest in Third World revolutions—the novel *The Decline of the West*, and his Fontana Modern Master *Fanon*, for example. Here, however, he uses techniques usually reserved for fiction to compose a collective portrait of the white Rhodesian settlers on the eve of their downfall.

Cauter's method is to accumulate small details out of which a picture takes shape. Scene after scene, interview after interview, all gathered during a succession of visits to Zimbabwe between 1976 and 1982, a gallery of individual whites—farmers, their wives, businessmen, members of the security forces.

The result is a book that is, at times, brilliant. Reading it evoked for me very powerfully just what the Rhodesian whites were like in their heyday, the end of which Cauter just glimpsed. Although brought up there, I had forgotten how awful they were—blind parochialism, venomous anti-communism, casual racism, nauseous self-justifications, and dreadful, narrow, petty-bourgeois culture. It's all there, captured in aspic—a world which we have very fortunately lost.

Cauter's standpoint is one of unequivocal support for the black liberation forces. Yet the focus of attention is the whites.

Nothing wrong with that, except that in a strange way, Cauter's narrative of the gradual attrition of the white laager, the virtual elimination in some cases of entire families and farming communities by the guerillas, confers on the settlers a certain dignity.

I detect some discomfort with this on Cauter's part, and an attempt to remedy it by from time to time throwing in some rather obtrusive sneer at the white's expense. This is a mistake. Cauter would have been far better advised, having chosen

his approach, to stick to it, and allow the whites to condemn themselves out of their own mouths, as they do again and again in this book, without any help from him.

That aside, Cauter's focus on the whites makes him vulnerable to an inevitable, if unfair criticism which has been aimed at him by a number of right-wing reviewers. A post-script notes the present situation in Zimbabwe, arising from the conflict between ZANU-PF and ZAPU. Yet there is little in the book to explain why this has happened. Why should it, since it is concerned with the whites, and describes rather than analyses? Cauter's support for the guerillas, however, invites the challenge now coming from the Tory press—in what way is independent Zimbabwe better than the old Rhodesia whose end he celebrates?

Reid Daly's book, 'as told to' the appropriately named Mr Stiff, is quite another matter. First published in South Africa, where it was a runaway best seller, *Selous Scouts* tells the story of one of the elite units of Ian Smith's army. The Selous Scouts, named after the famous white scout who was the original of Rider Haggard's Alan Quartermain, was created in 1973 to combat the guerillas of ZANLA (military wing of ZANU-PF, now the ruling party in Zimbabwe).

The problem which Reid Daly, the Scouts' first commander, had to confront was this. ZANLA's first major offensive, launched in December 1972 in the remote rural areas of north eastern Zimbabwe, took the Smith regime by surprise. The security forces discovered, to their horror, that the local peasantry had been 'subverted' by ZANLA. Special Branch informers could no longer be relied on.

The Scouts responded to this threat by creating 'pseudo-gangs' of the sort pioneered by the British army in Malaya and Kenya. Whites in blackface, black mercenary soldiers, and ex-guerillas who had been 'turned' after capture in exchange for their lives went into the countryside masquerading as freedom fighters. Reid Daly claims that his groups were largely responsible for most of the security forces' kills.

He is reticent on many subjects. While admitting the Scouts' most notable atrocity, the surprise raid by troops disguised as Mozambican soldiers on Nyadzonya camp in August 1976, he makes no attempt to counter the evidence that his men were used in a number of cases to murder missionaries and put the blame on the guerillas. Nor does he say anything about South Africa's part in the war.

Nevertheless, the book is fascinating, less for the narrative of raids and assassinations, than for the insight it gives into the politics

of war. Again and again, Scout pseudo-gangs would be horrified to discover with what enthusiasm they, as supposed 'guerillas', were greeted by the peasants. Sometimes local army commanders would refuse to allow the Scouts into their areas for fear that they would do ZANLA's work for them. A couple of times white Scouts pretended to be the captives of their black 'guerilla' colleagues—only narrowly to escape with their lives when the local villagers demanded their execution.

Remarkably, the picture Reid Daly paints is quite similar to Cauter's—an irresistible guerilla tide flooding into rural Zimbabwe, and gradually overpowering the security forces. This partly has something to do with the fact that

he left the Rhodesian army shortly before the end of the war under a cloud. The book is scathing about the incomprehension of the regular Rhodesian army officers faced with a people's war.

Reid Daly now commands the army of the Transkei, the most important of the Bantustans ruled by Pretoria's black quislings. No doubt he is preparing for a rerun of the Zimbabwean war there. However, the struggle in South Africa will not be the same—the increasingly militant, black workers' movement in the towns will ensure that. Zimbabwe may be one of the last of the purely peasant wars that have been such an important feature of this 'epoch of wars and revolutions'.

Alex Callinicos

Racist to the core

Zionism in the Age of the Dictators
 Lenni Brenner
 Lawrence Hill & Co

This is not an inspiring book, for it offers no guidance as to how Zionism can be defeated. But it is a very well researched study of international Zionism as a political and ideological movement in the years leading up to the 2nd World War.

Brenner's starting point is the birth of Zionism at the turn of the century as a minority response to the problem of anti-semitism. From the beginning Zionists refused to fight racism, preferring to use it as proof that they needed their own state. This led them to try to do all sorts of deals with the very people who were oppressing them.

This is clearly seen when the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, meets the Tsarist Minister of the Interior, von Plehve, who had organised the first anti-semitic pogrom in Russia for 20 years. Herzl offered a deal—if the Russian government would recognise the Zionists, and help their emigration to Palestine, then he would stop the ever-increasing number of Jews from joining revolutionary organisations in Russia.

Brenner sums up what lay behind this attitude:

'...anti-semitism was inevitable, and could not be fought; the solution was the emigration of unwanted Jews to a Jewish state in the making. The inability of the Zionist movement to take Palestine militarily meant it had to look for Imperial patronage... Zionists additionally saw revolutionary Marxism as an assimilationist enemy which persuaded them to ally against it with their fellow separatists of the anti-semitic right wing of the nationalist movements in Eastern Europe.'

After Herzl's death the influence of German Jews within the movement grew. They were influenced by

the nationalist mysticism which dominated German thought at the time, with its talk of German blood and German soil. Some erstwhile Zionists drew the lessons from this and moved leftwards. Others just took the ideas and translated them into Zionist terminology.

The logic of the standpoint was that they agreed with the anti-semites on several major points, such as the undesirability of Germans and Jews mixing sexually, and the Jews not being part of the German 'volk' or race.

As German Nazism grew the theorists and activists of the Zionist movement did not always agree with each other as to how to respond to Hitler.

German Jewry had always been loyal to the Weimar Republic, which had legislated against the discrimination of Jews. When Hitler's vote zoomed from 2% to 18% between 1928 and 1930 the response of religious Jewry was to turn to its traditional defence organisation, the *Centraeveren*. But the old leadership couldn't understand what was happening. A new, more radical leadership took over, which directed funds to the SPD's anti-Nazi propaganda.

But the SPD was completely incapable of fighting Hitler, and the CP was arguing its ridiculous ultra left line, that all but the communists were 'social fascists'.

However, while the leadership of the working class were committing political suicide, their members were still ready to fight. Right up until Hitler took power, workers resisted with strikes, demonstrations and street battles. The Zionists were noticeable by their absence.

Italian fascism had no axe to grind against the Jews, and Zionists in Italy became great admirers of Mussolini's nationalism and organisation. In Britain, although there were mass mobilisations against the British Union of Fascists, the British Board of Deputies told Jews not to heckle at

Mosley's meetings. Neville Laski, a Zionist leader, wrote, '...the Jewish community, not being a political body as such should not be dragged into the fight against fascism.'

In America fascist currents grew throughout the 30s, culminating in a rally in Madison Square Garden organised by the Nazi German-American Bund. In New York there were one and three quarter million Jews (30% of the population) yet not one Jewish organisation organised a counter-demonstration. Only the tiny Trotskyist group, the SWP, called a counter-demonstration. Jewish newspapers and organisations denounced this opposition. When the SWP tried to gain Zionist support, they were told, 'Zionist policy is to take no part in politics outside Palestine.'

Even so 50,000 turned up to the counter-demonstration, many of them Jews. Although they were not able to break through the police lines the victory was theirs, for had a contingent of 1780 armed police not been present the Nazis would have been smashed.

As Brenner puts it

'The fact that, as late as

February 1936, the SWP was alone in calling for a demonstration against a storm trooper meeting in New York City testifies to a reality during the Nazi epoch. Individual Zionists certainly took part in the battle of the Garden, but the entire range of Jewish organisations—political or religious—were never prepared to fight their enemies.'

But it was in Germany that the Zionists' behaviour was most treacherous. The German Zionist Federation repeatedly solicited support from Hitler after 1933. The similarities between the two movements—a contempt for liberalism, their common racism, and the belief that Germany could never become the homeland of the Jews meant they looked for patronage from the Nazi government. The main spin off from this was the Zionist attempts to quell any anti-Nazi activity abroad.

Rundschen, a Zionist paper, incidentally *not* banned under Hitler, argued that the Jews should accept the dictates of their new masters.

'We who live here as a foreign race have to respect the racial consciousness and the racial interest of the German people absolutely.'

Prior to the rise of the Nazis, German Zionism was no more than an isolated cult for bourgeois Jews. While the left fought the Nazis on the streets, the Zionists collected money for trees in Palestine. Suddenly, in 1933 this small group conceived of itself as properly anointed by history to negotiate secretly with the Nazis, to oppose the vast mass of world Jewry who wanted to fight Hitler, all in the hope of getting support for building their own state in Palestine.

Germany's Zionists didn't even see it as a surrender, they thought they could be partners. They were hopelessly deluded, once Hitler had smashed the German working class the position of the Jews became hopeless.

Brenner closes the book on the origins of those who control Israeli society today. Until Begin's election victory in 1977 the 'revisionists' as Begin's group was called were dismissed as the fanatical fringe of

Zionism by pro-Zionist writers.

The new Israeli premier, Yitzhak Sharmir, was the operations commander of the Stern gang. Begin himself was a leader of the Irgun. The founding of the state of Israel was done by terror and murder, backed by a reactionary racist ideology.

The history of Zionism as a mass political movement is bound up with the massive defeat of the working class which Nazism inflicted.

While the leaderships of the SPD and the KPD must share a lot of responsibility, the Zionist movement, with its reactionary ideas of anti-Bolshevism, anti-internationalism and pro-racism (both on the 'left' and the 'right' of the movement) must also be answerable for the mass extermination, not just of millions of Jews, but of socialists and trade unionists and many others too powerless to fight back. Lenni Brenner's book goes a long way to arming socialists with the arguments against Zionism.

Steve Cedar

LEFTY YOU BURGLE
ELLSBERG'S SHRINK.



MUSSY YOU BUG
THE WATERGATE.



LOUIE YOU BURN
THE EVIDENCE.



NO-NOSE YOU SHRED
THE MEMOS.



BUTCH YOU BOMB
CAMBODIA.



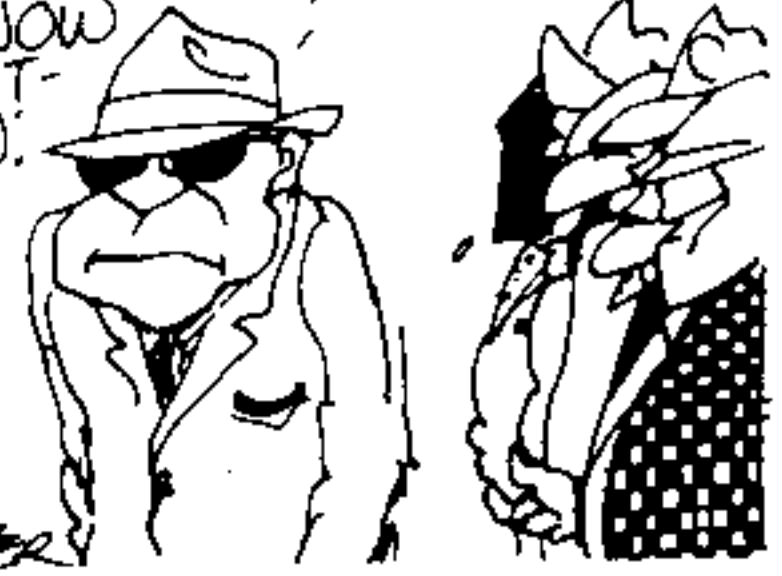
ANY
QUESTIONS?



WHAT IF WE
GET CAUGHT?



I DON'T KNOW YA, I NEVER
HEARD 'A' YA, I DON'T
KNOW
NUT-
TIN.



Jules Feiffer's America, From Eisenhower to Reagan
Edited by Steven Heller
Penguin £6.95

Jules Feiffer is a playwright more famous for his cartoons than his plays, and a cartoonist more renowned for his verbal gags than for his drawings.

Little known outside America apart from his work on the *Observer*, Jules Feiffer, if not the most popular of contemporary political cartoonists, is certainly among the most radically committed. This retrospective covers all aspects of his comic skills

over the last thirty years.

Humour can be a very personal thing, not everyone laughs at the same joke, so much as I would like to recommend Feiffer's book on the grounds that it's just funny, I think I should warn people that if they are unmoved by the films of Woody Allen they are probably likely to be unmoved by this book.

Having said that, Feiffer is clearly a lot more political in his attitude to his characters than Woody Allen. He really does dislike his villains, be they presidents, generals, judges, policemen (and dogs), teachers or parents. He also gets a great deal of comic mileage out of the eternal dilemma of the

professional liberal. One moment agonising over what attitude to have about McCarthyism, the next worrying about the growth of Black Power.

Not unexpectedly the '60s provided Feiffer with his best material. As a decade it saw the most dramatic political and social upheavals America had yet experienced. Black power, the Vietnam war, civil rights, women's liberation, it was a magnificent time.

It would be unfair to single out any one of Feiffer's comic strips but I particularly liked one in which a police dog takes it upon himself to go and arrest a black man having a quiet drink. There follows a truly

surreal conversation about justice and civil rights until at last the black man suddenly transforms himself into an equally belligerent dog. Whereupon the police dog, not to be outdone, metamorphoses into a suddenly deeply concerned liberal who believes violence is unnecessary in the pursuit of human rights.

I wish the '80s would provide Feiffer with the material for similar routines. I tend to find Reagan's antics far too nightmarish for comfort. He really might blow everyone up. Still, if he does initiate the final conflict at least I'll know that somewhere there was a funny side to it.

Peter Court

Valium of the masses?

Annie Walker is in hospital. Len is to be killed off, Elsie Tanner is leaving in November, Eddie and Marion want out. Bert Tilsley has died. Noel Halifax asks: Is this the end of *Coronation Street* as we know it?

According to Alan Sapper (of the ACTT) the Street is propaganda to dupe and brainwash the working class into accepting their lot in life, the valium of the people. To *The Sun* its appeal is that 'it's crammed with living, breathing men and women who would not be pushed around by anyone' (*Sun* Editorial 4 October).

And its appeal is extraordinary. It has been the top show for most of the past 20 years. I should add that I'm one of its 14 million regular viewers and have been a fan of Bette Lynch's ear-rings for years.

Of course much of the left's disdain and critique of the Street is right. It is essentially a safe, cosy picture of the working class where conflict is sometimes raised but there is always a happy ending, a re-affirmation of the status-quo. Stan was shown in debt to a money lender and on the road to poverty and misery but was saved by ex-con turned good. Eddie, Dierdre had her fling and for a time questioned the deadening conformity of being married to the boring goodie-goodie Ken Barlow only to go back to him and re-nurture the family and monogamy etc. etc. Time and again reality almost breaks into the Street only to be nullified. Valium after all seems an accurate analogy.

Hilda's pathos

But it isn't that simple or reactionary. The central characters are working class women who are shown as complex and diverse and not just victims or extensions of their men (very rare on telly or anywhere else). It has a sense of humour but the working class is not automatically funny as is the case with most TV shows (and nearly all 'high art' from Shakespeare downwards). It is one of the least patronising programmes to the working class. Occasionally a character comments on their plight. Hilda Ogden is used both as a funny char stereo-type and as a character with pathos and insight into her oppression. It is the only show that regularly deals with the factory floor, the women in Baldwin's textile factory, who sometimes go on strike and in a muted family-row sort of way take part in class struggle.

Of course in no way is it an accurate picture of the working class or inner urban life. It is supposed to be Greater Manchester, yet there are hardly any blacks, Irish or Asians. Very few are on the dole and there is a very high proportion of the self-employed. No male factory workers, no workers in large

offices. It is a picture of the working class of the mid 19th century (small factories and craft workshops all within walking distance from home) projected into the present without mass unemployment or the problem of racialism and urban deprivation. In the same way the old sense of community that existed when workers lived close to their workplace is presented and with a boss (Baldwin) living in the same street and drinking in the same pub as his workers.

Something like one in three of births in cities are now illegitimate and the nuclear family is far from being the all-prevailing norm. None of this is reflected in the show. It usually has the accuracy that Hovis ad has to the life of workers in the 30s, though this is not always the case. In the militant days of the 70s the Baldwin workers went on strike and a *Socialist Worker* seller actually appeared in the *Rovers Return*. As a sign of the downturn the Baldwin workers again went on strike (about a year or so ago) in solidarity with the London factory owned by Baldwin. This time the strike lasted only a few days and they voted to go back. For once it was depressingly realistic.

The point however is not that the Street is so bad (I personally think that the acting and script is far better than the costume dramas of the 'classics' or most TV plays), but what else could it be? There are those of the post-Frankfurt school of Channel 4 (now in retreat) who have and do argue that the

Street is part of a great ideological brainwashing diet fed to the working class. They argue that to change docile placid workers into a revolutionary class we need to intervene in the production of this ideology. Challenge the hegemony of the valium programmes and subvert the system with radical alternatives.

You would have thought (and hoped) that this would lead them to make subversive *Coronation Streets*. Can you imagine Bette Lynch and Elsie coming out as radical lesbians and setting up house together? Or Vera Duckworth leading an occupation of Baldwin's factory and organising a Coronation Street SWP branch? But no, all the analysis seems to result in programmes with dull and worthy talk-overs to pictures of high rise flats taken at odd angles, little if any plot and even less humour. Having given such importance to the influence of TV they take it all so very seriously. And so hardly any of the masses watch it, and of those that do, few are the working class the programmes are supposed to be aimed at. They become 'art' programmes for a small cultural audience.

People watch *Coronation Street* not because they have to or because there is no alternative, but because they want to. It fulfills the need to relax and watch cosy good rubbish on the box after a day with the kids, or at work, or both. Until the working class themselves create an alternative they will continue to watch it and in order to retain its huge audience the Street will reflect in a muted form its attitudes. It is not great socialist art, but neither is it going to be replaced by ideologically sound alternatives made by a small elite for the education of the masses.





ARGUMENTS ABOUT SOCIAL

'Forcibly if we must'

One of the main charges against revolutionary socialists is that we want to use violence to change the world. Phrases like 'the need to reject violence as a means to political ends' are the commonplace of arguments against revolution.

Most of the time these arguments are the rankest hypocrisy. When they come from supporters of the government, Tory, Labour or Liberal, they cannot be taken too seriously.

Take the case of the Labour Party. When MPs accuse us of supporting violence, unlike them, they are either wilfully ignorant or deeply dishonest. There have been seven Labour governments, and every one of them has been quite prepared to use violence for political ends.

Leaving aside ancient history, the Attlee government launched a colonial war in Malaya, the Wilson government backed the US war effort in Vietnam, the Callaghan government presided over a bloodbath in Ireland. And besides actually using and supporting political violence, these governments all spent millions on the preparations for even larger scale violence in the form of huge mountains of weapons.

Most of the time, the real argument is not about whether you are in favour of using violence for political ends, but what political ends you are prepared to use violence for. For the propagandists of official parties, the case is simple: they will justify the use of any degree of violence in order to ensure that the present system of society continues. For us, it is equally clear: we are prepared to use violence in order to end the existing system.

The reason we hold this position is not at all because we are bloodthirsty monsters but

because we recognise how the world is changed. We believe that it is most unlikely that the current ruling class will give up their control of society without a fight. Perhaps they will, but both history and theory makes it more likely they will not.

We therefore base our strategy on what is probable. We know that the class war is going to continue until capitalism is ended and we think it very likely that at some point in the future the ruling class in Britain as elsewhere will use the armed power of the state in a concentrated attempt to smash the organisations of the working class. We do not intend to lie down and let them drive right over us.

If they surrender without a fight, well and good. There will be no need to use violence. If they start shooting, then workers must be prepared to shoot back. To rule out that possibility from the start is to surrender the war before even fighting the first battle.

It is at that point that we meet our genuine critics, the real pacifists. They will argue that everything we say about the official parties is quite true, but we are just as bad because *all* violence is wrong.

People who are genuinely arguing this are in fact quite rare—mostly when pressed people will admit of *some* circumstances in which violence is justified. But when the view is genuinely held it has to be recognised as a profoundly humane response to the horror of organised murder. Unfortunately it is also profoundly reactionary.

It is essentially an abstract moral argument—it says that there is a single absolute rule for human conduct which everybody ought to obey. We reject that notion.

For us, all 'morality', all rules of conduct and all laws have to be seen in a class context. As Anatole France once put it 'The laws of France, with majestic impartiality, forbid both the beggar and the millionaire to sleep under the bridges of Paris.'

What is one class's meat is another class's poison, and so too with violence. The ruling class defines certain sorts of violence as legitimate and certain sorts as wrong. Stick a knife in a brutal husband and you go to prison; neglect a safety regulation and kill half a dozen workers and you get fined a piffling amount. Shoot a policeman in a scuffle and you get 25 years, shoot an unarmed civilian five times and fracture his skull, and, if you are a copper, the judge makes sure you get off scott free.

And that holds good for political violence too. If you blow up an oil refinery in Nicaragua, Reagan and Thatcher will say it is a blow for freedom. Do the same in El Salvador and you are a vile commie terrorist.

By rejecting all forms of political violence the sincere pacifist in fact ensures that the present state of affairs will continue indefinitely. That colossal man-made slaughter of war, famine, disease, all largely the result of human decisions, will continue without end.

In order to end that horror it is sometimes unavoidable that we use violence. What matters for us is which class benefits from such actions. The violence of the South African state in Soweto is designed to ensure the continuation of apartheid, the violence of the ANC is designed to end it. The equation holds good for the British army and the IRA in Ireland.

The Chartists had a slogan: 'Peacefully if we may. Forcibly if we must.' We too hold that view. Unfortunately for us, we have seen another 150 years of ruling class atrocities and it is our view that it is much more likely to be the 'must' part of the slogan that we have to act on.

Colin Sparks