

# socialist worker Review

May 1985 Issue 76

60p

**'We really thought we could get rid of the government.  
It all seemed possible...!'**



## **THE STRIKE THAT SHOOK A COUNTRY!**

◆ **Is the Party over?**

◆ **Enva Hoxha** ◆ **Zionism**

◆ **The peoples war** ◆ **Labour left in crisis**

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# NOTES

## of the month

### THE LABOUR LEFT

# The boot goes in

THE LEFT in the Labour Party is under very serious attack. The attack comes not mainly from the Healeys and Hattersleys (although they must be delighted with it), but from erstwhile leftwingers. In particular, many of those who enthusiastically backed the Benn for Deputy campaign in 1981, are now distancing themselves from the man himself.

An article in the May issue of the Labour Party magazine, *New Socialist* makes this abundantly clear. Entitled 'Bennism without Benn', the article marks the direction in which the bulk of the Labour left is moving. It states:

'The new left are trying to create room in the Labour Party for a popular and realistic democratic socialist politics, for a third force independent alike of the right and the ultra left. They are distancing themselves ... from the positions which Tony Benn, the former leader of the left, has recently been adopting. They are, indeed, preparing to recreate and redefine Bennism, if necessary without Benn.'

The article is very interesting. It describes a realignment where the bulk of the once Bennite left round the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the *Tribune* newspaper in particular are falling in behind Kinnock. They do so, they claim in order to 'try to detach him from the embrace of the parliamentary right.' Unfortunately the reality is rather different. In effect the old 'soft left' are themselves embracing many of the policies of the right and centre in order to make their peace with Kinnock. The only way they can reclaim Kinnock is to move on to his terrain.

Crucial to this realignment is the role of the trade union bureaucracy in reasserting the control of the block vote on Labour policies. An alliance of NUPE's Tom Sawyer, Michael Meacher MP and Sheffield council leader David Blunkett has been



instrumental in leading the left rightwards. The involvement of other union leaders like Ron Todd of the TGWU and Jimmy Knapp of the railwaymen has also been key.

Despite all the sophisticated phrases and lengthy justifications the realignment has entailed a massive shift to the right on the part of the 'soft left'. Any close observer of the Labour left could admittedly have seen that coming for some months now. It has been clear since the closing months of the miners' strike.

### The next election

Even more dramatic in terms of a wholesale shift to the right however, was the nearly total abandonment of a principled opposition to ratecapping. This was led by Ken Livingstone at the GLC, but has been followed by all but a handful of Labour local authorities.

But there is also one very obvious reason why the left rhetoric of last year's conference has been abandoned so rapidly. Labour's standing in the opinion polls has risen (not since the end of the miners' strike as the Kinnockites claim, but since the final more defensive phase of the strike). There is at least a reasonable chance of Labour forming, or helping to form, the next government. Not only does this entail a move to the right in order not to rock the electoral boat, it also means hammering very hard those who *do* want to raise left wing issues.

Both these elements are present in the new strategy of the soft left. The *New Socialist* article puts this quite clearly. It lists a set of

'characteristics and assumptions' common to this strategy. These include 'a willingness to work with Neil Kinnock as leader', a 'heavy emphasis on party unity', an abandonment of the left's traditional alternative economic strategy in favour of more up to date policies.

All these assumptions and characteristics serve one purpose: to dress up the fact that the former Bennites are abandoning any controversy and seeking unity on the terms of the right wing. That is bad enough. But other points show a trend in the party which will make life for genuine left wing socialists who remain within it very hard.

In particular, the article argues: 'there is a strong feeling that *Militant* and other organised Trotskyist groups within the party cannot be left unchallenged'. The meaning behind this is quite clear. Although the soft left are still slightly reluctant to call openly for expulsions, they are likely to back any witch-hunts that take place. Again, this confirms a lot of the writing which has been on the wall recently. *Militant* have suffered a number of purges and expulsions. In other places their influence has been lessened. George Wright is attempting to proscribe *Militant* supporters from holding positions in the TGWU. The forthcoming NUPE conference has resolutions attacking *Militant* on its agenda. The TGWU and GMBATU in Coventry are organising to deselect *Militant* MP Dave Nellist later this year.

What is obvious to anyone looking at the balance of forces inside the Labour Party today, is that all the gains that the left won in the early eighties, are now either gone completely or are being used not against the right but against the left.

All the hopes that the democratic processes could help to change the party into a genuine vehicle for socialist change have come to nothing. The power of the union block vote has made sure that the right are able to take the initiative, even over issues which should favour the left, like reselection.

But while the bulk of those who argued for those reforms are now going along with unity at any price, there is also a sizeable minority who must be feeling isolated and disillusioned. It consists of the people who believe that Labour can be transformed into a socialist party. Today they must find it difficult to stick to such a belief. They are unlikely to get anywhere at all inside the Labour Party and in fact face the danger of

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being witch-hunted if they fight for any of their policies.

At least some of the arguments put by revolutionary socialists, about how Labour cannot be reformed, are being proved in practice. The danger is that many in the Labour Party will become demoralised and drift out of politics. But there is an alternative to the right wing drift. It consists of a minority of socialists relating to the fights that are taking place and trying to build round those struggles a revolutionary party committed to workers themselves changing things from below. Although the general mood is to the right, there are many opportunities for such an organisation to grow. It is this type of organisation that we in the SWP are trying to build.

Those socialists in the Labour Party—faced with such massive attacks from the right—should really consider whether they too should be building such an organisation, rather than putting their energies into propping up a reformist party which doesn't even want to be reformed. ■

### THE POWELL BILL

## A noticeable absence

A GOOD measure of the state of the women's movement is the strength of its mobilisations. If the demonstration against the Powell bill is anything to go by, the movement is continuing its decline. A bare three thousand marched through London last month to protest at a bill which threatens to ban experiments on embryos and so, through the back door, restrict the right of women to have abortions.

Of that number, around a third were supporters of the Socialist Workers Party. Noticeable by their absence were not only organisations of the Labour left and the Communist Party (represented only by token banners), but also any significant number of feminists of any description.

There are a number of reasons why this is so. The first is the organisational decline of the women's movement. There simply is not a focus which can begin to channel any feminist protest. Compared to the previous mobilisations against attempts to restrict abortion, last month's was tiny.

Some feminists will argue that the Powell issue is confusing, and not clearly identified as anti-abortion in the way that the campaigns against White, Benyon and Corrie were in the mid and late seventies. This is true, but it still doesn't explain the women's movement's almost total failure to mobilise. Where the argument has been put, the response has nearly always been good. The fact is that, aside from a small number of socialists and feminists, the argument has not been put.

Partly this is because the decline of the movement has been heralded by almost total sectionalism on the part of those feminists still around. Feminist assumptions that the 'personal is political' lead to a failure to see anything *but* the personal as political. So there is little compulsion on anyone to do anything. If you write feminist books or work in a refuge you are making a contribution to the women's movement, even if you do nothing else. There is therefore a tremendous gap between the general feminist ideas that some women hold, and what they do.

This process has been going on for some years. But it has become more pronounced since Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, and it has gone hand in hand with a political decline, which also helps to explain the lack of mobilisation over the Powell bill. The ideas which were the bedrock of the early women's movement are by no means taken for granted among feminists today.

The Greenham Common women argued that 'feminine values' should be promoted, as opposed to violent male ones. Other feminists argue that we shouldn't necessarily fight for abortion rights because some women don't want abortions (even though the argument was never about forcing women to do something they didn't want). Even the National Abortion Campaign has dropped the slogan of 'a woman's right to choose' because some feminists believe it to be racist.

In the face of a right wing offensive, unfortunately, many feminists have begun to retreat from politics which a few years ago they would have taken for granted as asserting women's right to equality. This retreat is the logic of two things.

The first is the domination of personal lifestyle politics in the women's movement. This means that for a number of middle class women there are individual solutions to many of their problems as women. The second is the acceptance of Labour Party dominated ideas which see politics in terms of reforming existing society. Even some Labour women are therefore prepared to compromise on questions like abortion being regarded as an issue of individual conscience, rather than a class issue.

Such a retreat highlights the importance of the revolutionary answer to women's liberation. We fight for the right of women to control their own bodies, as part of the wider

fight to end class society. We also fight for those not directly affected by issues like the Powell bill to take a stand on them, because they have an impact on the lives of all working class people and not just the individuals directly concerned.

In June there is another demonstration which everyone concerned with women's rights should support. It is against the court ruling inspired by Victoria Gillick to stop contraceptive advice for the under 16s. Socialists should be arguing now that those who support women's liberation will actually have to do something about it and turn it into a major mobilisation for women's rights. ■

### AUSTRALIA

## From the jaws of victory

UNION busting is on trial for Australian employers. Their verdict will depend on the state of Queensland government's latest attempt to smash a well organised section of workers.

In February, the right-wing state government of Joh Bjelke-Petersen announced that contract labour would be introduced in SEQEB, the state's electricity authority. One thousand linesmen and other power workers walked off the job in protest. Bjelke-Petersen responded by sacking them, announcing that they would get their jobs back when they individually agreed to radically worsened conditions of employment. At the same time SEQEB advertised throughout Australia for scabs to take the place of the sacked unionists.

Even the Industrial Court called for the sacked men to be reinstated and for negotiations to take place. The government ignored it and legislated to outlaw unionism in SEQEB.

The new law takes away the right to strike or picket or to organise union activity in any way, or even for two or more people to discuss action which might disrupt the normal work practices. It gives preference in employment to non-union members and removes the shorter working week that power workers had won years before. Journalists are to be prevented from reporting on SEQEB picket lines. It would be an offence under the new law even to advocate a strike and the burden of proof is shifted so that workers have to prove that they didn't call for one.

Apart from about 100 scabs who agreed to these slave labour conditions and others who applied for the sacked workers' jobs, the strike stayed fairly solid. Action by power station operators meant that serious black-outs were beginning to hurt the government. A wave of solidarity spread throughout the Queensland working class. Dockers, coal miners, copper miners at Mount Isa, telecom

workers and thousands of others came out or placed bans in support.

Bjelke-Petersen has always been a right-wing pace-setter in Australian politics. His aim has been to prove to the ruling class in the heartlands of Australian industry outside Queensland that hard-line confrontation with the unions works.

For the last two years employers have been happy to rely on a Prices and Incomes Accord between the Federal Labor Government of Bob Hawke and the trade union leaders to hold wages down. Now, with the Australian economy clearly coming out of its two year boom and unemployment rising, some bosses believe that they are in a position to go further on the offensive.

Bjelke-Petersen aims to prove that all-out attack is a better policy than relying on trade union leaders to betray their members. Still, in March, the bulk of the Australian ruling class remained unconvinced. The main establishment newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne said openly that Bjelke-Petersen had gone too far.

A determined fight, spreading the dispute quickly could have exploited the state government's isolation, forced them to back down and warned other bosses not to try the same approach. The solidarity actions across the state pointed the way to victory.

When just such a victory seemed likely, the Queensland Trades and Labor Council stepped in and ordered back to work all

those not directly involved in the dispute. That included the operators whose action had caused the blackouts.

The Queensland Labor Party, worried that Bjelke-Petersen might call a state election, were desperate to avoid massive strike action. Labor Party leader Warburton congratulated the TLC on averting a general strike. Instead, the TLC and the ACTU (the Australian equivalent of the TUC) have undertaken a series of token actions. While actions like these could be a start, they fall far short of what will be necessary to get back the jobs of the sacked men, to overturn the anti-union law and prevent more of the same in other industries.

Through all this, the most serious attack on unionism in Queensland in nearly 40 years, the Hawke Federal Labor government has done absolutely nothing. In the past it has used various methods to overrule state government laws. It refuses to do so now. Industrial Relations minister Ralph Willis said that Labor couldn't 'condone a course of industrial action to try to change legislation'. Everywhere, the Labor Party leaders advise that the wisest path is to wait for an election to remove Bjelke-Petersen.

If they get their way, and unless the token actions taken by the trade union officials can be turned into something a lot more serious, then the price of Labor's reformism will be 1,000 jobs, much less confidence for militants, and a ruling class on the rampage. ■

# NOTES

## of the month

LATIN AMERICA

# Wind of change in Peru?

GENERAL elections in Peru have indicated a dramatic shift in the political mood. The ruling right-wing party received a mere five



# Marxism 85

A WEEK of meetings, discussions and debates organised by the Socialist Workers Party 5-12 July University of London Union

The most important event of the last year has been the miners' strike. It was a strike which raised thousands of people to activity and drew many of them into politics for the first time.

In the wake of the strike many of these people are asking all sorts of questions. Why did the defeat occur? Could Labour have done more? Would the rank and file have fought if the union leaders had given a stronger lead?

They are asking other questions as well. Can women ever be liberated? Can the working class win? Is there an alternative to the Labour Party?

MARXISM 85 is about discussing these and many other issues. It is about exploring the past—the ideas of Marxism and the experience of the working class movement—to understand the present and to consider the possibilities for the future.

Most of the debates will be between revolutionaries and others on the left. Some will include more than two speakers.

**DEBATES** ★ Which strategy for the left? ★ Trade unions and the fight against the Tories ★ Women and the struggle for socialism ★ Is Trotsky relevant today? ★ Which way forward for students? ★ Police and the state ★ Russia today

This year we are planning about 250 meetings organised into over 30 courses.

**COURSES** ★ The Labour Party—a history ★ What makes a revolution? ★ The rank and file and the Broad Lefts ★ Fifty years of the popular front ★ Capital for beginners ★ Socialism and culture ★ Racism and nationalism ★ Women's liberation and socialism ★ Labour in Irish history ★ Problems of Marxist philosophy ★ Anarchism and syndicalism ★ The history of the miners

**SPEAKERS** ★ Ken Livingstone ★ Chris Harman ★ Tariq Ali ★ Tony Cliff ★ Alex Callinicos ★ Lindsey German ★ Quintin Hoare ★ Nigel Harris ★ Paul Foot

The cost of Marxism, including entrance to all meetings, debates and entertainment, is £16 for the whole week (in advance) and £10 for the weekend. For further details write to Marxism 85, PO Box 82, London E2.

# NOTES of the month

percent of the vote. The nationalist and populist APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) received around 50 percent, with the loose-knit United Left of seven socialist parties receiving around 22 percent.

It seems likely that APRA, and its 36-year-old leader Alan García, will take office at the end of July. The only issue is whether there will be a second round of elections, if APRA has obtained less than half the vote. Meanwhile the left has achieved its largest support for years under the leadership of Alfonso Barrantes, Peru's equivalent of Ken Livingstone.

The new centre government will take office under extraordinarily severe conditions. Peru's currency devalued by 150 percent in 1984. By the end of the year some 70 percent of the country's savings were held in dollars. Only about a third of the 'economically active population' have stable jobs. The average national wage buys less than a third of the food required to feed a family adequately. Inflation last year was underestimated at 111.5 percent. The Peruvian budget for 1985 involved an anticipated \$1,000 million in *new* borrowing—the foreign debt currently includes at least \$400 million in *overdue* interest payments from last July.

The pressure on the new government to implement the demands of the International Monetary Fund—cuts in food subsidies and all—will be enormous. Equally, popular expectations are high. Under the outgoing government the most significant challenge came from the organised working class. A continuous series of strikes and other protests has taken place throughout the country, with miners, teachers and government employees to the fore.

## Opportunities for the left

The militancy of these groups is a major obstacle to the imposition of an austerity programme sugared with some sort of social contract propaganda—which will certainly

be the favoured option on the new regime.

There are thus considerable opportunities for the left current to grow. But the left has its own problems. What does it do when the elections are over? How does it face up to the continuing civil war in the southern provinces between the army and the 'maoist' guerrillas of Sendero Luminoso? How does it respond to the strong nationalist appeal from APRA, a party with a considerable mass base in the Lima shanty towns and in some sections of the organised working class—sugar, steel and fishing?

There is little to hope for from the disparate forces of the left bloc which fought the election. But last year, the 'left of the left' came together in an attempt to rebuild a revolutionary organisation, the Partido Unificado Mariateguista (PUM), named after the founder of communist organisation in Peru. Were such an organisation to focus on supporting and strengthening resistance to the employers and the government, a major change could take place. Recent strikes have been successful in winning concessions and should encourage other groups to fight back.

There remains, however, the serious problem of the war in the south. The most likely response of the army to the election results (apart from the outside possibility of a coup) is an intensification of the murderous repression which has claimed well over 4,000 lives since the start of 1983. The response of most of the left has been to deplore the repression but to oppose Sendero Luminoso.

To some extent this is understandable, Sendero carries out its own mass executions of peasants, is suspected of being linked to drug trafficking, and stands for a return to traditional Andean Indian civilisation and the rejection of all external influences since the Spanish conquest.

But the army and ruling class are the main enemy. Without a concerted campaign from the left against repression, there is a clear danger of the army taking over more and more control and, on the other hand, of numbers of leftists becoming frustrated with the situation and turning to urban guerrilla activity as a solution. ■

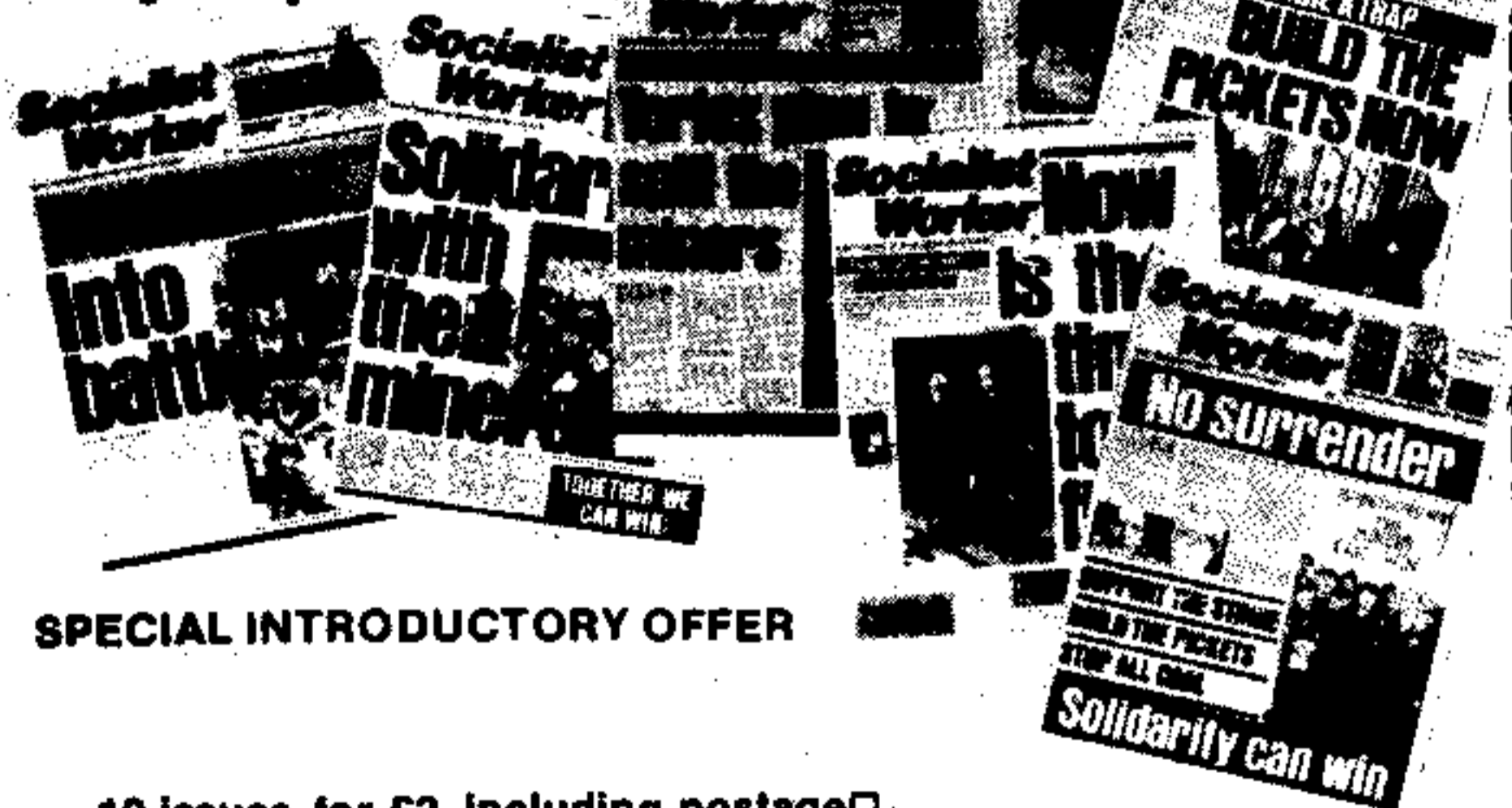
## GREEK ELECTION

# The more things change...

THE GREEK Socialist PASOK government is going to the polls in an early election this June. The election has been precipitated by the curious activities of the government and its leader Andreas Papandreou.

In March, only ten days before Parliament was due to hold elections for the presidency, Papandreou announced that his party would not support the re-election of conservative

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President Karamanlis.

Till then, it was regarded as certain that Karamanlis, the grand old man of the Greek right, would be unopposed and serve a second five-year term as president. Karamanlis immediately resigned upon the announcement and supreme court judge Christos Sarzetakis was elected, after bitter parliamentary wrangles, on the strength of PASOK's majority.

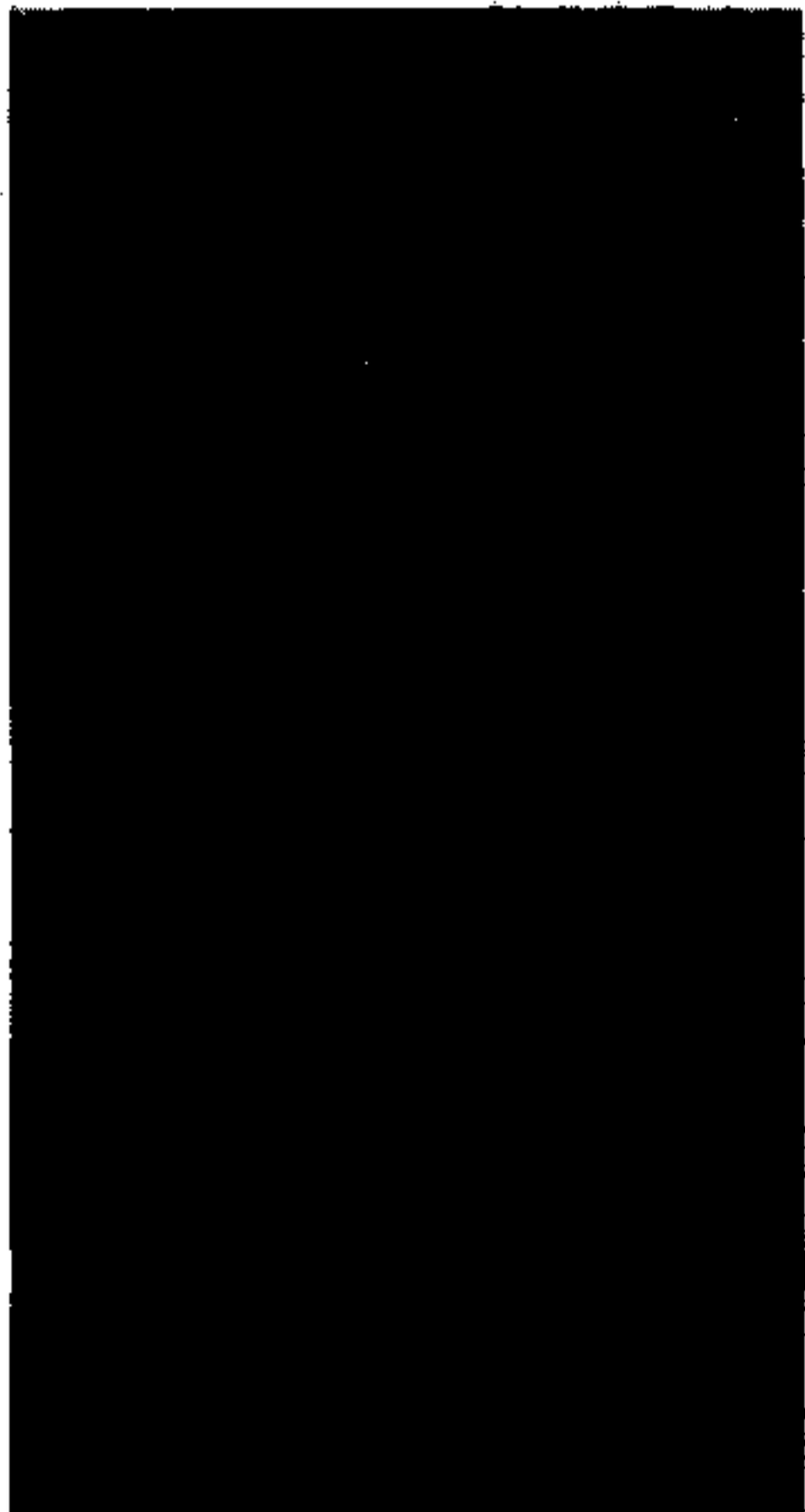
Papandreou's removal of a president who had lent the PASOK government a sense of national unity and continuity has baffled Greeks and western observers alike. PASOK had, after all, been working in perfect harmony with Karamanlis, the first prime minister after the junta and a man of impeccable right-wing credentials. Conservative president and 'socialist' government had had few real disagreements on the best way to manage the crisis of capitalism in Greece.

The Western press, great devotees of Karamanlis, bemoaned the move which they saw as a weakening of Greek democracy.

### Greater obstacles ahead

The Greek reformist left, both supporters of PASOK and the two Communist Parties, had an equally facile understanding of Papandreou's move. They interpreted it as 'a positive step', 'a left turn' and a furthering of 'the *allaghi*'. The slogan *allaghi*, meaning 'change', is PASOK's trademark.

By applauding PASOK's tactical parliamentary manoeuvres as a 'left turn', the reformists are boosting Papandreou's socialist credentials and his ability to con larger numbers of workers. As a result, working class struggles, already at a low ebb, face even greater obstacles.



Andreas Papandreou

In fact, it seems clear that Papandreou aimed to achieve two things by ousting Karamanlis.

Firstly, PASOK did not come to power as the traditional party of the Greek bourgeoisie. It rests, rather, on a loose coalition of sections of the ruling class, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and even sections of the working class. By pacifying the working class with vague promises of 'renewal', PASOK also gains the support of the ruling class.

As the pressures of the crisis threaten to break up this coalition, PASOK is forced into greater efforts to present itself as the sole able manager of a capitalism in crisis whilst at the same time maintaining popular support. To do the latter it was necessary, therefore, to remove Karamanlis and be seen to establish overall PASOK control, although Karamanlis himself was hardly a hindrance to Papandreou's policies.

Secondly, Papandreou and Karamanlis were heading for a clash over the question of Cyprus. After the recent abortive negotiations in New York between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, it had become clear that the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie are now prepared to agree to a settlement of the problem of the island.

Karamanlis and the opposition party *Nea Demokratia* (of which he is the founding member) support the Greek Cypriot willingness to settle. But such a settlement would weaken Papandreou's bargaining position with Turkey over the Aegean dispute. It would also deprive him of one of the weapons in his armoury of nationalistic, anti-Turkish chauvinism. Getting rid of Karamanlis was thus also necessary to pre-empt the coming, potentially damaging clash over Cyprus.

Anti-Turkish chauvinism and bigotry has been a consistent strand of PASOK politics. This chauvinism, which PASOK has taken to greater extremes than any previous right-wing government, has served two purposes.

On the one hand, it has whipped up nationalism to divert attention from domestic problems and the lack of any real socialist response to them by the government. On the other, the 'Turkish threat' has been used to justify continued NATO membership, to strengthen Greece's position within NATO against Turkey and to proceed with rapid militarisation, all of which are in direct contradiction with PASOK's 1981 election promises.

The recent purchase of 100 F-16, F-18 and Mirage 2000 fighter planes has been dubbed 'the sale of the century' in Greece. The press has proudly proclaimed that Greece is becoming armed to the teeth.

It is an indication of the impoverished state of reformist politics in Greece that the pro-Moscow CP (KKE) opposed the purchase of planes from the US and France. They proposed that Swedish Viggen planes be bought instead! Meanwhile another PASOK election promise, to close down the American military bases, has also been reneged on with the 'threat from the East' as an excuse.

This growing militarisation has been used by the PASOK government to counter the effects of the crisis on the Greek economy.

Unemployment has been edging towards the half-million mark in a population of 8.5 million. Closures have followed one another, with such major workplaces as the Iphestos and Neorio shipyards and the Fix brewery going out of business recently. In the textiles industry alone, over 70 factories have closed down and another 20 have applied to the government for help.

Workers in these and other 'problematic industries' have demanded nationalisation, no sackings and no 'intensification' of work.

Papandreou has indeed been undertaking some nationalisation. This, however, has been highly selective. Engineering factories are being nationalised and turned to the production of arms. In one such factory, PYRKAL, nationalisation was followed by a massive attack on conditions. After industrial action by the workers went down to defeat, productivity was dragged up by 48 percent.

### Preserving the government

The economic crisis and rising unemployment has put the working class very much on the defensive. The class struggle, already at a low level, is further hampered by the red herring of a 'socialist government'. Both the CP and the trade union bureaucracy (which consists largely of PASOK and CP members) have consistently refused to lead a fightback. Their main concern is the preservation of the PASOK government. The interests of the class come a poor second on their list of priorities.

Although popular support for PASOK has waned since its election four years ago, the fact that the right is disorganised and divided gives the government a good chance of being re-elected.

Better a 'left' government than a conservative one. But that doesn't alter the fact that, whatever the rhetoric, PASOK will make the workers and peasants of Greece pay for the capitalist crisis it is attempting to manage.

In those circumstances it is no good trying to pretend that PASOK can be pushed leftwards or that its catchword, the *allaghi*, can be broadened. Rather, what is needed is plain speaking about what 'socialist' Papandreou is up to. Without that there can be no chance of building even the bare bones of a movement capable of really taking on the system PASOK claims to oppose. ■

Additional notes from Daphnos Economou & Ali Saffet, and John Minns.

Thinking  
it over...

## The politics of famine

THE RAINS appear to be more promising and already the newspapers have passed on to other things; that is, until the next famine arrives. The horror of Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Mali, Niger, Mozambique and the others, joins a fitting series that began with Hiroshima, and so recently has passed through Kampuchea, Bangladesh, the Boat People, Biafra, Bhopal.

The film of Mohammed Amin which, last autumn, dropped the starving of Ethiopia into every sitting room, was an uncanny replay. For in 1974, Jonathan Dimbleby's *The Hidden Hunger* showed no lesser horrors in Ethiopia, and was one element in the overthrow of the emperor, Haile Selassie (but not before 200,000 had died). In March, the United Nations Conference on Famine in Africa likewise mimicked the 1974 Rome World Food Conference. This time round, Mrs Thatcher refused any increase in aid (only a redistribution between aided countries). Last time, the unlovely Fred Peart, Labour Minister of Agriculture, told his Roman audience: 'I believe a lot of people in Britain are not eating enough. I do not want malnutrition to appear in Britain.' Watch this space for the 1994 headlines.

We should be grateful for the film even if the warnings came long before. In 1980, one in four of the world's population ate too little for good health; every ninth suffered chronic hunger; every 73rd died from the effects of malnutrition; twelve million children died from protein deficiency. Since 1973 the income per head in most of Africa has been falling. Between the late sixties and the early eighties, food production per head in Africa has declined by 21 per cent—32 per cent for Mozambique and 18 per cent for Ethiopia. In 1981, 29 countries of Africa were notified as at risk of famine, but Western governments paid little attention.

Without Mohammed Amin's film, few people would have been any wiser. It linked genuine compassion to the razzamattazz of commercial exploitation, a media event with a cast of thousands: charity is the heart of a heartless world, even when the heart is made of plastic. The *Sun* can always be relied to transform the tragic into the banal, to vulgarise the horror, and this time was no exception with its slogan, 'Give a tiddler to save a toddler'. On the other side, the *Mirror* shifted gear from a one million pound bingo game to a one million pound 'mercy mission' ('Thank God You've Come!' was the absurd headline when the British, unable to send food, sent instead Robert Maxwell). And everyone visited—Charles Heston, Edward Kennedy, Cardinal Basil Hume and a

clutch of others.

This was merely the surface froth. Underneath, the real horror penetrated a mass audience with astonishing speed, and released a flood of spontaneous generosity. Very little was raised in Britain up to the time of the film, then £25 million in two months. A Cambridge farmer appealed for one tonne of wheat per farmer and raised 1,000 tonnes in November. In the United States the average contribution was \$40 per head.

The mass compassion is sharply contrasted with the vicious parsimony and hypocrisy of the governments. Just as



Robert Maxwell: substitute for food

Haile Selassie denied there was a famine in 1974 (and used his army to drive the dying out of Addis Ababa beyond the range of the cameras), so did Russia this time. That gave an opportunity to Washington (and the little yes-woman in London) to exploit the opportunity to discredit Russia and Ethiopia. The press settled down to identifying the military government as the real villain even though it had done far more than Haile Selassie.

The key issue is that Western Europe and North America control seventy five per cent of the world grain trade. It is a degree of control far greater than that exercised over any other commodity (much greater for example, than OPEC's share of the world oil trade). Everyone knows of the mountains of decaying cereals held in stock in Europe—8.7 million tonnes last year. But Brussels offered only to divert grain supplies from Bangladesh and Egypt to Ethiopia. Mrs Thatcher did the same.

Famine relief is one thing. More important in the medium term is the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC. It has wrecked markets for agricultural exports from Third World countries. The EEC charges high food prices in Europe to subsidise the purchase of food, its processing and storage, and finally its export. Through

massive subsidies, it has tripled its share of food exports in the last decade. In July 1984 the cost of producing sugar in the EEC was £346.50 per tonne and EEC sugar exports were priced at £93.50. A subsidy of £253 wrecks the markets of all Third World sugar producers. If the subsidies had affected cereals in 1984, it would have done far more to feed Ethiopia's hungry than any of the relief. But grain prices stayed high up until it was clear 1984 was a bumper harvest.

There was no shortage of food in the world. Per head of the world's population, more food is available in 1985 than ever before in the history of the world. And the estimates suggest continued growth to the end of the century, well ahead of the growth of population. The real problems are elsewhere—12 million Americans in ill health because of inadequate food intake, while American farmers are bankrupted by high debts and US agricultural banks stumble.

American farmers, like Ethiopia, have not been bankrupted by a shortage of food, but rather by rising interest rates, declining commodity prices, and rising imports (or input) prices. Africa—with a level of debt equal to 58 per cent of its gross product—is financing the advanced capitalist world with its interest payments. The problem of Ethiopia, like the farmers', is one of slump, not food production.

The function of slump is to 'restore incentives'. That means raising profit rates for capital by bankrupting segments of capital, cutting capacity and labour costs. For workers, it means enforcing the disciplines of work through the enhanced fears of unemployment, cutting back welfare and trade union protections. And famine is part of that process. Slump is a time when the rate of return on the sale of some forms of labour power falls below the minimum socially necessary income required to secure survival. The physical elimination of firms is paralleled by the physical elimination of part of the world's labour force.

Famine also shifts the balance of class power. Domestically, it redistributes land, equipment, livestock and cash to the rich, and it cuts wages. Internationally, the dominant powers in the world are able to force their wishes on the governments of hungry countries. One US aid official expressed the view succinctly: 'In a sense, we're talking about a kind of recolonisation—about sending smart white boys to tell them how to run their countries.'

The causes of famine have little to do with a shortage of food. And its results likewise produce no abundance. ■

Nigel Harris





# The strike that shook a country

**Pete Clark reports from Denmark**

DENMARK on the Monday before Easter was like no other country in the world. A million workers, from a total population of just five million, were on strike. The strike was illegal—the government had rushed a special law through parliament just 48 hours before to ban it. The strike was unofficial—union leaders had urged a return to work after official strikes the previous week.

But on Monday in thousands of meetings throughout Denmark workers voted to strike. In nearly every factory, most offices, docks, airports, the print, the breweries, many shops, hospitals, nurseries—hundreds of thousands voted to strike.

The national radio broadcast four news bulletins throughout the day, but otherwise just played music. The workers refused to allow normal programmes. Local community radio stations became organising points for pickets. Requests for pickets were rung into the programmes so the carloads of pickets would know where to go next.

In the afternoon there were enormous demonstrations. No buses were running, so throughout the afternoon workers and their families streamed in from the suburbs to the centres of all Denmark's cities to take part in the demonstrations.

In Copenhagen petrol ran short as oil delivery and refinery workers joined the strike. The national television stayed on the air just long enough to broadcast news and pictures of the size and strength of the strike. Then at 7.30 in the evening all programmes stopped.

On Tuesday thousands more joined the strike. Factories where workers had

hesitated on Monday now joined in. The home helps struck. The forestry workers in the north struck. By Tuesday afternoon most of Denmark was in the grip of an unofficial and illegal general strike. From the strikers came one clear demand—'Kick out the government.' The right wing coalition government of Paul Schlüter was unable to cope.

But by the next afternoon the strike movement was dying. Although many thousands stayed out over Easter the unity and momentum of those two days had been broken by Tuesday afternoon.

The story of the Danish mass strike is the story of initiative and heroism by tens of thousands of ordinary Danish workers. It is also the story of muddle, cowardice and outright treachery by the official leaders of the Danish trade unions and their allies.

The strike had its origins in a manoeuvre by the trade union leaders: In Denmark all wage negotiations take place every two years, as the result of a peace agreement signed between the Social Democrats and the employers following the great strike wave of 1899. Most of the private sector unions are organised into a single federation of unions, the LO, and they negotiate with the national private sector employers' organisation. At the same time parallel negotiations take place for all public sector workers.

Traditionally the Danish government has intervened in the negotiations to suggest and if necessary impose a compromise settlement acceptable to both sides. The Social Democratic governments of Denmark in the 1970s turned this intervention into part of the normal business of industrial bargaining.

This year there was a difference. The right wing coalition under Schlüter, elected just over two years ago, announced that they would not intervene in the talks. Like Margaret Thatcher in the miners' strike Schlüter said it wasn't his affair. The employers refused to make any concessions.

After two years of Schlüter Danish workers had begun to feel under economic pressure. For the previous 12 months expectations about the next set of wage negotiations had been rising. Trade union leaders had headed off problems by saying, wait for the talks in 1985. There were fewer strikes in Denmark in 1984 than at any time for 20 years—even an attack on unemployment benefits was greeted with quite small demonstrations. But underneath the surface the workers expected something out of the negotiations.

The union leaders faced a problem. They understood the pressure from their own members; they wanted to find a way of getting some concessions from the employers. Eventually, as the talks made no progress, the leaders of the private sector unions, the LO, decided to threaten a strike by all their members. The point in the threat was twofold—either the employers would give way to prevent the strike or the government would intervene and impose a compromise to prevent the strike. Either way the union leaders would have shown their continuing importance even to a government like Schlüter's. And they would have won some concessions. The last thing most of them expected was a strike. At the most they expected a short, token action, under their control, as happened in 1973.

The government still refused to intervene. The employers still refused to budge. The deadline for the strike approached. In the public sector talks a similar deadlock had been reached. A date for strike action in the public sector was set for one week after the private sector strike. Employers in the four main areas not covered in either set of talks announced a national lock out to coincide with the start of the public sector strike.

The Danish unions continued to drift towards the strike, still expecting the government to step in. There were virtually no preparations. One office worker describes how on the Thursday before the strike was due to begin, 'I went to my union branch. The strike notice was read out. There was no discussion on it. The meeting moved on to a long wrangle about safety provisions at work. The strike didn't seem real.'

Just 24 hours before the strike was due the metal workers, one of the key LO unions, held a national meeting where those present talked as if the strike would still be averted.

But there was no way of backing out of it. The government and the employers had the LO on a hook. On Monday 25 March, to the surprise and dismay of the people who called it, the private sector national strike began. It was nearly 100 percent successful. But there was little enthusiasm. One factory worker described how people felt there was 'no point going on strike. We saw it as a way of getting the government to dictate a compromise to the employers. We knew the LO would accept. There didn't seem to be anything to fight for. After all it had been the same for years—whatever the government came up with, people would say, that's fair, that's reasonable.'

### Leaders surrender

This time it was different. On Tuesday night Schlüter said the government was intervening. He announced a special law, to be rushed through parliament by Saturday, to impose a legally binding wage rise which amounted to less than half the rate of inflation. It meant a wage cut for the whole Danish working class.

But Schlüter had miscalculated. On Monday workers assumed they just had to wait for a reasonable deal. By Wednesday morning they knew they had to fight. The first sign of the changing mood came in Copenhagen. Some 1,500 workers from different factories, organised through an unofficial grouping of shop stewards from different factories, assembled on the bridges which provide the only entrance to Denmark's parliament. Some half of the MPs couldn't get past the pickets as they held off the police for two hours.

Inside parliament there was outrage. One right wing MP called it 'high treason'. But in the homes of the strikers and in the thousands of still working public sector offices, hospitals and nurseries the response was completely different.

A laundry worker described how they heard the news on the radio: 'It was marvellous. Everyone started to cheer.' A dairy worker said, 'Everyone in the canteen went quiet to hear the news and the furious debate in parliament. People who the day



100,000 workers demonstrate in Copenhagen

before would have been horrified said, good for them. Everyone was talking about it. We all laughed about the MPs. It was the start of what followed.'

There were more immediate signs of what was to come. In Aarhus, a large industrial city in the north, the dustmen approached workers in the LO and asked for pickets. They weren't due out on strike for another week, and they hadn't the confidence to come out themselves. But they wanted an excuse to join the strike. Pickets arrived and the Aarhus dustmen joined the strike.

But at this stage most workers still followed their union leaders. Now the LO leaders decided to organise mass demonstrations for Friday in protest at the government's action. This meant calling meetings, getting people together to organise. The leaders called the demonstrations but the workers organised them. In town after town groups came together to discuss picketing, to make banners, to get everyone there.

In the public sector most people went to work as normal on Friday morning. But there was nothing normal happening at work. One hospital worker described how

'We heard on the radio in the laundry that another laundry on the other side of town was coming out. We discussed what to do. There was no agreement. But then the hospital porters said they were organising a meeting and anyone was welcome to come. We went along. From all over the hospital other groups came as well. We decided to join the strike and marched out to the demonstration. I was amazed.'

The walk outs by some public sector workers on Friday afternoon were the first

sign that the official strike was going unofficial. The demonstrations were enormous—125,000 in Copenhagen, 30,000 in Aarhus, 10,000 in the small town of Aalborg. Thousands of public sector workers joined in. The slogans and demands of the demonstrators were already shifting from the question of wages to the one all embracing slogan, 'Schlüter out'.

But it was the last day of the official strike. The next day the government legislation imposing a settlement and making the strikes illegal would become law. The manoeuvre by the leadership of the LO had failed. They now faced a choice—continue with the strike or cave in to the government.

### The lid back on

The national trade union leaders did not hesitate. They surrendered. The left wing leader of the SID, the transport and general union, Hardy Hansen, announced on Friday, 'We have made our protest. Now we must return to work and establish normal working conditions. But remember where to place your cross at the next election.'

Other officials joined in. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party added their voice. The radio and television broadcast appeals from the union leaders to return to work.

On Monday morning throughout Denmark meetings were held before anyone went into work. Just one week before workers went on strike without enthusiasm because they had been told to by their union leaders. It was a mass strike called by the bureaucracy and controlled by them. No one was asked to vote.

But now, just seven days later, the workers



was nearly unanimous. A few abstained. Very few voted against. Some factories that did return to work on the Monday morning were out again in the afternoon or by Tuesday morning when the workers realised what was happening. The isolation, the feeling that nothing can be done, that someone else controls you, was, for 48 hours, broken down. Danish workers took control of their own lives.

The movement went so far that in Randers the police met and voted by just 10 votes not to join the strike. Either way, the vote showed how rapidly the controlling mechanisms of Danish society were slipping away in the crisis. The moment was brief, but it was there.

But even as the movement was sweeping forward, plans were being made to end the strikes. The plans were not being made in the government. There was no plan *they* could make. Instead those same LO leaders who had called the first strike, the one they controlled, now searched desperately to end a movement which had left them behind.

### Dangerous argument

Early efforts to end the strike were a failure. In Copenhagen the pro-Moscow Danish Communist Party, the DKP, began to argue for an end to the strike. Jan Anderson, a metal workers' union local official and a leading member of the DKP, argued that the strikes should end to allow local negotiations to take place. He was shouted down. In Aarhus another leading member of the DKP, Paul Erik Hougaard, argued the same. He too was shouted down. No frontal attack on the strike was going to work.

Instead on Tuesday afternoon a far more dangerous argument was put forward. Sometimes the national union leaders, emerging from their hiding places of the past few days, made the argument. More often the argument was put by the local fulltime officials of the unions, particularly in those unions where the DKP had a strong influence.

The argument was simple and deceptive. To qualify for Easter holiday pay in Denmark you must work on the Wednesday before Easter and the Tuesday afterwards. Surely, the argument went, we should all return to work on Wednesday, the following day, then take the five day Easter break, return to work on Tuesday, get the holiday pay, and then carry on with the strike.

The effect of this argument was catastrophic. All the doubters, all the workers with hidden worries about what was happening, found their voice. The atmosphere in the dairy changed dramatically.

'People started hacking at each other. The question of money at Easter changed everything. We just couldn't hold the strike. This social democrat argued, if we are against the government, why should we strike against our employer? It's not his fault. You could see people nodding. They thought it sounded sensible. Everyone was so new to anything like this. We'd never really talked at work before.'

In the Aarhus oil mill it was different. The shop stewards fought back.

had to choose for themselves. Their leaders had surrendered. The government was determined to extract every advantage from the failure of the LO. Across Denmark, in the largest factories and the smallest offices, the argument took place.

And in their hundreds of thousands Danish workers voted to carry on with the strike. The bureaucratic mass strike passed over into a strike organised by the workers. Pickets went to groups who still hadn't the confidence to join in. The dustmen who had asked for pickets the previous Wednesday in Aarhus now went and picketed the bus depot.

One picket outside the bus depot describes how:

'We really controlled what was happening. I was standing on the picket line. This well dressed man came up to me and I asked him—have you anything to do with the bus company. And he replied. Yes, but not today. Now I have no control or influence, but normally I am the director.'

At the post office the manager approached the pickets and asked them how long they were staying and when could he start work. Across Denmark there were no newspapers, and no buses; the docks, airports, factories, hospitals and many shops were shut. Each strike required a conscious decision by groups of workers arguing out the issues. One factory worker explained:

'We always had before this the feeling that even if we did something, no one else would. But once LO had called the first strike, we knew we weren't alone. If you like, the leaders called the first strike, but we, the workers, had to make it. And that

gave us the confidence to carry on when the leaders backed away.'

The dairy worker describes how, on Monday morning,

'We all assembled. There'd never been a real strike. I didn't know what would happen. Then one worker who had voted for Schlüter in the last elections, lifted his voice above the talk. "Now they have passed this law we have to do something," he shouted. Some of us went off together to join other picket lines—the previous Wednesday I hadn't dared to tell anyone I'd been on the dustmen's picket. Now this incredible change had come over everyone.'

A warehouse worker describes how:

'We held this union meeting. Even on the Wednesday of the official strike there had only been about 40 people at it. Now there were 400 or more. Stewards kept walking up to the front and announcing that their factory was on strike and at each announcement everyone clapped and cheered. Of 32 factories at the meeting all but two were staying out on strike. It gave us a sense of courage. We really thought we could get rid of the government. It all seemed possible.'

A hospital worker said:

'On that Monday, we just knew we couldn't be the only ones to stay at work. There was this excitement, this fever of talk and hope. It was gripping everyone.'

Another oil factory worker said,

'We had this enormous feeling of security on the Monday, this feeling that we couldn't be knocked down, we couldn't be stopped.'

In meeting after meeting the vote to strike

'We held a long meeting. We went through detailed arguments about holiday pay and about the campaign against Schlüter. We had to take up both. We'd had an active strike from the very beginning. Lots of us had been on picket lines at other places. We won the vote to carry on with the strike.'

The trade union leaders, assisted by their troops on the ground, the DKP members in the lower reaches of the bureaucracy, got the movement back under control in the only way they could. They broke it. In the DKP dominated nursery workers' union—a very important union in Denmark where child care is taken seriously—strike pay had been paid out on the Monday and Tuesday. On the Wednesday it was stopped as part of the effort to get a return to work.

Thousands stayed out—shipyard workers in Copenhagen, brewery workers across the whole country, many factories, the national newspapers. But hundreds of thousands returned. The warehouse worker says:

'Of the 30 factories on strike on Monday, 15 went back on Wednesday, seven or eight held out until the Thursday after Easter. We were united against the government. But the question of money—it just split the strike down the middle.'

On Wednesday morning as the strike crumbled, the police went into action. In Aarhus they broke the picket line at the bus garage. One worker described how:

'For the first time for three days the buses were back on the street. You felt then that it was all over. In the afternoon it got worse. The local paper appeared for the first time for days. They got the buses back and the paper out to make things look normal again. And it worked.'

In the huge city-wide shop stewards' meetings which had taken place throughout the action, fulltime officials now began to take a lead. One shop steward in Aarhus describes how:

'On Monday the officials stayed at the back of the room. They were quiet. By Tuesday afternoon they worked over different sections before the meeting, and took it over. No one said it was a complete return to work. It was just to be over Easter. It sounded so sensible to many of the workers who were taking action for the first time in their lives. After all, these were our leaders, our union officials. People wanted to believe them.'

On Wednesday, with the return to work well under way, the next stage of the trade union leaders' plan became apparent. Instead of continuing the strike after Easter, there would be a 'Day of Action' the Wednesday afterwards. The word strike was dropped. Instead union leaders announced that 'action' would continue after the big day through the pursuit of local negotiations.

For strong sections this was appealing. For the weak it was a disaster. The political strike against Schlüter had begun on the question of wages. Now the union leaders and their allies in the DKP brought it back to wages to break it. Sectionalism was being used to break the movement.

But the decline wasn't uniform—some workers stayed out all through Easter. In



Angry workers attack police van

some parts of the public sector the strike movement grew, in some smaller towns the trade union bureaucracy had more difficulty in reimposing control. In Randers, a small town in the north, the strike was still growing in strength the Wednesday before Easter, when the unofficial movement was breaking down in most of Denmark, pickets organised through an unofficial local picketing committee managed to stop most of the town again. But this was an exception.

The demonstrations on the Wednesday after Easter were the biggest so far. Everyone stopped work. But the atmosphere was already reverting to that of the first Monday—the bureaucrats, not the workers, were in control. And the bureaucrats had decided to end the mass strike and steer it into safe waters of local negotiations over wages and conditions.

The lid was back on. The DKP could continue its warm relationship with the bureaucrats of the trade unions. The leader of the separate Eurocommunist party, Gert Petersen, could declare, 'The press quote me as wanting to see society shaken to its foundations. Such rubbish. I have never said. I don't want to see that. I prefer a more peaceful development.' The left wing parliamentary group, VS, raised a feeble mutter on Wednesday. Their solution to the betrayal of the great strike wave was simple. 'Election now,' they whispered, hoping they wouldn't be heard.

The Social Democrat leader, Anber Joergensen, said, 'We must now build patiently for the next election.'

But thousands of Danish workers saw it differently. After years of little strike activity, after feeble resistance for the most part to the attacks of the Schlüter government in its first two years in office, the Danish working class fought back. In some sections that fight will carry on. Schlüter has not won an overwhelming victory.

But neither has the Danish working class.

For a brief moment the collapse of the government was a real possibility. For a brief moment the strike went out of the hands of the bureaucrats and careerists to the mass of workers. The results were amazing. Problems of organisation—information, pickets, demonstrations—all were solved by the initiative of different groups of workers, often meeting together for the first time in the course of the strike. Each immediate and specific individual problem of the strike could be overcome. But there was no way to solve the major questions.

## A political leap

The only people with a plan were the trade union leaders and their allies in the DKP. And their plan was simple: end the action. Groups of workers could win the argument to stop their own factory. They could march and stop the factory next door or the bus garage down the road. But there was no way of deciding collectively what to do next.

More than that, there was no way to resist collectively, across the whole working class, when the union leaders raised the question of holiday pay. After all these were the respected leaders of the trade union movement. It took political confidence of a very high order to argue against them when their proposals seemed so reasonable. The union leaders played on the instincts of the most backward workers, and they encouraged the sectionalism of the strongest.

Within a few days workers' ideas changed to the extent that they were prepared to take part in an illegal strike to overthrow the government. But it required another conscious political leap to go beyond that, to ignore and overcome the siren voices of their own traditional leaders. To do that more than marvellous initiatives and fighting spirit were needed. Conscious revolutionary political organisation was the missing ingredient. ■

# The coup and after

TEN DAYS of rioting followed by a three day general strike in Sudan last month finally toppled President Numeiri. The announcement of a military coup, the day Numeiri was due to return from America, brought tens of thousands of jubilant demonstrators onto the streets of Khartoum.

The spontaneous riots that followed occurred in Khartoum and in all major northern towns including Nyala and El Fasher.

Riots have been the usual form of opposition in recent years over varying issues. They have mainly involved students and the urban poor but usually only lasted a few days. Last month's riots were far more serious with 2,500 arrests in Khartoum in the first three days.

After the coup hundreds of people gathered outside clubs and hotels shouting what, in the circumstances, was a highly political slogan: 'We want beer, we want beer'. The chant would previously have led to imprisonment and floggings.

Whilst manual workers played little role in the demonstrations a large number of white collar workers attended. Army chiefs warned that the soldiers could not be relied upon. The leaders of the demonstration called for an immediate general strike.

## Growing opposition

The strike was largely solid and left Khartoum without communications or electricity and with little water. Government concessions had no effect, and the ruling class had no choice but to support the military takeover.

A leading opposition leader said: 'There are two ways Numeiri could go, the old way with a military coup or a new one with the mob descending on Khartoum.'

The ruling class will be very relieved that a coup proved to be enough to temporarily calm the situation.

Numeiri's actions over the last few years have not only angered Sudanese but also his main allies, America, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Both America and Saudi Arabia withheld aid in an attempt to force Numeiri to moderate the brutal implementation of Muslim law.

It is estimated in one year of Muslim law in Sudan there were more floggings and amputations for drinking alcohol and theft than in the past 25 years in Saudi Arabia. As economic problems grew more serious Numeiri used more and more repressive measures to keep the population in order.

Once seen as the future bread basket for the Arab world, Sudan faces crippling problems. Its annual interest payments are greater than its export earnings. A civil war in the Christian south against the Muslim laws and for greater autonomy has stopped oil production and halted the building of the

Jonglei canal, a massive drainage system in the Nile basin.

Sudan's geographical position, bordering Libya, Egypt and Ethiopia has meant that the US regard Sudan as a useful ally.

The International Monetary Fund has repeatedly urged Numeiri to withdraw food subsidies. This has been attempted on several occasions but widespread rioting has resulted in the subsidy being restored.

Petrol and food prices were increased, by 50 percent and 33 percent respectively, the day Numeiri flew to America. As he left the country the riots had already started. Sudan has become more and more reliant on America which in turn has become increasingly embarrassed and frustrated Numeiri.

Despite being one of the poorest countries in Africa, with a predominantly peasant population, Sudan has a history of a well-organised labour movement and an influential Communist Party. Following a rail strike in 1946 the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation was formed and by 1953 had a membership of about 100,000.

The SWTUF was closely linked to the Communist Party.

In 1965, 11 communists were elected to the parliament but a year later were dismissed. The CP was banned for calling for nationalisation and curbing the power of the state.

After Numeiri's military coup in May 1969 his first twenty-one man government contained five communists, although the CP was still banned. While nationalising foreign banks and major companies he succeeded in weakening the CP by integrating some of its leaders.

Numeiri was rapidly pulled to the right by the military, and the pressure from the ruling class with its international links.

In February 1971 Numeiri made a speech promising to 'crush the communists'. Measures were taken to lure western and conservative Arab governments to resume aid to Sudan.

In July that year a left wing coup lasted only three days before being crushed. Numeiri was saved by foreign intervention. Colonel Gadaffi and Tiny Rowlands played important roles. The failed coup, provoked by Numeiri, triggered a massive purge of communists. The CP leadership were executed and thousands of CP members and supporters jailed.

Unfortunately the CP learnt nothing from all this. In July 1977, just six years after being practically destroyed, the Central Committee adopted the following policy:

'Concerning the national bourgeoisie, we stand for drawing it into the national democratic alliance by a programme which does not jump over the present stage by posing socialism as the immediate goal or advocating prematurely the total liquidation of capitalist relationships.

'The programme should oppose the domination of foreign monopolies, invite the participation of the national bourgeoisie and direct its investment to productive spheres which serve the interests of the national economy.'

Following the recent coup, the CP has been desperate to become part of the government alongside the parties which had previously helped to destroy it. The actions of the CP have alienated many workers, and sadly while there is likely to be a growing number of workers and peasants wanting to overthrow the new junta there is no sign of any organisation that could lead the movement.

The mass movement has shown that after 16 years of military dictatorship workers are still prepared to fight.

But, whoever ends up in the new government, its economic policies are unlikely to differ greatly from those of Numeiri. ■

James Archer



Jubilation after Numeiri's downfall

# Making the break

*The end of the miners' strike and the shift to the right in the Labour Party has caused a number of socialists to question their ideas. A small number have taken the step of joining the Socialist Workers Party. John Rees talked to three of them: Paul Sugg, ex Labour Party and Socialist League, Tony Randall, former branch secretary of Redditch Communist Party, and Pete Noons, a Birmingham hospital worker who was in the Labour Party.*

**JR:** What was your experience politically just before the end of the miners' strike and before you joined the SWP? What were you thinking, what were the arguments you were having?

**PS:** I experienced the miners' strike at two levels. At one level I knew I was part of an historic process and it would be no good picking up a book about the miners' strike in ten years' time and realising the way the TUC and the Labour leadership were selling the miners out. During the miners' strike I was part of that process and I had to make an intellectual as well as physical break from the Labour Party and the Socialist League.

In terms of the way I saw the miners' strike as a member of the SL and the LP I felt I was trying to ride two horses at the same time. On the one hand I was part of a party which was committed to parliamentary democracy and that meant obeying the law—although they are obviously class laws.

But on the other hand I was part of a group which worked within the LP but preached revolutionary socialism. It causes a great tension within yourself, so you have to make the break and that is what attracted me to the SWP. I realised the importance of having an independent revolutionary organisation.

**PN:** Through becoming active in the miners' support group in the hospital, I was becoming very much involved in the activities. Yet within the LP itself I found very, very little physical support of any nature. There was a lot of posturing by individuals within the branch—supporting the miners in spirit almost and there were people who were willing to criticise Kinnock.

But it seemed more important to them to debate smaller party issues rather than the miners' struggle as a whole. And it showed through in lots of instances. Whenever people tried to raise money through collections or a raffle—it wasn't as Labour Party individuals, it was sponsored by the Trades Council, the party itself never came out and tried to organise anything for the miners.

On the other hand I was being physically active, but then when I turned round to the LP for backing asking for support for issues that the hospital was facing I got nothing from them. The party itself was very divorced from the physical reality of what was going on. It was nothing more than verbal support.

**PS:** In my LP there was tremendous support for the miners. People were almost inevitably pulled to the left. But there was a tendency for people to see the strike as an isolated thing and because of that they did not necessarily link the miners with the political issues. Because of the electoral pressure after the strike, these people have been active for so long perhaps they are disenchanted and disillusioned. Then they feel that they've got to toe the party line.

**TR:** I felt pretty isolated during the strike. In the Communist Party branch there were 14, and out of that six used to attend meetings—but towards the end the active members grew really disillusioned with the way things were going within the CP with divisions between the Eurocommunists and the Stalinists.

**JR:** These divisions were there before the miners' strike. What effect did the strike have?

**TR:** The miners' strike probably held the CP together—they had something they could focus on and so detract from the issues within the party. But now the strike has finished the party is concentrating on pulling itself apart.



**JR:** Part of the argument in the CP is about whether or not the working class is still the major force in any fight to change society. How much did the miners' strike give heart to those who said it was?

**TR:** It played an important part in the way people were raising money and working with the miners—I think that did give heart to the fundamentalists (Stalinists) in the party. It proved their point and it made it easier to argue for the role the party should play. So the fundamentalists made the running and the Eurocommunists had to go along with them.

**JR:** How big a shock was it on the Labour left when Livingstone collapsed after ratecapping?

**PS:** I was totally amazed by that. I went to a

meeting he did in Brum with Tariq Ali and I totally believed the speech, and I totally believed his commitment to it at the time. But with his capitulation over ratecapping—again it was one of the arguments that came out over the miners' strike—you either observe the law or you break it. Again it is a contradiction that is exposed in both these circumstances, which LP members went through, but which they couldn't accept because one day they'd have to use the same sort of law.



**JR:** What are the prospects for the Labour left now?

**PN:** There are a lot who will drift right wards. The success that they are getting in the polls is going to attract a lot of people to Kinnock's arguments that what you've got to gain is political respectability. A lot of people are going to be pulled by the idea that we wait three years to get Kinnock elected and then, we'll get the goods in the end of the day.

That's going to end up isolating people like the *Militant*. They used to have a base of people who may not have fully supported them but who were prepared to back them against the original witch-hunts. They gained a lot of sympathy and support from people who weren't *Militant* members themselves but who were prepared to back them. You can see now the LCC and the soft left who were once the allies of the *Militant* are now the allies of the right wing. They will isolate the *Militant* and the hard left and all the advances of the last few years will be undone.

**JR:** What will happen to the CP at the forthcoming congress?

**TR:** If the rest of the party don't accept the party line they will be told to get out. I've heard that about 1600 people are going to either get kicked out or are just going to leave. In the Midlands there are about 500, but out of that 500 quite a few are inactive. Of the actual active members they'll lose quite a few.

In Coventry, Derek Robinson will probably leave and he's got a following in Longbridge. I think it will knock the stuffing out of the party and the fundamentalists will

leave. They'll have no alternative, they can't stay and fight within the party when they're not allowed to argue their corner.

A friend of mine was left with a dilemma. He'd decided to leave the party but could not decide where to go. I think that if the SWP gets involved, talks to people and doesn't gloat over the demise of the CP but goes alongside and shows the policies of the SWP, we are going to get members. If you leave the CP and want to join a party that's based on Marx and Lenin where else is there?

**JR:** How do you think the SWP is viewed by people on the Labour left?

**PS:** I think a lot of people accept SWP politics, as politics. But they say that it is alright having these theories and tactics on building an independent revolutionary party but what are you actually going to achieve? Most people who are in the LP have been involved in parliamentary elections, county council elections and by doing those things see themselves changing policies towards education, defence, the health service. Also people say that because the SWP is an independent body, it's got no responsibility and therefore is always able to criticise whatever happens. These are the two main arguments that I come across. The paper sells well. People I've sold it to are impressed because it concentrates on the class struggle. But they believe the faults of capitalism can be reformed. They obviously haven't read the history of the Labour Party!



**JR:** One of the things that held the left together was the view that within a relatively short number of years there could be a left-wing split in the Labour Party. That prospect is now vanishing. Is that something which has thrown the left into confusion?

**PS:** For the Socialist League, that view of a left split, some of which would follow them, was always an illusion. Outside the big cities—Birmingham, London, Glasgow, Cardiff—nobody knows them and they have not had much influence on Benn.

**PN:** I think lots of people on the broader left, people who support *Militant* and Benn were horrified by the thought of any left wing split. They really want to use the LP, to take control of it. The loss, through the formation

of the SDP, of the right wing was seen as getting rid of the dead wood. But they did not want to take it too far, lose too many MPs, too many members of the right, because they still wanted that broad party but perhaps in a more left wing form. They never held up the prospect of eventually leaving the party.

It was a very demoralising experience talking to individual Labour Party members when they saw the collapse of Livingstone. They saw it as individuals selling out the party—not the party selling out the left. That is why a lot of demoralisation sets in. This left wing dream of the early eighties, that people might finally be able to take control of the party, make it their party, making it an accountable party is falling in around them.



**JR:** But there are a number of individuals who at one point or another simply say, 'I've had enough'. They can take so much caving in, so much ditching of first principles but then they just can't take any more. The danger is that they just sink back into their armchairs. That is why the fact that there is an argument is as important as its outcome. While the argument goes on we can become a voice and a pole of attraction within it.

**PS:** There are a lot of people on the left who have a deep pessimism after the miners' strike and, before that, after the election of two Thatcher governments. It is because the left in the Labour Party have kept on with their old slogans and have not admitted that there is a crisis and a problem. And until they admit that they can't put the problem right.

**PN:** Because the Labour Party is based around a branch which meets once a month and that is often the limit of your activity, it is not until you see the massive splits at Labour Party Conference that you become aware of the problems and debates within the party. It is very easy for a party composed of 300,000 mostly inactive members to slip into the argument that Kinnock has put forward.

Perhaps the individual groups realise that they are getting into a weak position but they are not a major enough influence within the party to bring about a debate on what is happening. It is very easy now for the moderates and the soft left to unite and silence the debate. They have been able to quieten things

down and promote this idea that Kinnock has got a very united party, a party of government for the future.

**JR:** So what you are really saying is that the people who are questioning what's going on do so in the privacy of their living room and that there is no room for debate inside the party.

**PN:** I don't think there is anymore. The Labour Party itself has managed to quell that. Obviously, the *Militant* are arguing against that but they are becoming so silenced that they are unable to transmit the debate as they would have done three or four years ago. Without that argument going on they have got no platform and they can be passed off as a bunch of Trotskyists who need expelling.

**TR:** What you say about the Labour Party applies even more to the CP. There have been quite a few expulsions over the last few months of people who have argued against the party.

**PS:** The sort of discussion that we are having must have taken place a million times since the miners' strike. It is a reflection of the crisis in society. Different groups trying to analyse the system and looking for an orientation. And if you take Hobsbawm's line that the working class as a revolutionary force is dead then the only way you can go is to the right. The other path is to take a principled class stand.■

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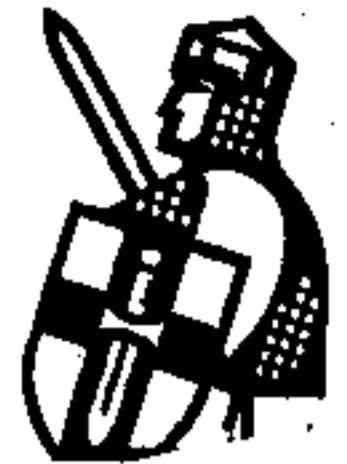
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# DAILY EXPRESS

THE VOICE OF BRITAIN



## Dreaming of Empire

THE AUDIENCE the *Express* appeals to are the lower middle classes and working class Tories. It can in no way be accused of being a thinking person's paper. If it doesn't use the mad histrionics of the *Sun*, it can nevertheless be identified as the paper that appeals most succinctly to petty prejudice. It's great dream is to turn the clock back to the halcyon days of Empire, before decimal currency, race relations and all those other things that have stopped Britain being great.

It is in this light that the various *Express* campaigns must be seen. The 'Why Work' campaign does its best to highlight the injustice of being able to earn as much on the dole as at work. This is needless to say, not a campaign against sweatshop employers, but for tax cuts, with a thinly-disguised anti-scrounger element to it.

The reasons for unemployment— apart from the workshy—are clear to *Express* readers. One recent letter summed it up. The cause for unemployment is rooted in Labour's election victory...in 1945! They 'nationalised everything, then the workers were bosses and discipline disappeared'. Bet you never knew that.

### Disgusting

Other campaigns involve keeping a grammar school in Gloucester safe from the ravages of comprehensive education which, it warns, Neil Kinnock will introduce as soon as he gets power.

One of its nastier hobby-horses is the Whites Have Rights Too campaign. Started by the disgusting George Gale, it bemoans the race relations industry, and shows how millions of perfectly nice white people can't get jobs because of all this pro-black prejudice.

Camden Council is singled out with the following remarks from Gale. 'Don't bother to apply...if you are a white, happily married man with no criminal record.' If all white happily married men end up disgruntled old reactionaries like Gale this may be no bad piece of advice. It is however typical of the *Express* that it should view modern Britain as a place where only foreigners and perverts can find work.

This may help to explain the *Express's* fond regard for South Africa, and that nice Mr Botha who is doing his best to change things.

Militant blacks were to blame for all the recent violence and innocent blacks were the victims. The *Express* has even found it's



own black moderate hero Chief Gatsha Buthelezi.

If the *Mail* outdid the *Express* in the South Africa sports stakes with the Zola Budd coup, the *Express* catches up by having a sports correspondent who has done for sport what Wagner did for music. He is affectionately known as Tommo and has the most wonderful outlook on all things sporting. Cricket rebels who played in South Africa shouldn't have been banned from playing for England. 'Why,' asks a bemused Tommo, 'what earthly good has it served?'

On Chelsea chairman's Ken Bates and his famous electric fence designed to burn the hands of anyone silly enough to touch it, Tommo is even more bemused. He is bewildered that 'people start bleating about human rights and wittering on about concentration camps.'

On 3 April the *Express* welcomed the end of the miners' overtime ban, the railmen's acceptance of a 4.85 percent pay rise and the postmen's return to work with the headline, 'Three cheers'. These were three cheers for Thatcher 'as key workers pulled away from confrontation' and were a tribute to the government's policy of standing fast against the militants.

Thatcher's successes at the expense of the NUM, UCW and NUR were not presented as a defeat for the unions as such but only a defeat for leftwing militants within the unions. Her victories have been 'victories for commonsense. For the ordinary working men and women who make up the membership of those three unions'. She has made it possible for moderate union members 'to make themselves heard above the leftwing clamour. This is Mrs Thatcher's achievement.' Here we see the great Tory ideological con trick at work.

The *Express* emphasised that Thatcher was a militant-basher not a union-basher,

and proclaimed that 'Maggie plans new deal with unions'. The miners were 'seen off' as a way of strengthening the rightwing within the unions. 'She wants the moderates to be more powerful', the paper insisted. Norman Willis, in particular, it seems, impressed Thatcher 'with his courage in standing up to Arthur Scargill'. What would she have done without him?

There has been one black spot for the Tory press in recent weeks: the failure of the Coal Board to shield the scabs who helped defeat the miners' strike from the anger and contempt of their workmates. On 12 April, the *Express* carried a heart-rending article by Irene McGibbon, wife of a prominent scab at Betteshanger colliery in Kent. Here, she revealed the good news that many scabs have not dared show their faces at work since the strike ended and that even a scab as highly motivated as her husband has been forced to take redundancy — shame!

The *Express* was outraged and launched a 'Save our Scabs' campaign, or, as they preferred to call it, a 'Protect our Pit Heroes' campaign. An editorial lamented that having helped defeat the NUM, the heroes 'who defied Scargillism...have been forgotten'. After all, when the next miners' strike takes place, 'who will be the heroes then if today's heroes are driven out now?'

### Chauvinism

The Princess Michael affair showed how deep the *Express's* little Englandism goes. George Gale made clear his firm conviction that Buckingham Palace had deliberately covered up the fact that poor Marie-Christine's father had been a staunch Nazi and SS Major. After all, he sneered, the Royal Family, 'has always been soft on Germany' because 'it is more German than English itself'. Even the saintly Lord Mountbatten, we are told, used to sign himself 'Prinz von Battenberg in Germany'. The national chauvinism with which the idiot Gale can override the interests of his class is a terrible thing to behold.

The *Express*, true to form, is not overfond of the Common Market and like many socialists is appalled at the food mountains. Unlike us it is not the thought of millions starving while food is stored that worries the *Express*. They have a much deeper worry. You see some of the surplus eventually gets sold off to Russia cheap. This leads to subsidising the Russian economy so that (and this is a straight quote) 'our butter pays for their guns'. That one piece of logic tells you all you need to know about the *Express*. ■

John Newsinger



# IS THE PARTY OVER?

**T**HE battle lines at the Congress will be clearly drawn. On the one side the 'Eurocommunists', on the other side the 'Stalinists'. (Neither side, by the way, would be happy about the labels, but there don't seem to be any better ones.)

The outcome of the Congress seems fairly certain. By virtue of their control of the party apparatus the Eurocommunists will have a clear majority of delegates. The Stalinists, however, will not accept that result. And so the stage will be set for a split. Whether the Stalinists will jump or be pushed is not yet clear.

The case has been forcefully argued that the coming split in the Communist Party is of considerable significance for the rest of the left. It mirrors, so the argument goes, the split in the Labour Party between 'soft' and 'hard' left. But is that really the case, and how far will the CP split affect the rest of the left?

The Communist Party has been in almost continuous decline for the last twenty years. In 1964 the officially recorded membership was 34,281. By the summer 1983 it was down to 15,691. Those are the last available official figures. Membership today must be less than 15,000. It is an enormous loss whose pace has quickened in recent years.

Alongside the decline in membership has gone a growth in argument inside the party, and the development of permanent factional divisions. The subject of those divisions was first, and most notably, Russia.

Until the mid-sixties the leadership of the Communist Party defended uncritically every action of the Kremlin. In 1956 that cost them the loss of about a quarter of their membership over the Russian invasion of Hungary. It was a price the Communist Party leadership were unwilling to pay again. So when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 the British CP immediately condemned the invasion. It was the first major break with Russia and a half-way step to what was to become known as Eurocommunism.

But this condemnation did not go unchallenged. At the 1969 Congress, a motion supporting the invasion and attacking the party leadership got more than a quarter of the votes. Because they supported the Russian tanks the opponents of the leadership were derisively christened 'tankies'. From then on, a loose but large Stalinist opposition to the leadership now became a permanent feature of party life.

For the next few years, however, it was another grouping that set the pace inside the Communist Party. The mid 70s saw the flowering of Eurocommunism. Criticism of Russia and Eastern Europe became more systematic and the party began to pay increasing attention to the 'new movements' particularly the womens' movement.

The leadership itself moved in these directions

with a new edition of the party programme *The British Road to Socialism*, adopted after considerable debate by the 1977 Congress. But there also developed on the leadership's flank a more thoroughgoing Eurocommunist tendency, with roots particularly in the student and academic world who were far less cautious than the leadership and in general tried to zoot up the party's rather stuffy image. Under the editorship of Martin Jacques they took over the party's monthly magazine *Marxism Today*.

**S**O by the late 1970s there were two well defined and influential groupings in the Communist Party, the Eurocommunists and the Stalinists, with a leadership balancing in between. In 1977 the leadership was leaning heavily towards the Eurocommunists, and a small group of Stalinists around Surrey District Secretary Sid French left to form the New Communist Party. But the bulk of the Stalinists stayed and by 1979 the leadership was shifting back towards them.

The shift however was nowhere near enough to satisfy the Stalinists, and as the party continued to lose members, so it seemed that the Stalinists continued to grow in strength. By the 1981 Congress they were able to muster up to 40 percent of delegates for motions supporting the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, condemning *Solidarnosc* and criticising the *Morning Star* for being too critical of Russia.

The leadership, which up to now had balanced between the two sides now split in two. In August 1982 the *Morning Star* published a virulent attack by industrial organiser Mick Costello on an article critical of some aspects of the shop stewards movement that had appeared in *Marxism Today*. The party executive committee then proceeded to censure Costello for the attack and *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater for supporting it.

In early 1983 Costello resigned as industrial organiser and was rapidly appointed to the staff of the *Morning Star* against the wishes of the party executive. And by the summer of 1983 Chater was running his own slate of candidates for the management committee of the *Morning Star* against a party executive slate. With the Stalinist grouping rallying heavily in support, Chater's candidates won.

The final lines of battle were drawn at the 1983 Congress in November when Costello, Chater and *Morning Star* deputy editor David Whitfield were thrown off the party executive as the bulk of the party apparatus round general secretary Gordon McLennan came down decisively on the Eurocommunist side.

So for some two years the Communist Party has been in a state of open civil war, with the Eurocommunists controlling the national party apparatus and the Stalinists the *Morning Star*.

**On the eighteenth of this month about two hundred delegates will assemble at Hammersmith Town Hall for the 39th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It is no routine affair. For this is a special congress, called to resolve a crisis quite unprecedented in the party's history. Pete Goodwin investigates its background.**



Gordon McLennan



Tony Chater



Mick Costello

What finally brought matters to a head was that towards the end of last year the Stalinists gained control of the important London district committee of the party. General secretary McLennan then led a walk out of London Eurocommunists, because of alleged vote rigging. The national executive then suspended 22 leading London Stalinists. It followed that up early this year by expelling a number of them plus Chater and Whitfield, calling the special Congress and launching a new weekly paper *Focus* to carry its views.

The Stalinists have responded by stepping up the number and viciousness of articles in the *Morning Star* attacking the Eurocommunist party leadership and organising a series of meetings round the country at which the expelled members have put their case.

**W**HAT of the political differences between the two sides?

On one issue there can be no doubt. The Eurocommunists are for systematic criticism of violation of democratic rights in Russia and Eastern Europe (although note that they still regard these as socialist countries whose faults can be reformed away). The Stalinists are in practice completely uncritical. More than that they see criticism of the 'socialist countries' by the rest of the party as a fundamental part of its 'revisionism'.

But where do the two Communist Party factions stand on the sort of issues that are currently dividing the Labour left?

A succinct and revealing presentation of the Eurocommunist position is contained in an article by Jon Bloomfield in a recent *Focus* entitled 'Strategic choice for the left'. Bloomfield argues that what is necessary is to 'mobilise the broadest range of forces around a...limited set of demands that can isolate and defeat reaction'. He cites as a prime example of this the campaign against the abolition of the GLC. He then continues:

'In its New Year editorial *Tribune* came out clearly in favour of this approach. Recognising the immense issues facing the left it called for "the maximum unity around winnable and realisable aims".'

'It rightly criticised Kinnock's leadership but said that to challenge it would be a futile gesture which could only damage Labour's chances of winning the next election.'

'The editorial, clearly critical of the approach of sections of the Labour left, was part of a move to realign the Labour left towards a broader strategy.'

'As such, it aroused the wrath of both the Trotskyist press and the *Morning Star*.'

If there was still any doubt Bloomfield continues his argument by lumping together the *Morning Star*, the Trotskyists, Tony Benn and Eric Heffer as 'fundamentalists' who refuse to face up to the existing state of political understanding and outlook among millions of working people' and therefore advocate 'leftist strategies' which 'can only push Neil Kinnock even further into the (right-wing)

camp'. Instead what is necessary is 'mass campaigning on the broadest scale' which can 'exert influence on the disappointing Kinnock leadership'.

The same theme is taken up by Dave Cook in his major article on the CP split in the February issue of *Marxism Today*. He concludes:

'Increasingly, on all or several of the key issues of controversy outlined in this article, common cause is being made between Communist Party hardliners and the *Morning Star*, some of the Labour Party Left often called the hard left and 'entrust' socialists who have gone into the Labour Party since 1979. This is being experienced within CND, sometimes within the trade unions, in theoretical argument, and in 'inner' Labour Party struggle.'

'On the other side are the Communist Party majority, that section of the Labour Left differentiating itself from more 'fundamentalist' positions, and a range of activists in broad movements like CND. Similar trends can be traced within the unions in the differentiation between the broad left and BLOC.'

Elsewhere *Focus* singles out for praise the opinion of *Tribune* and the Labour Coordinating Committee that there should have been a ballot in the miners' strike. It also stresses *Tribune's* talk of the 'trap' of mass picketing and the LCC's condemnation of the NUM leaders' refusal 'to speak out against violence on the picket line'.

In the current debate then, the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party have clearly and proudly nailed their colours to the mast of the Labour Party 'soft left', that is to those former elements of the Labour left now busily engaged in lining up behind Neil Kinnock. Whatever differences the Eurocommunists have with Kinnock are increasingly obscure to the outside observer.

**T**HE Stalinists meanwhile have been quite happy to accept the role of 'hard left' that the Eurocommunists have assigned to them. Alongside the articles on Russia and those on party rules the *Morning Star* has published a number of theoretical pieces criticising the Eurocommunists for moving rightwards.

In particular two large pieces by Tony Chater have attacked the concept of 'Thatcherism' which *Marxism Today* uses as a central argument to justify watering down left politics so as to ally with just about everyone. And a rather more sophisticated and sustained attack on Eurocommunist politics from the left has been produced in the pamphlet *Class Politics: an answer to its critics* by Ben Fine and four other CP academics who support the Stalinist side.

At the same time the Stalinists have also had a few stabs at the 'soft left' in the Labour Party. As has already been mentioned the *Morning Star* attacked Nigel Williamson's editorial which signalled *Tribune's* move to the 'soft left'. Kinnock's behaviour during the miners' strike of course came in for serious criticism from the Stalinists

and since the miners' strike there have been occasional pieces like the 'Westminster Window' column in the *Morning Star* which at the beginning of April supported the Campaign Group of MPs against Kinnock and rounded on Michael Meacher for opposing an anti-Nato resolution on Labour's NEC.

But alongside these criticisms of the Labour Party soft left, the *Morning Star* carries a larger amount of material which supports that same 'soft left'.

Take as a revealing example the *Morning Star's* treatment of the GLC rate-capping fiasco. Ken Livingstone's behaviour in facilitating a rate being set was seen on all sides as a key move away from the 'hard left' by one of its most prominent figures. The *Morning Star's* response was to publish a major feature article by GLC councillors Valerie Wise and George Nicholson devoted to defending Livingstone's position.

That sort of stance is more typical of the *Morning Star* than its criticisms of the Labour 'soft left'. Indeed sometimes the *Morning Star* can get positively grovelling towards the Kinnock camp itself.

On January 30, the day Larry Whitty was appointed general secretary of the Labour Party, the *Morning Star* published a glowing portrait by deputy-editor David Whitfield. The next day it followed that up with this remarkable editorial:

'Larry Whitty's appointment yesterday as the next general secretary of the labour Party is welcome following the retirement this spring of the much respected Jim Mortimer...Mr Whitty is the person to maintain and strengthen the party's links with the trade unions. The Tories have made no secret of their strategy to split the mass party of the labour movement. Larry Whitty recognises how disastrous for Labour that would be. And he has made it clear that the party must work against disunity at times of major struggle, like the present miners' strike.'

This same tendency to grovel to establishment figures in the labour movement is particularly pronounced with regard to trade union leaders. It reached a particularly grotesque level on January 26 when the *Morning Star* produced a special three page feature on the anniversary of the union ban at GCHQ. The lead article was written by Norman Willis!

So far as the *Morning Star's* coverage of both Labour Party and trade union affairs is concerned, then, the general bias is to the 'soft left' rather than the 'hard left', with fairly regular lurches even further rightwards.

**T**HE same goes in general for the practice of the Stalinists in the unions. Take one of the most prominent trade unionists on the Stalinist wing, Ray Alderson, senior vice president of the CPSA. Until last year he was part of the heavily *Militant* influenced CPSA Broad Left. Alderson was one of the key people in engineering the split away of the 'Broad Left 84' organisation, carrying with him most of the Broad Left's executive members.

Since then he has, amongst other things, voted

to have a government imposed ballot (he didn't even carry all the Broad Left 84 executive members with him on that) and seems to be attempting some sort of rapprochement with right wing national secretary Alastair Graham.

In other words, in the CPSA it is a Stalinist who is leading a 'realignment of the left' against the 'hard left', and towards the establishment of just the sort of 'soft' broad left that the Eurocommunists would welcome. And there is nothing odd-ball about Alderson's behaviour. It is quite typical of the Stalinist camp.

So, once you probe behind the rhetoric, the much-vaunted role of the Communist Party split in the realignment of the left disappears. It certainly is true that the Eurocommunists are firmly and openly in the 'soft left' camp. But, as we have seen, so, more often than not, are the Stalinists.

There is, however, one other thing, apart from Russia which divides the Eurocommunists from the Stalinists. The Stalinists constantly go on about the Eurocommunists 'abandoning the leading role of the working class' and 'neglecting organisation in industry'. What this seems to boil down to in practice is that the Stalinists feel more comfortable in the traditional culture of the union machine and the union bureaucracy and dislike the 'trendiness' of *Marxism Today* in particular. Even this divide shouldn't be pushed too far as of course a lot of very 'untrendy' trade union bureaucrats, most notably Mick McGahey, support the Eurocommunists.

So what is going to be the impact of the Communist Party split on the rest of the left?

In reality probably not very much. Both sides end up on the 'soft left'. But there is a further reason. The Communist Party simply does not carry the clout on the left that it did even as late as ten years ago. It has diminished in influence even faster than it has lost membership. It has simply been overshadowed over the past few years by the Bennite left and its off-shoots.

It has also been in practice for years an extremely undisciplined organisation. The fact that it now divides into two also probably very undisciplined organisations just isn't going to make much difference to things. Both will probably decline in numbers and influence as fast separately as they did together.

The one exception to that is likely to be the magazine *Marxism Today*. That has been the CP's one success story. It has steadily grown in circulation from 4,000 in 1978 when it was relaunched in its present format, to over 12,500 today. It has developed an influential intellectual justification for the left moving right with a panache that neither Gordon McLennan nor Tony Chater came anywhere near.

In the current climate its influence is likely to continue to grow. However that success has not pulled the Communist Party up behind it. And *Marxism Today's* future success is not going to save even a new 100 percent Eurocommunist Party from continued decline. For the conclusion of the message that *Marxism Today* spells out with such skill is 'get stuck in behind Neil Kinnock'. For that you join the *Labour* party.

# THE PEOPLE'S WAR?

The celebration of the 40th anniversary of VE Day this month will be marked by a great deal of rhetoric. Chris Bambery looks at what the war was about and in whose interests it was fought.

**T**HERE are two great myths surrounding the Second World War. The first myth is that the war was a fight against fascism. The second is that the whole nation, regardless of class, made great sacrifices for the war effort. In those days everyone was 'in it together'.

That many thought (and still think) that the war was an anti-fascist one can be shown in the writings of many on the left at the time. Just weeks after Dunkirk, George Orwell was able to write:

'...if we can only hold out for a few months, in a year's time we shall see red militias billeted in the Ritz...and it would not particularly surprise me to see Churchill or Lloyd George at the head of them.'

Winston Churchill, of course, was not a British Lenin, but a representative of the right wing of the Tory party. He had earlier expressed his regards for the likes of Mussolini. What marked him off from the appeasers among the Tories was not his progressive ideas or political programme, but a different (and more accurate) assessment of Germany's threat to Britain's interests.

The history of appeasement towards Hitler among Britain's rulers is well known.

In 1939 Prime Minister Chamberlain and the service chiefs hoped Hitler would be satisfied with Poland and the war would simply peter out. Indeed their attention focused on confrontation

with Russia. In early 1940 Britain had plans to side with Hitler's Finnish allies in their war with Russia and to launch a bombing assault on Stalin's oil wells in the Caucasus.

Even after Churchill replaced Chamberlain as Prime Minister, Tory MPs continued to regard Chamberlain as leader, greeting him with cheers and Churchill with silence. The first coalition cabinet in 1940 was still dominated by appeasers.

Churchill and his followers (notably Lord Beaverbrook) joined with Labour MPs to use the anger generated by Dunkirk to toss out the Tory old guard.

The *Daily Mirror*—whose circulation boomed—demanded the sweeping out of 'the old loitering gang'. Three of Beaverbrook's journalists—including Michael Foot—produced a pamphlet *Guilty Men* at the urging of their boss. In weeks it sold 200,000 copies.

The *Evening Standard* published cartoons attacking 'Colonel Blimp', the archetypal bungling upper class officer.

But above all the feeling grew that not only were the ruling class responsible for the defeat but that they weren't serious about the war and were determined to hang on to their privilege.

Churchill—the leading light of the Tory right and defender of the Empire—found himself ruling over a country where the Tory party and its traditional ideas were becoming increasingly isolated.

After Dunkirk sections of the ruling class understood they had to fight to defend their markets. They triumphed over the likes of Lord Halifax and the Duke of Windsor who stood for surrender. But Churchill was never concerned with destroying fascism. Throughout the war his attention focused on the Mediterranean—key to Britain's interests in the Middle East and India. Later he would oppose an invasion of France arguing for 'an invasion of the Balkans' to prevent Stalin gaining control of the region.

Throughout the war Britain happily traded with Franco and maintained close relationships with the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal—which eventually joined the Allies.

A war against fascism must have seemed something remote to the major troop units stationed in India throughout the war in order to suppress the nationalists. It was even more remote to deported Jewish refugees or former fighters in the Spanish Civil War whose services were rejected in 1940 because they were too 'unreliable'.

Jewish and anti-fascist refugees from fascism found themselves rounded up and interned. One German Jew told the managing director of the firm he worked for he expected to be deported. His boss answered, 'that I deserved all I got because "wasn't it the Jews", he said, "who put Hitler up to this—to declare war on England?"'

Along with his family he was put on a ship, having had all his valuables stolen by the captain, which was to take them through U-boat infested



Advertising for cannon-fodder

shipping lanes to Canada. Canada refused to accept them. The ship was diverted to Australia. They were lucky. Hundreds of refugees deported by the government died when the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed.

**B**UT if the war was not an anti-fascist one, neither was it one in which the ruling class abandoned their privileges. Indeed the preservation of this privilege, plus the indolent and incompetent handling of the early stages of the war effort, heightened much of the resentment workers had felt after the experiences of mass unemployment and low wages of the previous two decades.

The rich were certainly determined that war wouldn't impinge on their lives. Working class children evacuated to leafy suburbs and prosperous country houses found middle class families wouldn't take them in. The first attempt at evacuation collapsed in the face of this resistance.

The rich could also easily avoid rationing either through black marketeering, produce from their country estates or simply by eating in unrationed restaurants.

A real contradiction existed between people's desire to defeat Hitler and their belief that the ruling class wasn't up to the job.

Mass Observation surveys carried out by the government show that working class people were extremely cynical about the Tory government's will to combat fascism. A common view was that war would simply bring a fresh depression. One government observer reported a Labour Party meeting of 70 in Halifax voting unanimously for peace. Twenty years of Tory rule had left a great pool of bitterness.

The military fiasco of 1940 brought this bitterness to the surface. The 'Dunkirk spirit' on view was rather different from that which Thatcher is fond of quoting.

One Londoner recalled seeing troops returning from France:

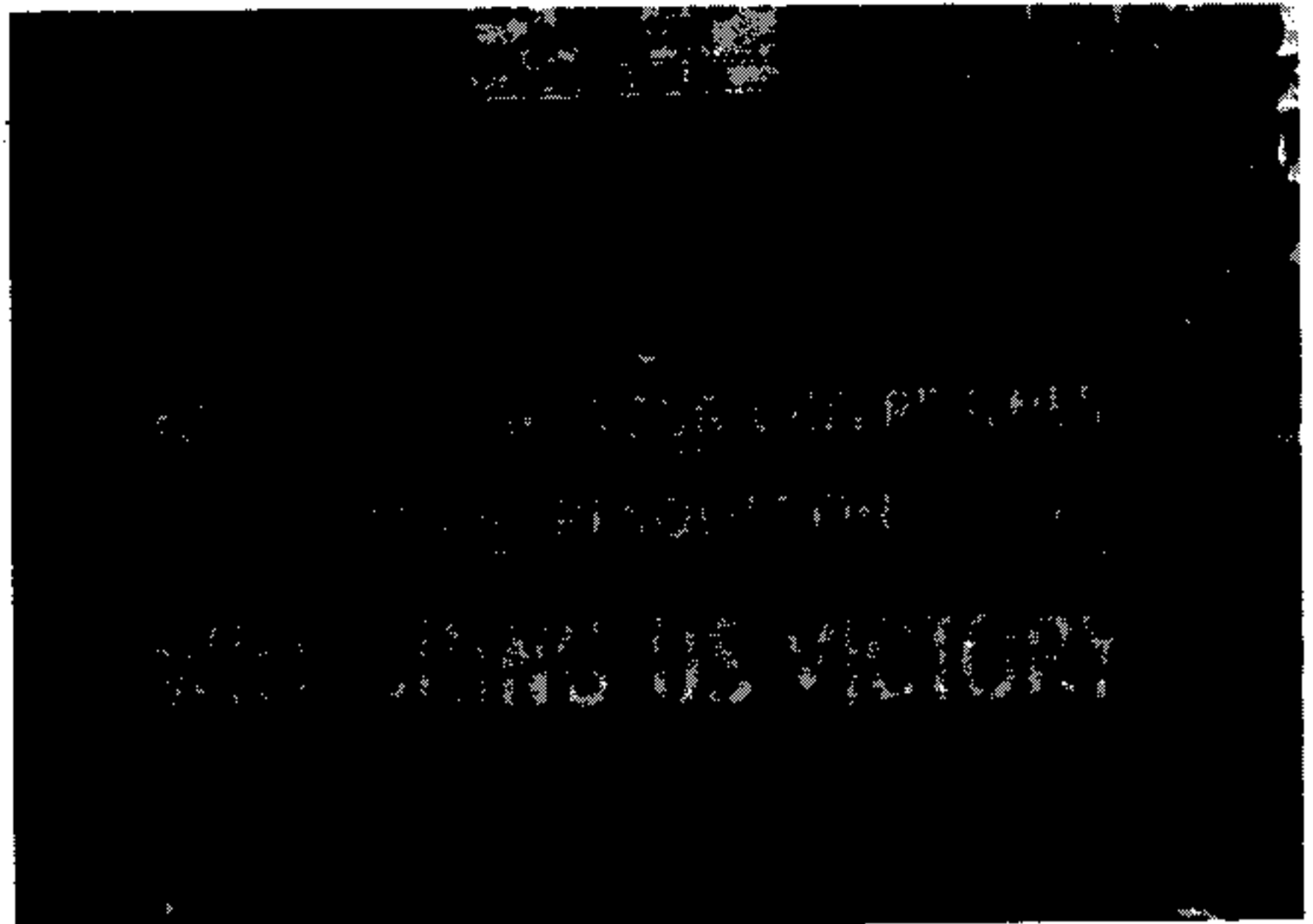
'I saw literally hundreds and hundreds of lorry loads of soldiers...Soldiers with no uniforms, in shirts, in a hell of a state...Us kids were horror-stricken, not so much at the thought of invasion or the Germans, but the fact that this was the army...They were starving...They were in a pitiful state. You couldn't believe it was an army.'

Mass Observation surveys report waves of anger as the soldiers returned and told of the military incompetence which had led to defeat in France. The government had made no effort to plan a campaign across the channel until well into 1939. Vital equipment wasn't available and the officers were incompetent.

The catalogue of military disasters continued through 1941 and 1942 with the blitz, the fall of Singapore and Tobruk and the shipping losses in the Atlantic.

The result of all this had a deep effect on working class consciousness. The years 1939 to 1945 saw a major swing to the left among the working class and sections of the middle class.

In March 1942 further cuts in rationing were accepted but with much grumbling about the fact



*Unconsciously truthful government slogan*

that the rich were left untouched.

There were widespread fears that management were deliberately sabotaging vital war production, that they were 'Little Hitlers' and that the army was staffed by 'Colonel Blimps'.

While the vast majority of British workers backed the war they had little or no trust in their rulers.

**A**FTER the victories at Stalingrad and El Alamein this mood began to change among a minority of workers to more active resistance. Strikes in Clydeside, Barrow and Tyneside seriously worried the government. This increase in strike action, which in itself was illegal, reached its peak in the winter of 1943-44.

Government surveys following El Alamein show people ready to accept Churchill as a war leader but a clear majority against his continuing in office after the fighting. By early 1944, 62 per cent were against him continuing.

In October 1944 government intelligence reported: 'People dread and expect mass unemployment.'

On the eve of D-Day Churchill visited troops bound for Normandy. He was subjected to long questions about what he would do to ensure jobs for all after the war.

Unfortunately the left had little alternative to offer beyond Attlee's mainstream Labourism. The left wing of the Labour Party did not oppose Labour's backing for the war or its entry into Churchill's government. The collapse of Labour Party organisation in the absence of elections meant that the left even in 1945 was weak and isolated having seen its former leaders like Stafford Cripps go over to Attlee.

Until the invasion of Russia the Communist Party opposed the war. But despite some left sounding statements by the party leadership and their organisation of the People's Convention around such issues as the air shelters, the evidence suggests that this line was never pursued inside the factories. After Russia's entry into the war all this changed.



**T**HE CP—which contained a number of crucial stewards in engineering—backed the war, opposed strikes and supported the drive to increase production. Despite that, widespread sympathy with Russia meant a huge increase in CP membership to some 56,000 in 1942. That figure slumped by over 10,000 by 1945 but the party retained sizeable support particularly among shop stewards.

As redundancies began to affect workers in 1944 it still opposed strikes and soft-pedalled on opposition to Churchill's suppression of the Communist led resistance in Greece. In 1945 it entered the election campaign supporting a continued coalition—a position to the right of Attlee.

The revolutionary socialists numbered perhaps two hundred during the war, far too few to influence events. But they were able to win an audience among strikers in Tyneside, Clydeside and Belfast. In this they benefitted from the CP's anti-strike position. But they also showed that opponents of the war could play on the central contradiction in the war effort—distrust of the ruling class and what would emerge at the end of the war.

In 1940 that meant turning the fire on the ruling class who clearly toyed with surrender. As the war progressed it meant connecting the struggle against fascism with that against capitalism whether over opposition to management, the suppression of the Greek resistance or repression of supporters of India's independence.

But the reality was that the radicalisation of World War II swung behind the Labour Party...and a Labour Party which was far from left wing.

The bitterness of the 1920s and 30s, the memories of the 'guilty men' of 1940 produced a real swing to the left among working people. Labour's gains were most marked in the West Midlands, previously the stronghold of working class Tory voters, suburban London and East Anglia.

One soldier recalls setting up a Labour Party in East Anglia involving himself, the co-op manager and the station manager. Despite their lack of organisation and no history of Labour's candidacy they won the seat.

The 'them and us' spirit of the war survived into the post war boom but as little more than that. Workers coupled a high degree of union organisation with loyalty to the Labour Party.

In July 1945 Labour was elected to office on a landslide. The simple truth was that its programme may have appeared radical in 1939 but six years later merely reflected a fairly wide consensus on post war reconstruction.

Already in 1942 an obscure Liberal politician, Beveridge, had become a popular hero. The Beveridge Report outlined the post-war welfare state. It had been commissioned in 1941 when it had been clear the promise of reforms was needed to maintain morale.

At the same time the British economy had undergone a major change. Rearmament only got fully underway after Dunkirk. Only then were financial controls swept aside as secondary to the needs of war production.

The 1941 budget was drafted by the economist J M Keynes. Six months earlier he'd produced a paper which contained ideas which were central to post-war Labour and Tory governments. The need to maintain full employment was recognised and in order to achieve this a measure of nationalisation and state/private sector co-operation was needed.

With Ernest Bevin of the TGWU as minister of labour, management was encouraged to incorporate shop stewards into the production effort. Much of the shop stewards' organisation which existed in the 50s and 60s was rooted in the war. The mass introduction of piece work encouraged shopfloor organisation and women were allowed into the engineering union for the first time.

**C**ENTRAL sections of the ruling class recognised both that things had changed and that Labour and the union leaders had shown their ability in administering capitalism.

That was what lay behind the present Lord Hailsham's warning to Tory MPs that 'if you do not give the people social reform they will give you social revolution'.

Churchill himself failed to get the Beveridge Report shelved and in stopping 'socialist' broadcasts on the BBC. He did succeed in blocking the nationalisation of coal.

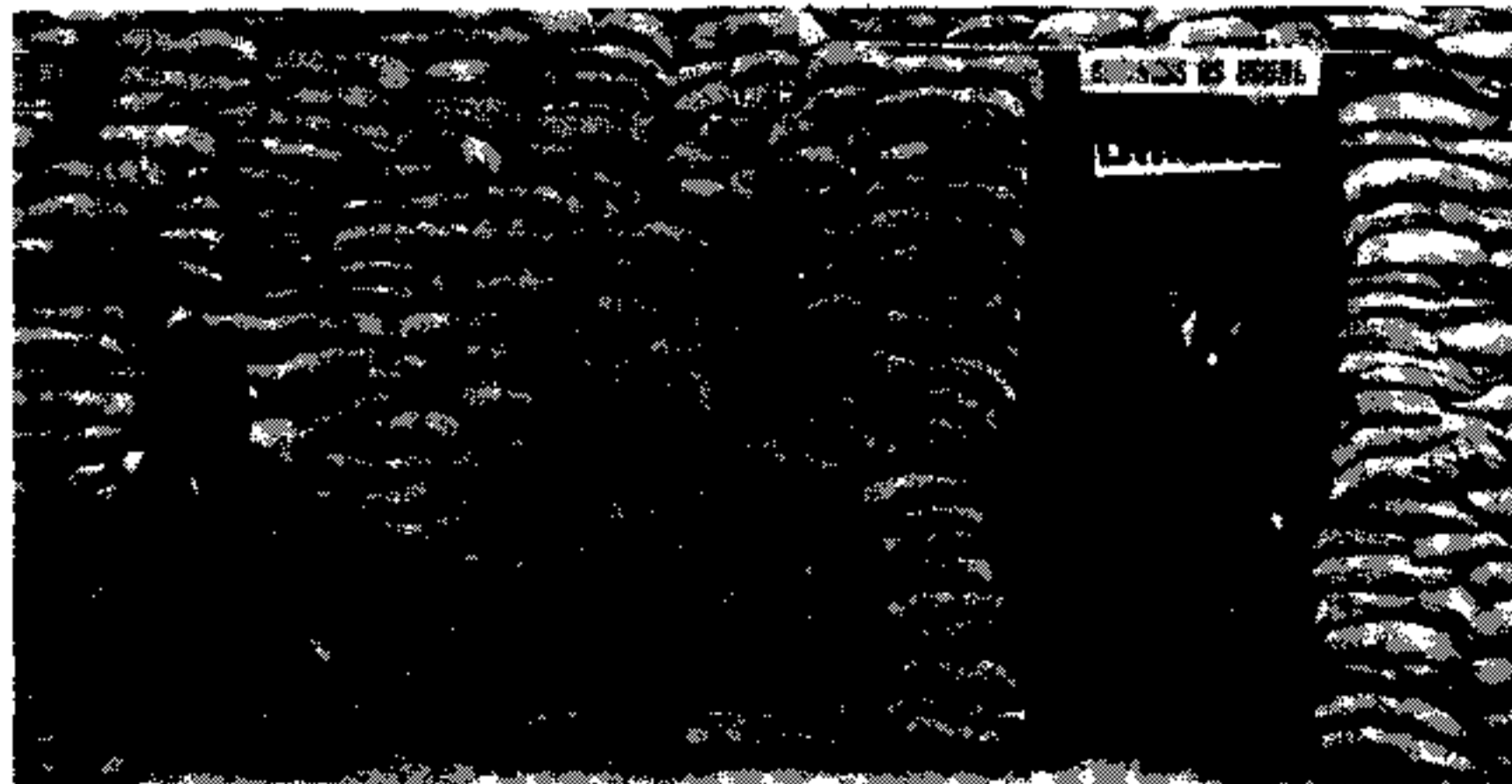
In 1943 Churchill committed himself on the radio to full employment. The newly pro-Labour *Daily Mirror* saw its circulation climb from one and three quarter million in 1939 to three million in 1946. The *News Chronicle*, *Picture Post*, *Observer* and, even briefly, the *Evening Standard*, switched to Labour.

The vast majority of workers had backed the war but were now looking for change. Labour fitted the mood. It also benefitted from the new consensus on the economy.

But this new reformism masked the fact that beneath the surface class society remained unchanged.

In the absence of an alternative to Attlee the radicalisation of the war years, while real enough in itself, did not achieve fundamental change. It did not point in the direction of workers changing society through their own effort.

In this, British capitalism benefitted from the lack of any real alternative to Attlee.



# Death in the family

Albanian Communism, it cannot be denied, has a certain sectarian charm. When the Russian Communist Party sent condolences on the recent death of Enver Hoxha, the Albanians promptly sent them back—a pleasing contrast to the hypocrisy which usually attends the funerals of world leaders.

A Party that can describe the late Russian leader Nikita Krushchev as 'the greatest counter-revolutionary charlatan and clown the world has ever known' cannot, one instinctively feels, be all bad.

But rhetoric butters no parsnips, and, as the western press has hastened to point out, after forty years of Hoxha's leadership, Albania remains the poorest country in Europe. GNP per head is not much over £600 a year.

Albania has natural assets. It is self-sufficient in food, has some oil, and is the world's third largest producer of chrome. But its efforts to industrialise have been painfully slow, and it is in great need of foreign technology.

But if Albania is poor, the fault lies with those powers which have repeatedly threatened its independence. In the Second World War Albania was occupied by Italy, and at the war's end Yugoslavia had plans to annex it. Britain, too, is very much a guilty party. Britain still holds Albanian gold, now worth over fifteen million pounds, grabbed at the end of the Second World War. The pretext for this theft is the fact that in 1946 two British destroyers hit mines while *within Albanian territorial waters*. Albania has always refused to pay compensation.

Between 1949 and 1953 Britain and the US launched a series of clandestine operations to overthrow the Hoxha regime. Fortunately these were betrayed to Albania by Kim Philby.

It is against this background of poverty, underdevelopment and foreign threat that Albania's bizarre history of political alignment must be understood. While Stalin was alive the Albanians had little to be grateful to him for. Albania was liberated from fascist occupation without Russian help. And Stalin seems to have felt little respect for the tiny Balkan satellite.

When the Communist Information Bureau (the Cominform) was set up in 1947, Albania, alone among East European countries where a Communist Party was in power, was excluded from membership. But when Stalin split with Tito's Yugoslavia the following year, Albania lined up with Russia, hoping this was the best way to protect itself against a possible Yugoslav take over.

After Stalin's death Albania initially followed Krushchev. In 1956, after Krushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin, Hoxha addressed the Russian CP Congress, praising Krushchev and not mentioning Stalin's name. But in the early 1960s, China split with Russia. One of the issues at stake was

China's argument that Russia should give more aid to poorer countries in the Communist bloc, rather than spend it on unaligned countries. As the poorest country in the Eastern bloc, Albania had most to gain from such a line, and sided vociferously with the Chinese.

The pro-Chinese line meant the development of a grotesque cult of the memory of Stalin. But this was only the icing on the cake. Over the next 15 years Albania picked up something like four thousand million pounds worth of Chinese aid. But by the late seventies Albania was developing differences with China. The Chinese policy of loving up to the United States had nothing in it for Albania.

## Towards Stalinism

The final straw came in 1977, when China renewed relations with Albania's arch enemy Yugoslavia. Since then Albania has refused any political alignment, covering itself in doctrinal purity and total dedication to the memory of Joe Stalin.

It is not hard to see why Hoxha fostered the Stalin cult. At the cost of enormous brutality, exercised against the Russian working class, Stalin succeeded in industrialising Russia. Hoxha would have dearly loved to do the same thing—but Albania was too small and too backward for it ever to be possible.

So the rhetoric lived on in a vacuum. Radio Tirana and the party paper *Zëri i Popullit* churned out their endless clichés about 'revisionism' and 'Marxism-Leninism'. For those who like their Marxism real, real simple this had a certain appeal, and for many Maoists in the sixties and seventies Albania was a second motherland.

But the rhetoric had no roots in practice. For all its talk of 'internationalism' Albania

spread no revolution: it merely cultivated the rag tag and bobtail of a handful of irrelevant Maoist sects. On the one occasion when Hoxha had a real struggle in his own backyard he did little to help.

When Yugoslavia split with Russia in 1948, Tito's government cut off aid to the Communists in the Greek Civil War and closed the border. Defeated Greek communists who took refuge in Albania were promptly interned by Hoxha.

For despite the rhetoric about 'fortress Albania' Hoxha could not keep his country outside the world economy. In recent years trade has increased, notably with Greece and Italy. A railway link is to be established with Yugoslavia, and a French ministerial visit is expected shortly.

Throughout his forty years in power Hoxha was impotent to achieve the world revolution he may or may not have believed in; impotent to achieve the national economic development he certainly aspired to. Behind the language of Leninism lay a squalid struggle for survival.

Of the forty members of the first central committee of the Albanian Communist Party in 1944, Hoxha was the only one to die in bed; all the others were purged and liquidated. One of his most recent victims was Mehmet Shehu, formerly his Prime Minister for 27 years. In 1981 Shehu was said to have committed suicide, but the Albanian press has subsequently revealed that he was a 'secret agent of the Americans, the Soviets and the Yugoslavs'—a heavy work load indeed. But we are assured that during 30 years as a member of the Party Politbureau he never succeeded in 'distorting or modifying the Marxist-Leninist line'. Clearly Enver took all the decisions himself.

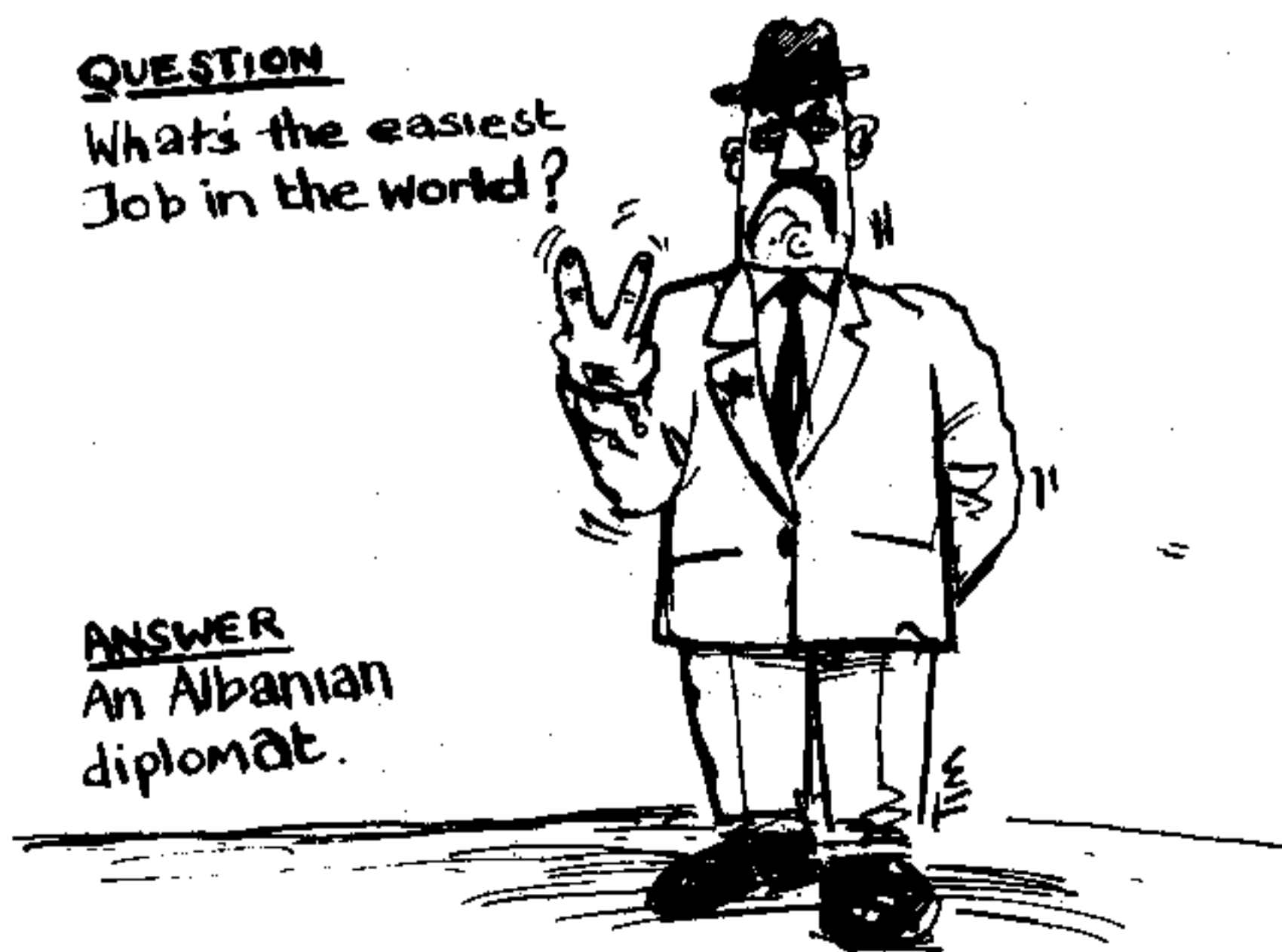
Now Hoxha is dead, but power stays in the family as his brother-in-law Ramiz Alia succeeds him. There may be more policy zigzags in store, but Albanian workers and peasants will continue to suffer from poverty and underdevelopment. The clichés may be 'Marxist-Leninist' or 'revisionist', but the reality will remain. ■

Ian Birchall

### QUESTION

What's the easiest job in the world?

ANSWER  
An Albanian diplomat.



# Mirror images

THERE IS a long standing argument between those who support Israel and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and those on the left who are opposed to zionism and support the Palestinian struggle. Anti-zionists are often accused of being anti-semitic, or against all Jews.

The vast majority of even left wing Jews today support the ideas of zionism. In the West the vast majority of Jews and non-Jews alike view Israel as representing Jewish interest.

The assumption of zionism is that anti-semitism is the inevitable result of Jews' displacement from their historic homeland, and their position as a minority in other people's lands. It accepts that the source of conflict between Jew and non-Jew is race. Anybody who disputes that the state of Israel has the right to exist, is guilty of exacerbating such a conflict and is discriminating against Jews, so the argument goes.

What is the truth behind the arguments? Is anti-zionism the same as anti-semitism?

As a political movement zionism began at the turn of the century. As a movement commanding mass support among Jews, zionism is very new indeed. In 1933 out of 4 million Jews in the United States only 88,000 were zionists.

From the 1880s up to the 1930s there were successive pogroms (massacres of Jews) and outbreaks of anti-semitism in Russia and eastern Europe. Millions of Jews fled or were forced to emigrate due to loss of livelihood.

Most did not think of going to Palestine. Out of four million Jews who emigrated from eastern Europe between 1882 and 1929 a mere 120,000 left for Palestine. The vast majority, 2,900,000 went to the United States. Palestine held no appeal except for a committed but tiny minority.

What changed this? First, the scale of the Nazi holocaust. Six million Jews died in the gas chambers. European Jewry was uprooted en masse. The holocaust reached into the home of every Jew of European origin. Jews outside occupied Europe usually had relatives inside. Many non-religious Jews changed their names as the threat of Nazi invasion loomed.

It is the argument that the Jewish state was the Jews' only refuge from physical extermination that commands such massive support. It is a very powerful argument.

It was not the horror of the holocaust alone that laid the foundation for the massive growth of zionism. To understand it we have to return to the origins of zionism a century ago.

These origins coincided with the development of advanced capitalism in Europe. Employment in the newly developing industries was often not open to Jews. Meanwhile many of their traditional occupations were destroyed by the developing industries. As capitalism moved into crisis, thousands flocked into the towns only to find them-

selves unemployed. Competition for jobs made it easy for the ruling class to foster anti-semitism. The response of the Jewish bourgeoisie was zionism.

Until the 1930s the last resort not only for Jews, but also for millions of workers, was to emigrate—mainly to the United States. But the crisis now devastating Europe reached across to every corner of the world. No ruling class was prepared to allow a mass influx of unemployed workers.

In 1943, when the extermination of the Jews was at its height, the United States admitted the vast total of 4,705 Jews...5 percent of its Jewish immigration pre-1930!

For the first time in history a homeland in Palestine seemed to many Jews a logical solution to their plight.

The zionist solution to the experience of the holocaust was a simple one—'Give to a people without a country, a country without a people'.

Simple solutions can be dangerous. First, zionism assumes that anti-semitism is an inevitable result of Jews living in non-Jewish society. It implicitly sees Jews as the problem.

This is false. Capitalism forced millions of Jews out of their traditional areas of production and the capitalist crisis threw millions of Jewish and non-Jewish workers into poverty and unemployment. Anti-semitism bred out of the ensuing competition between workers and between the petty bourgeoisie. There was nothing inevitable about it.

## Jewish revolutionaries

Those who fought for the socialist tradition, for the unity of workers in the fight against the ruling class have also always fought hardest against anti-semitism. Consequently thousands of Jewish workers and students in Russia flocked to the banner of the Bolsheviks. The proportion of Jews in the Bolshevik party far exceeded their proportion amongst the population as a whole. This terrified the middle class founders of the zionist movement far more than did the anti-semitic policies of the ruling class.

Conversely, whenever the working class is defeated or in retreat anti-semitism and racism have flourished and Jews have paid a terrible price. The fate of Jewish workers and of non-Jews are inseparable. It was the smashing of the German working class that laid the ground for the holocaust.

For the founders of zionism and for its leaders today, the struggle against anti-semitism was at best a waste of energy and a diversion, and at worst would alienate the ruling class whose support for the cause of zionism they were always trying to win. During the holocaust in fact, the 'liberal' leaders of the zionist organisation in the United States pledged to the US government that it would not campaign against US immigration barriers against Jews. They



**Menachim Begin**

believed that a mass influx of poor Jewish refugees from Europe would stir up anti-semitism.

Outbreaks of anti-semitism have all too often been welcomed by zionists as examples of the futility of the attempts of Jews to live as equals amongst non-Jews.

Most Jews before the Second World War either dismissed zionism as irrelevant or actively opposed it. In the Jewish community elections in Poland (a country with one of the worst records for anti-semitism) just before the outbreak of war, most votes went to the anti-zionist Bund.

Many socialists today find it difficult to oppose the zionist solution—to give the Jews 'a country without a people'. But Palestine was not a country without a people. In order to colonise Palestine the Palestinians had to be excluded. Their exclusion is the founding principle of the Jewish state.

The Histadrut—the Jewish 'trade union' in Israel—was built on the principle of building an enclave for Jewish labour and Jewish produce. It organised pickets of anyone employing Arabs and boycotts of Arab producers.

Zionists claim that the Arabs left voluntarily and secondly that 'Jews made the desert bloom'. Arab lands in Palestine were owned in the main by big absentee landlords in Iraq and elsewhere. Their tenants had worked the land for generations. The Jewish land agencies were able to offer prices far beyond the income from their tenants who were usually over their heads in debt.

There was a condition to the sale—the removal of the tenants. No Arab was allowed to live or work on land owned by the Jewish National Fund. Arab farmers were pushed off their lands, out of their villages and into the towns where they fell victim to the Jewish blockade of Arab labour and Arab produce.

In 1947 the United Nations came up with a partition plan supported by all the major powers including Russia. In effect it played off the Arab rulers against the zionists with Britain playing for maximum advantage in an attempt to maintain its influence in the region.

The result was war. The victims were the Palestinians. By the end of the war Israeli territory extended over four fifths of former Palestine. Of the 859,000 Arabs living there before hostilities began, 133,000 were left. The Jewish enclave was established.

The flight of over 700,000 Arabs was achieved quite simply—through terror. On 9 April 1948, units of the Irgun (whose overall commander was Menachem Begin—later Prime Minister of Israel) and the Stern Gang



massacred 254 men, women and children in the village of Deir Yassein. Bodies were found mutilated and thrown into wells. Arab areas in towns were shelled; villages and homes looted then burned or blown up.

Once the Palestinians were driven from their land the Labour government introduced the Law of Return. The Law of Return is straightforward. Any Jew anywhere has the right to settle in Israel. Any non-Jew (except Palestinians) has the right to visit Israel. No Palestinian born in Palestine or their descendants have the *right* to return. It's racism of the first order. The Law of Return is the inevitable conclusion of Zionism. Without it four million Palestinians would return to Palestine—the Jewish state would not survive.

It was the need to establish as many Jewish settlements as possible on the 'vacated' land that led to the formation of the kibbutzim. Since their origin they appealed to supposed egalitarian and socialist ideals and many on the left still regard them as an embodiment of those ideals.

The kibbutz movement cannot be looked at in isolation from the society in which they exist. They excluded Arabs. Most were built on Arab lands already drained for cultivation etc. They were a line of defence. After the 1948 war they were strung across the armistice lines facing the refugee camps.

In spite of the illusions, however genuine, of its adherents, the kibbutz movement is an inseparable part of Zionist colonisation.

Closing the economy to Arabs and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their lands was not enough on its own to guarantee the survival of the Jewish state. Zionism from its very beginnings went begging for support from the imperialist powers.

Today Israel is an armed camp in the Middle East. It pays a price—the highest inflation in the world, the highest per capita foreign debt and the highest taxes in the world.

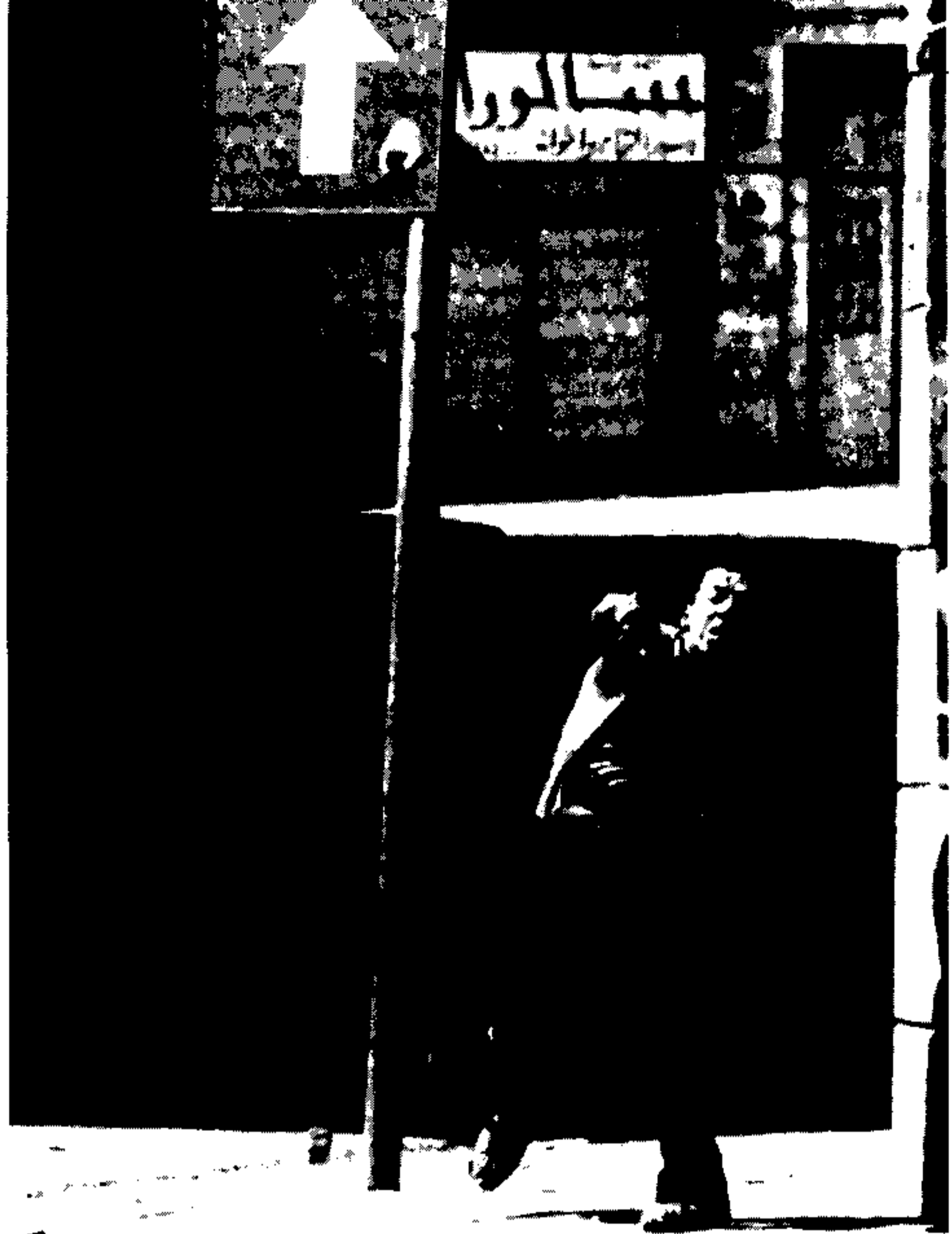
US aid amounts to three billion US dollars, 25 percent of Israel's budget, 1,000 dollars per head of population.

One third of Israel's manufactured exports are arms. It is the world's seventh largest arms exporter with a population of three million. Without its arms exports and US aid the economy would go bankrupt, unable to pay its short term debts or for more than two weeks imports.

Israel's closest allies read like a roll-call of the most brutal, racist, reactionary regimes in the world. Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti...the list goes on. Closest of all is South Africa whose troops Israel arms and trains.

Most shocking of all are the allies on Israel's border—the Lebanese fascists. Their founder, Pierre Gemayel, went to the Berlin Olympics in 1936 and was so impressed with fascism he returned to found the Phalange. The Phalange are backed and armed by Israel and were sent by General Sharon into the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps to 'cleanse' them of 'terrorists'; 1,000 Palestinians were massacred. In 1976 the Lebanese right murdered 3,000 men, women and children refugees at the Tel al Zaatar camp.

Israel is not only forced to pursue and



**Arab youth in anti Zionist protest**

attempt to destroy Palestinian resistance but cannot allow the emergence of any progressive or revolutionary movement that threatens the Arab ruling class.

Zionism maintains that only a separate road to self-determination can deliver the Jews from oppression. To oppose that road, it argues, is to oppose self-determination for the Jews. This is why Zionists are led to accuse *all* their opponents of being anti-semitic or Jewish 'self-haters'.

But there is no path to self-determination possible for the Jews *separate* from that to free all workers and all the oppressed from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism.

Socialists support the struggle for national liberation in so far as it is won *at the expense* of imperialism. The Jewish state can survive only by winning the backing, and acting *on behalf of*, imperialism.

It was the 'left' Labour Zionists who governed Israel from its founding for 29 years. It was the young left Zionist pioneers of the Histadrut and the kibbutzim who organised the boycott of Arab labour and produce. It was Labour Prime Minister Rabin who invited South African premier Vorster to Israel, and it was Labour who armed the Phalange, and colonised the West Bank.

The most horrible irony is that Israel is

today the most dangerous place in the world for Jews to live. Its existence depends on the backing of American imperialism. If United States interests are threatened in the Middle East the US will not hesitate to use Israeli workers as a battering ram if necessary. They care no more for the plight of the Jews than they did during the holocaust.

Many supporters of Israel who regard themselves as socialists believe it possible to form an ideal version of the Zionist state. However, good intentions cannot get the Jewish state out of the trap it has built for itself. In the end it is a trap that will snare all those who enter.

Many on the left, both Jews and non-Jews, support and defend the Jewish state out of a genuine commitment to what they see as the deliverance of Jews from anti-semitism. Many are committed to the fight against racism and anti-semitism in Britain and elsewhere. In such circumstances it is difficult for supporters of Israel to break from Zionism. But it is a break they have to make if they wish to remain true to the commitment that motivated them in the first place. The two cannot march hand in hand. At the crunch one will always be sacrificed to the other. Zionism's adherents are faced with that choice. ■

**Rob Ferguson**

## WORK PLACE NOTES

This month we talked to two Socialist Workers Party members working at Ford's Halewood about their experiences, and the conditions in which they work

Many people think that working in a large and traditionally well organised factory like ours means that the working conditions are good, and union organisation on the shop floor is solid. In fact over the last few years union organisation has become much more bureaucratised and management more petty. This has led to worsening conditions.

The management have got so confident that they will now tackle us on all sorts of issues, some of them very basic. They drive round in these little orange buggies creeping up on you, always trying to catch you doing something wrong. And something wrong these days can be somethings as simple as going to the toilet without permission.

When you want to go you have to ask the foreman. You get ten minutes.

In the summer it's murder, there's no windows. The toilets are up a massive flight of stairs. They're designed to make you want to not go. Why else would they design toilets suspended from the ceiling? It's like a cabin suspended in mid air.

Each section used to have two relief men, one to take over if you went to the toilet and the other one to do repairs. They got rid of one of them. You're not officially supposed to go to the toilet while the line's running anyway. If the relief man is doing some repairs or relieving somebody else and you are desperate and go—you can face the

threat of being disciplined.

A dispute blew up over this. Two fellas had been disciplined for going to the toilet without the foreman's permission. They walked out and the section backed them.

There's no doubt that Fords were trying to use that dispute as a test case to get rid of the toilet reliefs. Although officially we're not entitled to one, I don't think that anyone has been disciplined for going to the toilet while the line is running since then.

Even so you can tell the management are confident. When our disputes are reported in the press, it's portrayed like all these militants are at it again. What they don't tell you is that at certain times management actually want and provoke strikes.

It usually happens just before Christmas and before the new registration comes in August because the demand drops off.

After about a week of paving the way, telling men to 'get that tea boat out of the way', 'what are you doing here?' etc, the foreman starts demanding that we do extra jobs. You know it's going on because normally it takes about an hour for the management to come down if there's a row, but now this butcher is there straight away, and sends men who refuse to do the extra jobs home without pay.

People know what's going on but there's nothing you can do. If you agree to their demand you've then got to do it for the rest of your working life. So you've got to walk out.

We come back under the same conditions that we had before. They've won because although they haven't achieved any attacks on conditions they have got rid of us for two weeks.

Many of the tricks that management have developed were learnt when they spent some time in Japan learning Japanese management techniques about three years ago. They came back trying to develop company consciousness, pride in the product, all that sort

of stuff. One of the major thrusts of their strategy has been to try and incorporate the stewards, and to a large extent it's worked.

All the stewards have 100 percent facility time. They rarely call section meetings. There are 47 stewards in the trim, one per 80 workers. They are the remnants of a strong stewards committee. They are much reduced in power because the pressure from the shop-floor is no longer there.

When I stood for steward, I stood on the platform of staying on the line. There's no job loss involved, because Fords would have to have a man permanently on standby to cover me when I was on union business.

The convenors are on permanent days. The stewards hang around in the convenor's office. It's all boarded up so that you can't see them. There's loads of easy chairs. They don't wear overalls. Take our steward. He never wears jeans but trousers, and black shiny shoes.

There's resentment of the stewards. The line starts at 8 o'clock. At 9 o'clock you might see a couple of them coming out of the convenor's office. If they have to stay over to deal with a dispute they take the night off or claim overtime.

### Poor attendance

As for the branch meetings they are very poorly attended these days. About 15 turn up. We've recently started to meet with half a dozen other left wingers beforehand, to plan what to argue.

We've had a lot of mass meetings over the last two years, mainly over the Days of Action. They've been getting worse so that now they don't call for any action.

It's got to the stage now where we don't even have a vote. They just have a talk by Derek Hatton or whoever and everyone goes back to the plant.

The stewards used to have a policy that if one person gets laid off then the whole plant comes out. Now they have selected lay offs where only certain sections are laid off. It came to a head. We had a plant vote in favour of 'one out, all out' but later the stewards said that it was only over that particular instance and wasn't plant policy.

Despite all this there are possibilities from time to time.

There was a dispute in one of our sections. It involved the loss of a job. Four men doing the work of five. They refused management's demands and stopped work. One of us pulled the rest of the section out.

Then of course there's the important routine work of being an SWP member in a factory.

We try and build up our personal contacts. Ford's have this 'loan system' where another section might need extra labour. You meet different people, show them articles in *Socialist Worker*. Sometimes people tell you about others who might be interested.

We got two or three people to the NGA picket at Warrington at the end of 1983. We also took half a dozen down to miners' picket lines. We started collections for the miners along with one bloke. This forced the stewards to take it over immediately.

It's that sort of activity that can allow you to begin to rebuild decent shopfloor organisation. ■

# socialist worker Review

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# What do we mean by.

## Reformism

THERE ARE all kinds of reformists. Some confine themselves to seeking a deal for the workers within present day capitalist society. Others want to change the structure of this society in a more humane direction. Still others want to abolish capitalism altogether, and, like revolutionaries, to replace it with a society run for the needs of the many not the profits of the few.

A conventional wisdom on what separates the latter of these people from revolutionary socialists has it that the reformists believe in 'peaceful' methods—conciliation, arbitration, parliament—while we think violent means are needed.

But that is rather misleading. In 1914 reformist parties in Germany (the SDP) and in Britain (the Labour Party) supported violence when it meant millions going to their deaths in the trenches. Labour governments used violence on a major scale when they sent in troops to break strikes by dockworkers in the 1940s and firefighters in the 1970s. Add to this the record of labour governments in Ireland, and the simple equation of 'peaceful' methods with reformism becomes patently absurd.

So reformist parties, in spite of what they claim, in practice believe in violence. What they cannot abide is workers challenging the state's monopoly of violence. At moments of crisis they will even jeopardise parliamentary democracy in the defence of the state and its apparatuses of army and police forces.

In 1936 an alliance of Socialist and Communist parties demobilised a workers' revolution in Spain. In 1973 in Chile another alliance of Socialist and Communist parties worked with the generals who were plotting a coup—indeed they even brought them into the government and allowed them to imprison workers protesting against these preparations. In both these cases scores of thousands of workers were killed and 'socialist' parliamentarianism eliminated as well.

However it is not just a matter of some otherwise good socialists getting muddled over the violence of the state. The provisional IRA for instance, talk about a strategy involving an armalite rifle in one hand and a ballot box in the other; and our criticism of them is not that they should have an armalite in both hands. In fact the bullets and the ballots are both part of the *same* strategy. As Trotsky once put it: 'A terrorist is a reformist with a gun.'

The obsession with parliamentary forms on the one hand or terrorism on the other—or any combination of the two—is an expression of an underlying elitism and pessimism. The working class cannot emancipate itself and therefore another force is needed to bring socialism—whether 320 MPs or a terrorist army. The working class is seen as an *object*, and socialism as some kind of operation carried out on this object.

This deep pessimism about the creative potential of the working class is strongly self-perpetuating. After all the reformists' vision of socialism—captured in such slogans as 'nationalise the top 200 companies'—poses the question in terms of the state versus private enterprise. Is it any wonder that there's not too much enthusiasm around for a society looking a little more like the Gas Board and a little less like ICI? Is it so surprising that workers are so apathetic at the prospect of such a 'socialism'? But for the leaders of reformist parties this lack of enthusiasm for their ideas makes them dilute them still further in order to win elections.

### An alternative to Labour

If workers' ideas were unaffected by such moves it would not matter so much. Unfortunately they are. The alternative to Labour—in the absence of a mass revolutionary current—is the Tories. Disillusion with reformism therefore leads workers (or at least the mass of workers) to the right and not to the left.

Furthermore the organisations that workers have created to defend themselves against the employers—the unions—are deeply imbued with reformism, and this is of *crucial* importance. It means that when winning a strike conflicts with the strategy of winning a 'consensus' for elections, the leaders sacrifice the strike.

When Norman Willis and the other TUC leaders failed to deliver support to the miners in the autumn of 1984, it was a particularly gross example of a phenomenon that is all too familiar. Even the best of the reformist leaders do the same. They may differ as to how soon they do it, but inevitably at a certain point they falter.

The reformism of the union leaders is not confined to their ideas but built into the very structures of the unions. It is reflected in the separation between the bureaucracy and the rank-and-file, and in the lack of rank-and-file control within the unions.

The reformism that is deep inside the unions is a built-in guarantee of failure to lead the class struggle forward, at some point or other. As a result it undermines the confidence of workers in their own capacities to win. Furthermore, their inability to control their own leaders also takes its toll: if workers cannot control their own unions what chance is there of them controlling society?

For revolutionaries, reformism is a complex problem to deal with. It is not simply a matter of filling workers' heads with Marxist ideas rather than reformist ones. Our task is to show workers that they *themselves* have the ability to run society.

And this can't be done in isolation from the class struggle. It is only there that the glimmerings of this potential is experienced by workers. This necessarily involves us in the unions. But here a further problem arises. If the class struggle is the means for breaking the hold of reformist ideas on workers and opening up an alternative based on the self-emancipation of the working class, what happens in its absence? The links that we build with reformist workers has effects in both directions. Where there are defeats or when the struggle is at a low level or sectional, pressure will be placed on revolutionary workers to adapt to the reformist environment.

That is why we need a revolutionary party, to prevent the isolation of the tiny number of revolutionary workers in their workplaces and unions. Paradoxically, it is only by building such a party with roots in the working class and with clarity of ideas that it is possible for its individual militants to work with reformist workers and win them to revolutionary socialism.

Yesterday's reformist worker can be tomorrow's revolutionary worker—but only if dialogue is possible and only if the end result is not the tail wagging the dog. ■

Pete Binns



Chile: the price of demobilising workers

# A man can't do it alone

IT'S HARD to review Ernest Hemingway and resist the temptation to do a real hatchet job. A basin full of Honcho he-men and fawning women is enough to turn the stomach of any half decent socialist. Even harder is the job of finding any politics in the writing of a man who covered some of the greatest upheavals of the century but could only present them as woolly crusades where social issues came second to individual heroics.

None of this is surprising as Hemingway, true to the society that made him famous, saw the individual as paramount. From wartime Italy, through the Depression, to the Spanish Revolution, he produced a series of very readable, boys' own adventure stories that never drew any coherent connection between their characters and the social events they were set in.

Whether it was an ambulance driver surviving the carnage of World War One, or a lone saboteur fighting fascism, you're left with the hopeless struggle of an individual against powers beyond his control. For marxists, the 'powers' are produced by class conflicts. For liberals, they're products of fate, destiny or whatever word they use to describe what makes the world go round. Hemingway fell squarely into the latter category.

But, hatchet well and truly buried in him, it's important to highlight some points that either directly or indirectly reflect credit on him. As an ambulance man in the Great War, he experienced the debacle at Capretto that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Italian workers.

## Deserter's fate

After the war he wrote what was considered his best novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, which, though packed with the usual hunky veteran and one dimensional woman, carries a vivid description of the horrific retreat following the Italian army's defeat.

Anyone with any lingering sympathy for battered scabs should read what happens to workers who desert the bosses' war. Well-fed generals led the retreat in staff cars, while conscripts, many of them wounded, marched behind with little food or medical provisions. Those wise enough to leg it were rounded up like cattle and slaughtered by firing squads.

Hemingway continued to observe glaring inequalities in a later novel, *To Have and Have Not*, where he contrasts the squalid existence of war veterans in the Florida Keys to the middle class bobbing about in their yachts. Unable to analyse the situation politically, he simply put it down to a vague injustice heaped on 'real men' by unworthy parasites.

But it was this and his later involvement in Spain's civil war that brought his novels closest to any kind of social content. The deprivations of men who had fought the

bosses' war and the poverty of peasants under brutal landowners drew out the liberal in him. Workers' revolution in Spain also brought him into contact with left politics for the first time.

Unfortunately by the time he got there the dead hand of Stalinism had smothered most of it under the Popular Front. Not that Hemingway would have noticed, being more interested in the man's world at the front (though he hardly ever went there, and, on one of the occasions he did, nearly blew himself and everybody else to bits by messing about with dynamite).

Deserting the class struggle for the trenches made him a favourite with the CP. No politics and plenty of Gung-ho was what the Stalinists wanted in the American press, and that's just what they got. His reporting was so popular with the CP that they invited him to speak at one of their meetings for the Friends of Spain. It was the only political meeting he ever attended, and that says more about their politics than about his.

But even romantic liberals have their limits. In 1940 he wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as an attempt to compensate for all the rubbish he had reported. In it he gives glimpses of Soviet generals living it up on

supplies that were badly needed at the front, and even the notorious CP assassin, André Martel, gets a look-in. But old habits die hard and the anarchists are portrayed as drunken, trigger-happy loonies — a far cry from the million-strong CNT that made the revolution. The bulk of the story is carried away from the cities where the revolution is being murdered into the hills on a heroic odyssey.

It's this constant theme in his writing that belies the centrality of the individual. His characters always try to go it alone and fail. The inherent futility of fighting alone and not collectively shows through every novel. But a fog of destiny shrouds each attempt. For Hemingway, Robert Jordan's lonely battle in Spain is no different from the old man and the sea hunting a marlin. Nothing to do with the rest of society, just a man testing his steel against nature.

Which brings out another undercurrent in his machismo, his attitude towards women. Hemingway is definitely not flavour of the month in feminist circles, and quite right too. There is always an imbalance of age and experience between the men and women in his books. The men are old and worldweary. The women are young and nubile, with nothing better to do than look for old, world-weary men to give their lives some meaning. There is never a hint that women might have a human identity of their own, and they certainly never worry their heads about life in general.

## Manly image

This reflected a situation where women had yet to enter the labour force in sufficient numbers to exercise their muscle as workers in fighting their debasement as people. But even more it reflects how machismo alienates men from women and exposes the weakness that underpins it.

The only novel where he came close to developing a relationship between a man and a woman was *The Sun Also Rises*. The root cause of this was that the central character had been castrated in the war, and, lacking the ability to make the earth move, had to build an alternative bridge to his lover.

Hemingway's own fear of impotence comes through loud and clear. Beneath all the macho bluster and action-man posing, there was a human being so isolated from reality by an impossible image of manhood that he was incapable of relating to women or seeing any point in life after lost virility. Which was why at the age of sixty-two he blew his head off with a shotgun.

If ever there was need for an example of how sexism cripples men as much as women, then Hemingway's lonely suicide should be it. Still, for all that, there is one line from *To Have and Have Not* that every socialist can agree with: Harry Morgan's dying words, 'A man can't do it alone.' Too true! ■

Sean Piggott



# Digging in or striking out?

## Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike

Huw Beynon ed  
Verso £3.95

## The Great Strike

Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons  
Bookmarks £3.95

THE MINERS' strike has faded from the television screens. But the debate among its participants and supporters as to which course the strike should have taken is as alive as ever.

There are those, like the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party, who see the demise of the strike as signalling the end of 'class politics', and therefore the time to dust off old alliances with the 'movements'. Others, like the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, have used the opportunity to put the boot into the hard left.

But there are also a surprising number of people who still reject the options of abandoning class struggle, or uniting uncritically behind Kinnock. Many of them will be turning to two recently published books which attempt to analyse the miners' strike. *The Great Strike* is written by two members of the Socialist Workers Party.

## Future of the left

It traces the beginnings of the strike, its background within British capitalism's continuing 'rationalisation' of the coal industry, the key turning points of the strike, and its deep roots in the community. In a chapter headed 'The Unnecessary Defeat', the authors chart the bitter last weeks of the dispute. They place the blame for the strike's defeat where it lies—not with an incredibly courageous rank and file, but with the area leaderships and with the failure of the TUC leaders to even try to mobilise support.

There are many facts and descriptive passages in the book which will not be found elsewhere. In particular, the description of the first few crucial weeks of the strike in Notts is unique. It shows how the Notts miners could have been shifted towards supporting the strike. Thatcher's police and courts plus the timidity—or sometimes even treachery—of the area leaderships prevented this from happening. And much of the story—unlike most descriptions of the strike—comes through in the words of the miners and their families themselves.

*Digging Deeper* is a different sort of book. Many of its individual essays are well written and informative. This is true of John McLroy's 'Police and Pickets', the essay on women and the strike by Loretta Loach, and the round-up of support work by Doreen Massey and Hilary Wainwright.

But even the good essays in the book are full of pulled punches. The interesting 'Where's Ramsay McKinnock?' by David Howell is a case in point. It spells out a comparison between 1926 and 1984, and between

the Labour leadership then and now.

Howell ends with a critique which few socialists could disagree with of what is wrong with Labour: the separation of politics and economics, the limits of electoralism, the acceptance of the capitalist state. But he then goes on to say that socialists must attempt to reverse such policies. He doesn't say how. I doubt if he could, since the logic of his argument is to build an alternative revolutionary party to Labour.

Similarly the essays on miners' support groups. Massey and Wainwright start off by saying that the strike proves the 'old' working class is still capable of fighting. By the end they are arguing:

'it is not a question of *either* industrial action *or* the new social movements... what the strike has demonstrated is a different direction for class politics.'

The problem is you're never quite sure what they mean. They are representative of a muddled school of thought which applauds the fight of the miners, but which at the same time is slightly tempted by the idea of alliances against Thatcherism.

Some of the contributors are, however, much more than slightly tempted by the idea of such a popular front alliance. They have a clearly defined set of ideas which are influenced particularly by Eurocommunism. For example, the South Wales NUM's research officer, Kim Howells, reiterates the standard Eurocommunist argument.

In an essay subtitled 'The birth of a new kind of politics', he manages to put forward some very old style political justifications for his role in helping to end the strike.

Howells has never hidden his dislike of mass picketing. He promoted the token occupation as an alternative to picketing last year and now has the nerve to write:

'Unfortunately, it was the latter type of tactic [picketing] which came to dominate the headlines and capture most people's imagination. It never succeeded in stopping a single lorry nor a scab and taught us in South Wales a good deal about what to do to win friends and influence.'

Yet, as *The Great Strike* shows very well, mass picketing was never seriously tried in South Wales. The bureaucracy managed to prevent it taking place, and relied instead on a dangerous passivity to maintain the strike.

The problem is that the book tends to be dominated by the arguments of people like Howells. So it tends to be a critique of the strike not from the point of view of the striking miners, but from that of the area bureaucracies. So Huw Beynon says, on the question of the ballot, 'With hindsight, the decision *not* to hold a ballot at that time (May-June) might be seen as a tactical mistake.'

His argument is certainly a popular one these days. It is also wrong. The strike began because it was based on an *active* minority deciding to picket out other areas on an issue which affected them all, but didn't affect them all immediately. To have stopped or retarded that movement in May and June would have been a disaster for the strike.

Unfortunately, much of the argument put forward in *Digging Deeper* reflects the notion that the strike lost because it didn't harness enough public opinion, because the mass picketing and lack of ballot were unpopular, and because the positive case for coal wasn't argued hard enough. This means that despite the good intentions and useful information which some of its contributors provide, its net effect is to fuel the arguments of Kinnock.

Both books are informative. But *The Great Strike* has the advantage of *both* being totally committed to the success of the strike, and of providing an explanation of why that success wasn't forthcoming.

Every socialist should buy the book, and keep it as an excellent record of the most inspiring strike most of us have seen. ■  
Lindsey German


A new book from Socialist Worker

**THE GREAT STRIKE**

THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1984-5 AND ITS LESSONS

A new book from Socialist Worker that sums up the miners' struggle and examines the strike's crucial turning points: Nottinghamshire, Orgreave, the police offensive against pit villages, the role of the trade union leaders.

£3.00 from SWP branches, or £3.95 from left bookshops and by post from BOOKMARKS, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE.



## The glass menagerie

Test tube women—what future for motherhood?

Ed Ruth Arditti, Renate Duelli Klein and Shelley Minden  
Pandora Press, £4.95

THIS BOOK is a collection of essays by women from the USA, Britain, India, Australia, New Zealand and Germany. The articles examine reproductive technology from a feminist point of view, and on the whole condemn it as yet another way of men having control over women's bodies.

According to Julie Murphy:

'Scientific advance in egg research could be exciting, even liberating, for women in non-patriarchal cultures. In patriarchy, however, we have so little control of our lives that such reproductive techniques threaten our very survival.'

The articles contain plenty of horrific examples of the abusive treatment women have suffered at the hands of doctors and scientists. These cannot be disputed.

It is absolutely true that women are made to feel dirty when they have an abortion, that women in poorer countries are forcibly sterilised, that drug companies make fortunes out of marketing depo provera, that contraception is inadequate or dangerous, that women who are infertile are made to feel failures as wives and human beings, and that the poorer fertile ones are exploited in surrogate motherhood.

But what can be disputed is who or what is to blame. And what do we do about it? All the contributors to this collection lay the blame at the door of patriarchy. Some also implicate science itself. The result is that none of them have any idea of how you change this situation and improve women's rights. And worse than that they actually end up in the same camp as Enoch Powell and other vicious right wing moralists who use arguments about the sanctity of human life to justify banning experiments on human embryos.

The arguments from the feminists are different. Reproduction technology to them is 'egg snatching'. If 'male' scientists are allowed to keep fertilised eggs for experimentation, who knows, they may be able to eventually develop a real baby from a test tube, and do away with the woman's role in pregnancy altogether.

Women would then be almost obsolete—useful only for egg production—and when cloning becomes possible would not even be needed for that.

However, it is difficult to see how this method of reproduction would benefit capitalism, or how it would

increase male domination over women. This is about the most expensive way imaginable to reproduce the population, and in a perverse way, would actually relieve women of the burden of childbearing.

On the positive side many of the writers do understand that social conditions are the reason why women don't have a real choice about whether or how they reproduce. Many women are forced to 'choose' childlessness and abortion in the face of 'inadequate childcare facilities, low welfare benefits, high unemployment, and personal isolation'. But because the authors see men, and not capitalism, as controlling reproductive technology they do not see the issue from a working class point of view, which means they fail to take up the fight in any practical way.

Further to this they are actually undermining the issue upon which many working class men and women are prepared to fight. If Powell's bill successfully outlaws experimentation on embryos of only a few days or weeks old, then we can be sure that attacks on abortion, which can be done at 28 weeks, will be next.

But instead of seeing the implications of this, and preparing to fight to defend abortion, the writers prefer to opt out because

'In patriarchal societies it [abortion] has too often become institutionalised as a weapon of reproductive control.'

Unfortunately socialists too have sometimes argued a similar position. Since doctors and scientists are the agents of capitalism, they cannot have the interests of male or female workers in mind. Therefore, any experimentation or new development is of no benefit to us and actually poses a threat.

But this is simply not true. Doctors may well be part of the middle class status quo, but that does not mean they do not want to improve the health of ordinary people. We benefit in thousands of ways every day from scientific research: premature babies who would otherwise die are kept alive in incubators until they can live independently; antibiotics too save masses of lives.

It is of course true that medicine can be misused: some antibiotics have been overused, and this has led to resistant bacteria developing; contraception is not perfect, and so on. But these problems are to do with who controls, directs and pays for research, rather than with science itself. Our task is not to throw it away, but to find ways of getting science under our control,

so that it can properly service our needs.

Trotsky asked of technology:

'Is it only an instrument of class oppression? It is enough to put such a question, for it to be answered at once: no, technology is the fundamental conquest of humanity and although it has also served as an instrument of oppression and exploitation, it is at the same time the fundamental criteria for the emancipation of the exploited.'

I do not believe he meant to exclude reproduction technology.

The book's weaknesses are compounded by the fact that firstly nowhere do the contributors discuss how to organise, campaign, make propaganda, get support etc. And secondly, since they do not want any part of reproductive technology at all, they don't bother to explain the issues properly. Women who are infertile but still want to have children are dismissed as

having an attitude problem.

The advantages of experiments on embryos for *in vitro* fertilisation and in the fight against genetic diseases like Down's Syndrome or sickle cell anaemia are hardly covered.

Finally, in seeing all males as either part of the patriarchal conspiracy or, at best, as passive beneficiaries of women's oppression with nothing to gain from change, the writers do not see how male workers can be drawn into the struggle for abortion rights etc. It is worth remembering that the actions of tens of thousands of trade unionists in Britain contributed to the defeat of the Corrie Bill in 1979.

Really it's not worth bothering to read this anti-male paranoia. Instead start organising now to fight against Enoch Powell's Unborn Children Protection Bill, and get prepared for the attack on abortion rights that is bound to follow.■

Lynda D'Avray

## Up against the States

This mighty dream

Adamson & Borgos

Routledge & Kegan Paul

£8.95

THIS BOOK covers over 120 years of social protest by organised farmers, workers, blacks and communities.

The American ruling class have never hesitated to use every method of divide and rule possible to maintain its supremacy. It has used immigrants and blacks to undermine the unions and radical movements.

The good thing about this book is that it doesn't show the mass of the population as witless dupes unable to do anything to overcome the divisions, or fight back.

It is easy to lapse into believing that social change comes about automatically. As the authors state: 'Social change once achieved becomes part of the status quo and seems unremarkable to those who come after.'

But if, in modern day America, it is the case that some women get equal pay, that blacks can use the same rest rooms and restaurants as whites, that some workers are organised in unions and have protection from the worst of exploitation, and that some tenants are protected by law, it's not due to some kindness from above. It is because of past struggles.

There are those who look at the existing order with complete pessimism. They believe that racism and sexism run so deep that nothing can be done. Unity can't be achieved, therefore everybody should organise in their own

isolated corner on their own specific problem.

Yet in the 1880s the Knights of Labour with a million members demanded equal pay, and in spite of segregation laws held rallies of black and white workers. It wasn't until the defeat and decline of the Knights that the more elitist, and definitely racist American Federation of Labour became the major workers' organisation.

For a long time the big corporations were quite happy to use the AFL, often in a strike-breaking role.

The AFL by behaving like a company union hoped to win concessions, but with the growth of mass production this became self-defeating, and the only people to gain were the bosses.

In 1936 American Labour broke from its narrow confines of skill and race, and built for the first time a mass general union federation, the CIO.

The struggle in steel is one area that is well documented and illustrated in the book. Unionisation rose to 36 percent and only three decades later dropped below 25 percent.

In 1956 it took a 381 day boycott by blacks to win desegregation on Montgomery's buses.

'The Mayor said as soon as the first rainy day came all the blacks would be back on the buses. The first day it rained it was a sight to see people just walking in rain, water dripping off them, soaked but they just kept on walking.'

It was the late sixties by the time civil disobedience had desegregated

all buses and public eating places, and broken down discrimination by some employers.

Yet today in Chicago unemployment and segregated housing is higher than when Martin Luther King first led campaigns in that city.

It is at this point that the book's weakness comes to the fore. The authors accept that there have been setbacks and rightly insist on remaining optimistic. They refuse to join those who believe the struggle is over, that active struggles will never happen again.

But they give no satisfactory answer as to why these movements failed, and how organisation should change for the future.

Though they note that often campaigns have been cynically used by those seeking the vote, or that the farmers failed because they didn't build an alliance with Labour, they draw no such conclusion for black and community struggles.

The concentration on movements and organisation means that politics for the most part is ignored. Therefore they leave unexplained how it was possible to have the mass growth of the CIO without the sub-

sequent growth of a Labour Party.

They believe that the main political weakness of the movements was their failure to manipulate the power available in the ballot box to their own ends. Here we have a familiar argument, extra-parliamentary action can be aided by parliamentary activity. Not to believe that is to reject politics. Of course, that is to ignore the fact that it is always parliamentary action that comes out on top.

But it would be expecting too much that this interesting book should conclude that the problem has been the absence of a different kind of politics. An independent workers' party based on struggle, completely united irrespective of race or sex. A party based on the potential power of the American working class, capable of leading and uniting the whole of America's oppressed.

At £8.95 the book has excellent photographs, facsimilies of bulletins etc and is a good introduction to American grass-roots struggle. ■

Andy Strouthous

of the needs of an emerging bourgeoisie and had a firm base in-class struggle.

The book does cover a wealth of information and detail, albeit in a

style redolent of an 'A' level sociology course. I'd rather recommend the *Black Jacobins* to get us up and fighting. ■  
Lesley McBirney

## Under the carpet

**The Most Contrary Region: The BBC in Northern Ireland 1924-84.**

Rex Cathcart

*The Blackstaff Press £5.95*

THE MEDIA have to perform two functions. Firstly they act as the mouthpiece for our rulers. No one could doubt that after the performance of the press and television in the miners' strike.

But they also have to present a product which the mass of people can identify with. After all, to function they need an audience. That means they can and do reflect items which are profoundly critical of the way society functions.

The BBC is a classic invention of the British ruling class. It is in reality controlled by the state. That is where it gets its cash. But that reality is masked by the fiction that it is a public corporation set up by that wonderful device, a royal charter. Thus we are always told the BBC is independent and free from bias.

But in one area of what is termed the United Kingdom the whole basis on which the BBC operates has been under challenge from its inception.

Northern Ireland has always provided a tricky situation. One third of the population doesn't share 'British values'. But what emerges in this book is the difficulty BBC Northern Ireland has faced, ever since it went on air, in providing a product which reflected a Northern Ireland culture.

After all Northern Ireland is an artificial creation. It is the result of a line drawn on a map by a civil servant in Whitehall, and agreed to in a deal between the British and Irish ruling class.

To build an audience in Northern Ireland the BBC had to present programmes with a local flavour. In this it immediately met with the suspicion of the new Stormont government. As in Britain, top civil servants and military chiefs initially opposed public broadcasting, arguing that radio communication should be used only for defence and other purposes. But American experiences and the threat of radio from Europe reaching Britain changed that.

Even so, the Stormont government demanded and got some extra control over the new Belfast station. In its first broadcasts BBC Northern Ireland simply used English announcers and put out fare drawn from across the channel.

But there were demands for local programmes and accents from all shades of opinion in Northern Ireland. No effort was planned to mark the first St Patrick's day of the station's existence. Under pressure the BBC relented and played a programme of Irish music. But in 1926 a concert from Dublin was abruptly cancelled. A BBC official hinted to the Catholic *Irish News* that the decision was taken under pressure from Lord Craigavon, prime minister of Northern Ireland.

In order to develop a separate identity a new, English station chief was imported from South Africa. He recalled:

'I was invited to become a member of the Ulster Club, where almost daily I met members of the government; the governor, the Duke of Abercorn, was immensely helpful and friendly, and Lord Craigavon, the Prime Minister was a keen supporter of our work. In effect I was made a member of the Establishment...'

But in developing a local product there was a problem—what exactly was the culture of this new state? To the BBC in London it was clearly just as Irish as Dublin or Cork. From London there was a steady demand for Irish programmes. This clashed with the determination of Northern Ireland's Unionist rulers to present a loyal, 'Ulster' product.

When BBC Northern Ireland used actors from Dublin or broadcast the world famous Abbey Theatre it brought howls of protest from the largely Protestant audience.

In 1934 Craigavon intervened again to stop the results of Gaelic football matches being broadcast on Sunday—the day they were played. In 1936 the BBC decided there could be no Gaelic broadcasts whatsoever. But despite this there was also a continual campaign about the Englishness of BBC broadcasts.

What really established the BBC in Unionist eyes was its coverage of the 1935 sectarian riots in Belfast. After a period of working class upsurge which saw a high degree of Protestant and Catholic unity, bigots like Craigavon had worked hard to rebuild sectarian hatred. When the pogroms against Catholic areas began the BBC simply kept mum. It was part of a policy which would last to the 1960s of simply sweeping sectarianism under the carpet.

## A system built on slavery

**Stand the storm**

Edward Reynolds

£3.95 *Alison and Busby*

*Stand the Storm* is a short book about the Atlantic slave trade which probably would appeal more to people who, like the author, reject a Marxist viewpoint. What the blurb on the back refers to as 'realistic and balanced', all too often turns out to be a middle of the road muddle.

Reynolds takes us from the organisation of African societies before white slave traders, through details of the trade itself, to the abolition movement and finally the legacy of the slave trade in both Africa and the American continent.

One of the better chapters is on the supply and demand for slaves. Reynolds explains how the early European colonists, having virtually wiped out the indigenous population, needed a cheap and reliable form of labour which could not be met by indentured servants.

Masses of figures and detail scarcely dull the clear relationship between the sheer magnitude of slaves bought and sold (approximately 10 million), their brutal exploitation and the vast profits made by these early capitalists. Barclays Bank and Lloyds Insurance company are but two powerful institutions whose money was first made from slave trading.

Reynolds becomes shaky however, when he discusses the ending of the slave trade. He starts by almost reluctantly agreeing with

the theory which asserts that the profits made by slave trading provided one of the main sources of accumulation of capital in England, which financed the Industrial Revolution.

This industrialisation had economic consequences which shifted the movement of labour and resources from agriculture towards industry. In other words it became probably a more profitable investment to own mills in Lancashire than a plantation in Barbados.

And of course the slaves themselves weren't just sitting back and taking it. The rebellion in St Domingue led by Toussaint L'Ouverture immortalised in the *Black Jacobins* by CLR James, was not isolated. But Reynolds plays down these pressures and gets terribly bogged down in what he calls 'the philosophical ideology of the 18th century.'

We struggle painfully through how public opinion did or didn't influence parliament and the efforts of individuals like Wilberforce and Granville Sharp till we reach this.

'The notions that shaped the attitude of western Europeans...emanated from biblical and historical beliefs which gave substance to an ideological movement with an evangelical and philosophical base that was concerned with reform.'

Now of course it was 'ideas' from the French Revolution which affected the Dominguan revolt, but those same ideas were an expression

Until the 1960s the BBC, including the new television station, lived in an artificial world. It tried to mirror home counties broadcasting by putting out programmes like *A Week in Stormont* and *Any Questions*. But a whole battery of controls existed. News from the Irish Republic was banned. Issues like partition couldn't be discussed. Instructions were drawn up trying to enforce 'Ulsterisation'.

Thus a series on great writers could cover Shaw, Joyce and Yeats as long as they were broadcast by lesser known writers who were born in Northern Ireland.

Through BBC Northern Ireland, the Stormont regime also tried to control coverage of Northern Ireland from London. That could be as petty as complaints about the broadcasting of the Irish national anthem. But in 1959 they did succeed in stopping a series of reports into sectarianism and other realities of Northern Ireland life made by Alan Whicker.

By the mid 1960s things began to thaw. In line with British interests, the Stormont government attempted to adopt a liberal face. Reports poking fun at Ian Paisley's

beliefs were broadcast. Talk of change encouraged a civil rights movement.

When, in 5 October 1968, the RUC baton-charged a peaceful protest march in Derry, a television crew from BBC London were there. Their broadcast helped lift the lid on Britain's police state in Northern Ireland.

When a Unionist MP complained of this coverage Harold Wilson gave the game about Northern Ireland away. Turning on this back bench bigot Wilson replied: 'Up to now we have perhaps had to rely on the statements of himself and others on these matters. Since then we have had British television.'

Since 1968 the BBC and ITV have both scrapped programmes in line with government instructions. They've had programmes banned. But they have had to recognise two things. Northern Ireland isn't really part of Britain and isn't a 'normal society'. That simply reflects the beliefs of most people in Britain. Naturally a new mystical package has been drawn up to justify Britain's presence there. But that is another story. ■

James Barr

## Not much heartbeat

Post War Britain: A Political History

Alan Sked & Chris Cook  
Pelican £4.95

ANY BOOK written in a narrative style which tries to compress 40 years of history into 400 pages is bound to display the atmosphere of the average game of bingo. Reading it is a bit like 'Eyes down for a full house'.

To be fair, the authors do not claim anything more than to provide a chronological framework for the major events since 1945. Within this rather limited ambition, they largely succeed.

But for Marxists, the style of this book will inevitably be superficial: this is history viewed in what Plekhanov once described as 'the mere outward connection of events'. The central theme of the book is that the period around 1963 marked a watershed in British history 'before there was stability, afterwards failure and disorientation'. But even this is not really analysed in terms of inherent causes.

Let me give an example: at one point Sked and Cook claim that Britain did not benefit from the Empire, and that the economy in fact expanded more rapidly once the Empire had been dismantled. Now this is a very controversial statement. But, even if it is true, a thinking reader would surely expect to see at least some attempt to establish a causal link between the end of the Empire and subsequent

economic growth, plus perhaps an assessment of the importance of other factors that may have come into play, like, for example, changes in the terms of trade. However not one supplementary piece of information is given to support this view.

So even where an interesting point crops up—like the fact that, during the so-called 'golden boom' years of the 1950s and early 1960s, whereas workers' living standards rose by 50% in about 13 years, the value of equity shares rose by 225%—no real development or analysis occurs beyond saying 'workers began to see that the real beneficiaries of the affluent society were those with the money to invest'. Yet all this is written within the overall context of how bad industrial relations bedevilled attempts by the Tory government to put things right.

The view that perhaps the only bad thing about industrial relations was the weakness of the workers' organisation in allowing the gap to develop would not really be seen by Sked and Cook as coming within the sphere of 'real politics'.

There is another galling feature of this book; the one reference to the Socialist Workers Party is factually incorrect. Sked and Cook claim that we, along with 'CND, Iranian students, Methodists and Quakers' demonstrated with banners that proclaimed support for Argentina in the Falklands War. Now while it may be true that we on the revolutionary left have a ten-

dency to see ourselves as the centre of the universe, it still left me wondering. If the one piece of information in the book of which I have personal knowledge is incorrect, then how accurate is much of the rest of the vast information of which I have no personal knowledge?

So as a quick source of reference, maybe this book has some value; it will no doubt be widely read by 'A' level and under-graduate students.

## A sorry sort of socialism

Soviet Power — The Kremlin's foreign policy from Brezhnev to Chernenko

Jonathan Steel  
Penguin £3.50

JONATHAN STEEL'S book, recently issued in Penguin, is an argument for detente. It is a response to the 'evil empire' demonology of the West's resurgent Cold War warriors. He argues that, far from seeking world domination, the USSR has always acted pragmatically.

Outgunned both militarily and economically by the United States, it has had little success since the 1940s in extending its influence, and far from energetically promoting subversion, or being pathologically aggressive, has intervened abroad only with the greatest reluctance.

The material on Soviet defence policy will be familiar to readers of *SWR*. The tale of how the bogeyman of Russian 'aggression' and supposed military superiority has been resurrected in the West to support the demands for arms spending and repression by our own rulers has been told before.

On Eastern Europe Steel is at his weakest. His narrow 'foreign policy' approach can explain little about the continuing working class revolts in the countries of the Warsaw Pact. To say simply that the USSR's actions have been prompted by the need for a buffer from the West, while fair comment, is to ignore any discussion of the nature of the economic and political systems of Russia and its allies and to fail to look at what interests underpin the actions and policies of the ruling classes of the Soviet bloc.

Steel is most interesting on the 'Third World'. The left is bedevilled by the tendency of many, even those claiming to be the heirs of the Marxist tradition of opposition to Stalin, to put their faith in the various faces of 'socialism' in the developing countries.

The USSR's apparent support for many of these regimes has been used to claim a progressive role for it in this, if in no other, respect, while on the other hand, anti-Soviet commentators use it to characterise

For those who require a general outline of how the various patricians of British politics have played a part in the events of the post-war period then again the book has some merit.

But for anyone who recognises that we live in a class divided society, and that the heartbeat and matter of politics lie elsewhere, then this book will prove to be a not unexpected disappointment. ■

Kevin Corr

the USSR as intent on world revolution and to portray Russian influence creeping in all over the globe.

Steel's emphasis on examining the manoeuvring of the USSR in the international arena, largely without the gloss of 'progressive' or anti-communist rhetoric means that while his basic analysis of Soviet motivations is suspect, his account of the practical effects of the policies is clear.

This is shown in the considerable space he devotes to Afghanistan. The Karmal regime, he notes, is a nationalist one, composed of the rising generation of the intelligentsia and the armed forces who were excluded from power under the old monarchy. He also points out that while the royalist regime remained friendly, the Russians were only too happy to support it! The USSR may have made an error in invading, he argues, but their motivation was that of concern for national security, not of spreading 'socialism'.

The question of the 'state capitalist' regimes (such as Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia Egypt and indeed China) supported by the Soviet Union is perhaps of most interest to us. Steel begins in this respect to arrive at an analysis which he is unable and unwilling to develop further.

'If the Russians had hoped that nationalist regimes that had embarked on the "non-capitalist road to development" with a heavy state involvement in domestic industry would evolve towards socialism, they were disappointed. This stage—in reality state capitalism rather than socialism—did not preclude a foreign policy switch back to the west.'

His comments beg the obvious question—if this road is state capitalism in Egypt or Ethiopia, why is it socialism in the Russian motherland? Steel's reliance on the pronouncements of the Soviet leaders and his reluctance to delve behind the Kremlin's turgid 'Marxism-Leninism', lead him to give us only glimpses of the forces at work in today's world system.



Steel's is the voice of the sane bourgeois commentator, anxious to show the lunacy of the Thatcher/Reagan return to global confrontation.

The problem is that he sees the question of conflict in the world system as being one of policy. We have to recognise that the world system is not governed by reason but by the blind demands of accumulation. East and West, nation-states are locked into a world economy which increasingly makes their decisions for them.

Steel believes that the world, as it is, can be stable. He describes the counter-revolutionary role of the USSR in the world in order to show that it is not the bloodied Bolshevik monster of Reaganite fantasy—it is a common-or-garden pragmatic monster, with appetites no more bestial than most, and should be treated as a legitimate partner in international affairs.

The USSR has not supported a workers' revolution for sixty years.

Time and again, it has shown that the 'national' interests of the bureaucracy, the ruling class, are inimical to the interests of the world's working class. For Steel, this is acceptable pragmatism. For revolutionaries, it is evidence of the permanence of another war—the class war in which comrade Gorbachev is as firmly ranged against revolution as Margaret Thatcher.

Steel is an accurate commentator within his limitations, and socialists will find *Soviet Power* an interesting read. To understand the analysis that is sadly lacking, however, read or re-read Nigel Harris' *Of Bread and Guns*—where Steel hopes for good intentions from the world's ruling classes, Harris recognises that it is only with their overthrow, East and West, that we can remove once and for all the barbarity and the threat of destruction that their system breeds. ■

Tim Sneller

little monkey' than from 'a savage who delights to torture his enemies ... and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.'

When Thomas himself suggests that 'the preoccupation with gardening, like that with pets, fishing and other hobbies, even helps to explain the relative lack of radical and political impulses among the British proletariat. I can hear the chortles of the Flippant School of Marxists whose response to every mention of such subjects is, 'Animals? Flowers? We'll get rid of them under socialism!' Thomas's offhand remark is, of course, nonsense, and one can hardly imagine a working class with no hobbies making a revolution.

But Keith Thomas also quotes Engels, who was fond of dogs and horses, saying that 'anyone who has

much to do with such animals will hardly be able to escape the conviction that there are plenty of cases where they now *feel* their inability to speak is a defect.' Many well-known Marxists have been friendly to animals (Lenin apparently kept cats), and Rosa Luxemburg, who began her studies with botany and zoology, believed that no living creature should be harmed unnecessarily.

Can all this be dismissed as irrelevant sentimentality? Perhaps, somewhere between the flippant approach and the false and incoherent ideas of animal liberation (would they draw the line at malarial mosquitos? or at harmful bacteria?) there is a Marxist position waiting to be worked out. ■  
Norah Carlin

## Animal attitudes

**Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800**

Keith Thomas  
Penguin £4.95

KEITH THOMAS, though no Marxist, is a historian whose writings have generally been well worth attention from Marxists. He has written on the Levellers and Diggers, and on women in the English Civil War. Some years ago, in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, he broke new ground with an examination of the relationship between the ideas of the educated elite and the attitudes of the peasantry in early modern England.

At first sight, *Man and the Natural World* seems to be attempting something similar. Its theme is changing attitudes to biological nature, and its starting point is the sixteenth century, when the ideas of medieval christianity still prevailed. The orthodox view then was that the natural world was created by God for the exclusive use of human beings, and that human nature was destined by God for a supernatural fulfilment.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the foundations had been laid for a modern scientific attitude to the natural world, a world existing in and for itself, having a history much older than human history, and not specially designed to be dominated by mankind.

Keith Thomas tries to show how popular attitudes, particularly middle class attitudes, slowly changed with urbanisation and the growth of capitalism in England,

preparing the way (he claims) for nineteenth century changes in scientific understanding.

His attempt fails, and the result is trivialisation. The opportunity to examine the relationship between the ideology of grand theory and the attitudes of everyday life is simply missed, largely because there is no discussion of grand theory at all. Rousseau and Darwin, for example, are both mentioned frequently and we are given to understand that they were important, but they appear only in scattered quotations on various sub-topics throughout the book. Much more coherent accounts are given of pet-keeping, country sports and fashions in gardening.

Overall, the book gives the impression that Thomas is jumping on the bandwagon of currently trendy ideas such as ecology and animal liberation. The story he tells is essentially one of simple progress, of the rise of a set of improved attitudes to animals and the environment. But his own patchwork method of assembling quotations from fifteenth to nineteenth century sources suggests that perhaps the story is more complicated.

Can a Marxist learn anything from this book? There are fascinating quotations and suggestions which may give comfort to those who see the whole complex of ecologism and animal liberation as fundamentally reactionary. Kindness to animals was often combined with vindictiveness towards the working class and contempt for other races of human beings. Darwin proclaimed that he would rather be descended from a 'heroic

## A noble cause

**South Wales and the Rising of 1839**

Ivor Wilks  
Croom Helm £15.95

'I SHALL this night be engaged in a struggle for freedom and should it please God to spare my life I shall see you soon; but if not, grieve not for me. I shall fall in a noble cause.' So wrote 19 year old George Shell, a carpenter, to his parents on the eve of the Chartist march on Newport. He was to be killed in the fighting, shot down by British troops in front of the Westgate Hotel.

Ivor Wilks' account of the 1839 Rising is a tremendous achievement in recovering the history and experience of the revolutionary working class in South Wales in the late 1830s.

Wilks successfully restores it to a central place and successfully lays bare the nature of the working class that could mount such a challenge. The South Wales working class was formed in the early decades of nineteenth century industrialisation.

The great strikes of 1816, 1822 and 1830 are testimony to increasing working class strength. The Scotch Cattle, a secret society of militant miners, were busy, maintaining working class solidarity by a combination of moral and physical force that intimidated the backslider and punished the scab. Then in 1831 this early phase of working class history came to an end with the great uprising in Merthyr Tydfil.

Wilks provides an exciting and detailed account of the development of Chartist organisation among the iron workers and coal-miners of South Wales, at the end of the 1830s. Thousands of men were enrolled in secret armed conspiracy against the state. Organised

attempts were made to subvert the military and some deserters were actually enrolled in the rebels' ranks.

Altogether some 7,500 men, organised in fifteen brigades were ready, hoping to seize control of South Wales, to take over the mines and ironworks and to establish a Workers' Republic. They counted on similar risings taking place in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

On 3 November 1838, in torrential rain, the rebels assembled for the march on Newport and the following day attacked the town's garrison. A frontal assault was made on soldiers occupying the Westgate Hotel with disastrous results. The rebels were shot down in the open with no way of effectively retaliating.

The failure to capture Newport demoralised the rebels and they soon dispersed, with their leaders in prison, in hiding or fleeing abroad. Defeat and military occupation did not end working class resistance however.

When the employers tried to impose wage cuts the following year, while the iron workers accepted the coal miners struck, in some pits for fourteen weeks until the cuts were withdrawn.

Wilks provides a masterly account of this great challenge to the state and surely gives the lie to those such as Neil Kinnock who deny any tradition of revolutionary struggle to the working class.

It is unfortunate that he chose not to place the Welsh Chartists more in the context of the national movement and does not dwell more on those activists in Yorkshire and Lancashire who were of like mind. Nevertheless this is a book that well repays reading. ■

Bill McDare

## Don't undermine the action

GARETH JENKINS' and John Lindsay's article on South Africa (April *SWR*) threatened to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Of course it is nonsense to argue that factory closures by multinationals will advance the struggle against apartheid. And it is the rise of the black proletariat which has made the Anti-Apartheid Movement leadership's sanctions seem so ludicrous.

What side are we on when blacks fight for the right to work against a foreign boss? To ask the question is to answer it: we stand with our class against closures and redundancies—against 'disinvestment'.

But the article seemed to draw the conclusion that socialists should therefore oppose all disinvestment campaigns. The authors did not actually say that of course—instead there was a clumsy bit of fudging. Apparently 'we will carry our arguments more successfully if we participate in protests'. The implications of this statement simply have not been thought through. It would be impossible to apply this in practice.

Let us take the example of a college disinvestment campaign (the most likely platform for the argument). Is it being suggested that SWSS members should join an occupation only to go around arguing it should be called off because disinvestment is a bad idea? Gareth and John were probably only half-aware of the contradiction, so they glossed over it. But unless it is sorted out it could cripple SWP involvement in anti-apartheid activity.

The mistake is to assume that arguing for the sale of shares is the same thing as arguing for factory closures in South Africa. In the real world there is no connection between the two at all. Very few stock market investors are open to anti-apartheid pressure. Shares sold by a college will immediately be purchased by someone else. Companies are not going to be pulling out of South Africa because of collapsing share prices in the wake

of mass sales. That is not—or should not be—the argument in favour of college disinvestment.

Indeed, to put the case in that way enables the administration to make telling counterpoints. It is true that very few institutional investors are likely to disinvest. It is true that British owners pulling out of South Africa would simply make room for other capitalists. It is true that black workers would suffer. The basis on which socialists should demand disinvestment is not only different to that of the Anti-Apartheid Movement leadership; it is also unanswerable.

The crux of the matter is that a disinvestment campaign is an assertion of anti-racism. It raises the political question, challenges reactionary ideas, polarises opinion and draws people into activity. A victory for the campaign is a victory against racism and for internationalism. The point is that colleges which hold shares in companies operating in South Africa—colleges which own apartheid capital—profit from the system. They are on the side of the bosses and the state. Not in words—but in deeds.

Our argument is that their words must match their deeds. We demand a clear-cut anti-racist, anti-apartheid statement from them—we demand that they cease to be part of the apartheid system. There need be no pretence that we expect material gains from disinvestment. The campaign is a battle of ideas.

A college disinvestment campaign raises the banner of anti-racism and international solidarity. There can be absolutely *no* question: we wholeheartedly support it, seeking to draw the maximum number of people into the most militant forms of action until our demands are won. That is how we win an audience for our ideas among other activists—not by putting forward arguments which undermine the action.■

Neil Faulkner  
Guildford

## In defence of Lenin

COLIN SPARKS's review, *Lenin and the Patriots* (April *SWR*) contains a few errors.

Colin writes:

'Lenin...began by opposing the demand for "peace" and insisting that to call for anything less than civil war was to capitulate to the muddle-heads who did not see the class lines clearly and who wanted to join with middle class pacifists. Reality was to knock his head against the wall, too: by 1917 "peace" was to

become one of the key slogans!'

Lenin until 1917 quite rightly opposed the slogan of 'peace' as muddled pacifist nonsense. As against this he argued that only civil war could put an end to the imperialist war. However, when the Soviet was established in Russia after the February revolution, naturally the slogan of civil war did not fit and the slogan of peace did. To use Colin's method one could say that the fact that Lenin was anti-defencist until October 1917 and



Zinoviev

then turned defencist was because he 'capitulated to the muddle-heads'.

Colin describes Zinoviev's *War and the Revolutionary Crisis* as a vulgar abuse of Trotsky. First of all one must notice that the article appeared in a book edited by Lenin and Zinoviev, entitled *Against the Stream*. At the time Zinoviev was the closest collaborator of Lenin while Trotsky, both at the Zimmerwald conference and later at the Kienthal conference, opposed the Bolsheviks sharply, while col-



Trotsky

laborating with the centrists. Colin writes:

'The Zimmerwald conference... ended without a clear division between the revolutionary current, the "Zimmerwald left" led by the Bolsheviks, and the "centrists" led by Ledebour and his co-thinkers in the SPD.'

This was not so. The main guidelines of the future Comintern were forged by Lenin at the Zimmerwald conference.■

Tony Cliff  
London

## Vicious red circle

YOU ARE absolutely right on the prospects for socialists in Italy (April *SWR*) when you say the outlook is bleak. The employers are clearly on the offensive and there has been very little organised resistance. An ominous sign of the times are the changes in union membership in the key Lombardy region, where the CP-dominated federation, the CGIL, has declined while the more moderate groupings, CISK and UIL, have actually gained members.

The article is, however, mistaken on one small but significant point, concerning the recent murder of Ezio Tarantelli and the strength and role of the Red Brigades.

Some years ago the Red Brigades had a degree of working class support and could be described as having a left-wing orientation (however confused).

As its old leadership has been smashed, or 'repented', the Red Brigades have, however, declined in political significance and changed their character. By now it is almost certainly not a single organisation (if indeed it ever was) and is virtually indistinguishable from the various right-wing terror groups and the gangs of gunmen controlled by the Mafia and the Camorra. The Tarantelli murder was in fact claimed both by the Red Brigades and the so-called Armed Proletarian Nuclei, a grouping clearly identified with the fascist right on numerous occasions.

Tarantelli himself was, as the article notes, involved in the negotiations to scrap the *scala mobile* system of wages linked to price rises. He was not, however, a 'right-

wing trade unionist'. As economic adviser to the Christian Democrat union federation, CISL, he had in the past been known for his advocacy of an agreement with the CP. If anything he was to the left of other ruling class economists.

This probably accounts for the fact that he could be gunned down so easily in the university precincts—not having been given a bodyguard he was a soft target.

Tarantelli's murderers were most likely in the pay of the far-right of the Christian Democratic party, or possibly of the Mafia (he was a Sicilian). Even if they were nominally of the 'left' they are almost certainly being directly manipulated by the far-right.

This may all sound absurdly conspiratorial, but it would only be the latest in a continual series of bizarre and grotesque operations carried out by the right in Italy with the aim of intimidating the reformist wing of the ruling class, driving the CP into calls for more repression, and incidentally isolating the revolutionary left.

The tragedy of Italy is that socialists have been unable to escape from this vicious circle. The combination of soft Maoism, Stalinism and more recently autonomism, has destroyed what was once easily the largest and most influential layer of revolutionaries in Europe.■

Dave Beecham  
West London

Note: at the moment the referendum on the *scala mobile*, sought by the CP, is scheduled for June 9th—unless the unions sell out first.

## Separating the separatists

I HAVE recently begun to be disturbed by the way in which the word 'separatism' is used by SWP members in discussing women's issues. Although *Socialist Worker Review* has for the most part avoided using this word as an all-purpose term of abuse, I feel it is time that it was discussed.

Women's separatism can mean two or three different things. The first, which I would call total separatism, is the view that feminists should have nothing to do with men in their personal lives: they should live separately, make love only with one another, and reject male children. Women who do live with men and have sex with them are 'collaborators'. This is the position taken by a Leeds feminist group in 1979, and the debate around it was published as a pamphlet, *Love your Enemy?* (Onlywomen Press, 1981).

Total separatism has some support in feminist circles, but it is small and highly controversial. Many feminists are outraged at suggestions that male toddlers should be excluded from conference creches or that being heterosexual compromises their feminism.

It is elitist, because the majority of women are and probably always will be 'collaborators'; and a counsel of despair, because it says that no unity of women and men in struggle is ever possible.

The second position is that women should organise separately from men, through women-only groups, campaigns and demonstrations. Clearly, total separatists participate in this kind of organisation, but so do women who reject the total separatist position—women who live with men, have sex with men and even feel friendly towards their teenage sons!

Many of the women involved in Greenham Common for example took a positive view—perhaps even a too conventional view—of the role of women in the family, while insisting that Greenham should be a women-only activity.

We reject this argument because it says that only by organising separately can women influence

men in a positive way, and that symbolic actions, like hanging baby clothes on the fence at Greenham, can win struggles. We insist that the fight for women's liberation has to be part of the class struggle to have any hope of changing the world.

But many SWP members also use the word separatism to describe the position that *within* mixed organisations (political parties whether reformist or revolutionary, trade unions or campaigns like CND) there should be women-only meetings, caucuses or committees as a matter of principle. This is not a 'separatist' position by comparison with the two outlined above, and many socialists are puzzled at being accused of separatism when they are neither political lesbians of the *Love your Enemy?* stripe nor whole-hearted advocates of Greenham-style separate organisation.

Women's meetings, caucuses and committees are not always the wrong tactic. For example, most miners wives who were acting in the recent strike began by setting up a women's group or committee. When any activity takes place around a women's issue which is also a class issue (such as abortion) it is likely to be women talking together—whether formally or informally—who start the ball rolling so that men, too, become part of the campaign.

What we in the SWP do not agree with is the view that in an organisation of women and men, women's issues can be hived off into women's groups or committees on a permanent basis, because this pushes the issues out of the centre of attention on to the margin, and lets men off the hook because they can sit back and let the women get on with it.

I really don't know what to call this third kind of 'separatism'—women's sectionalism?—but it is time the SWP found a name for it which doesn't just amalgamate all those who disagree with us under a name which suggests the most extreme. ■

Norah Carlin  
North London

## Reply to editors and critics

MY ARTICLE *What Do We Mean By The State?* in March *SWR* got a bit mangled in editing. An argument I think important disappeared.

Lenin's formal definition of the state is insufficient. There is more to the state than 'armed bodies of men' etc. We shouldn't define the state by a characteristic *means* it employs: violence.

States do useful things. The pen-

sioner going to the Post Office doesn't view the state as 'organised violence'. Nor does the NHS patient, or the consumer of water. The modern state's 'useful functions' strengthen it, by making it seem inevitable.

Reformists, who take the state for granted, assume only 'trained experts', 'managers', etc can organise key social activities. Their 'socialism' is always 'from above'.

Marxists, by contrast, insist society must reclaim control over all its own necessities and functions. This argument applies equally to policing, production, distribution, welfare.

To define the state, we must follow Marx's method, and begin with *social relations*. So, where to start? With the fact, surely, that every state involves one class monopolising key processes of rule-making and rule-enforcement. A society with a state is, by definition, a class-divided society. Those who comprise the state are a class. The existence of a state is an immediate sign of society's *alienated* character. People are still reproducing the means of their own domination.

Every state is an impediment to popular self-government. Certainly, every state protects its monopoly by organised violence; but the monopoly itself, not the violence, is the centre of the evil.

This is as true of the 'welfare state' as it is of the police, army, judiciary, etc. To put the matter extremely, revolutionaries must aim to 'smash the welfare state'. Lest some daft eejit seek to misunderstand me, of course we don't oppose public welfare. But welfare does need to be 'de-statised', ie, made directly subject to popular democratic control. Demands for

just such democratisation of all state institutions—health services, schools, law and order, etc—have played a crucial role in all modern movements with any revolutionary potential. Look at France in 1968, Portugal in 1975, Poland in 1980!

What of a 'workers' state' (Letters, *SWR* April)? Certainly the working class has to establish its own democratic state power. But a 'workers' state' has meaning only as what Lenin brilliantly termed a 'semi-state', a state whose democratic form permits its dissolution or 'withering away'. What makes it still a state is that, in *some* respects, *some* parts of the population are excluded, in some measure, from control over the running of society. So long as the term 'state' still fits the situation, there is still hierarchy and subordination in social life.

Marx was an implacable enemy of all forms of 'statism'—and not only in respect of 'capitalist' stages. Socialism is the struggle for the destruction of the state, in *all* its manifestations and forms. The 'subordination of the state to society' is not the final goal; our ultimate aim is the removal of all forms of monopolisation of social functions and thus the end of the state *in toto*, without qualification. ■

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## Chasing public opinion

IN 'PATTERNS of defeat' (March *Review*) reference was made to the wide currency of *Marxism Today's* ideas, outside the CP itself and among the 'soft left' in the Labour Party, among NUM officials, etc. As you point out, among these ideas is the argument that a 'broad alliance' is the only way to defeat Thatcher, that the working class alone isn't strong enough to win, and that winning over 'public opinion' is crucial.

In April's *Marxism Today* the consequences of these ideas, in coming to terms with the miners' defeat, becomes apparent. In an article written by Hywell Francis, Chair of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities, both the absence of a national ballot and the use of pickets are attacked on the grounds that they alienated 'public support'. This, the argument runs, 'internalised' the struggle and 'diverted attention away from ... the case for coal.'

Francis even goes so far as to believe that the only positive intervention that did occur was over the 'initiative launched by the church leaders'. He sees workers' direct action ('the ... archaic strategy of mass and flying picketing') as being a principal reason for the *failure* of the strike.

Orgreave is seen as having failed not because there was no really

serious attempt to mobilise support from trade unionists in the factories of Sheffield and Rotherham to join the picket, or because the leaderships consistently ignored Scargill's calls for mass picketing of Orgreave. Rather, it is seen as a consequence of 'Thatcherism'—'the Government was better prepared' and miners were now picketing 'against the state'.

This is not new. Workers in struggle over a period of time always reach a point when the fact that they are fighting the state becomes more or less clear. The tragedy of the miners' strike is that the official leaders of the labour movement were never prepared to take that struggle against the state seriously.

Once you see class struggle as having an acceptable (GLC, CND) and unacceptable (Orgreave, picket line violence) face, then you become capable of abandoning and betraying the interests of real workers in the here and now, in favour of pursuing some chimerical 'public opinion' down the road to the next general election. And once you do that, you can even conceive, as Hywel Francis does, of a situation where 'the price for 'victory' and 'unity' will be acceptance of the ballot and the abandoning of mass picketing.' ■

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# Revolt in the empire

THE SUPPRESSION of the Mau Mau rebellion was, without doubt, the most brutal and bloody counter-insurgency campaign fought by the British Army since the end of World War II. The rebellion was defeated; nevertheless it began the process that was to lead to British withdrawal from Africa. Its importance is difficult to exaggerate and yet today it has been virtually forgotten.

The Mau Mau movement has usually been labelled as some sort of barbaric return to witchcraft that held Kenya's black population in the grip of superstitious terror. This is a lie. Mau Mau was a response to the increasing exploitation of the blacks at the hands of a white settler minority that looked to developments in South Africa as their model. Mau Mau was a national liberation movement that had the support of the overwhelming majority of the Kikuyu, the largest tribe in Kenya, which was beginning to gain support among the other tribes. Thousands of brave men and women died fighting in its cause.

There were two great sources of unrest that fuelled this rebellion. First, the chronic land hunger of the great mass of the Kikuyu peasantry, many of whom were working for white farmers on land they considered their own. Secondly, the growing anger of black workers in Nairobi at their starvation wages, appalling living conditions, and the repression of their trade unions.

The political direction of the rebellion was provided by the workers of Nairobi. The East African TUC (EATUC) set up by a number of unions in May 1949, was the first organisation to call for majority rule and political independence in Kenya.

The dramatic strike-breaking activities of the 1945-51 Labour government in Britain are not widely known, but even less well known are its strikebreaking activities in Britain's colonies. In May 1950, the EATUC was barred and its leaders were arrested. A general strike was called in Nairobi and eventually spread throughout the whole country, involving over 100,000 workers.

A massive show of strength by troops, armoured cars and low-flying RAF aircraft, together with mass arrests, broke the strike after nine days. The Kenya Labour Department observed that trade unions should be encouraged to develop, but only 'slowly'. The general secretary of the EATUC, Makhan Singh, an Asian socialist who had great faith in the British Labour Party, was placed in detention without trial, where he remained for the next eleven years.

After this defeat, union activists increasingly threw themselves into the underground revolutionary movement that was to become known as 'Mau Mau'. It was the trade unions, in particular the Transport Union, that were to provide much of the organisational backbone for the movement in Nairobi.

At the height of the rebellion, Mau Mau virtually controlled the black districts of the city. It was here that recruits, funds, weapons, and supplies were collected for the Land of Freedom Armies in the forests. Nairobi was the hub of the rebellion.

When the British declared a state of emergency in October 1952 they believed that the crisis would be over in a matter of weeks. Within a little over a month over 8,000 suspects had been arrested, many of them moderates opposed to Mau Mau, such as

Jomo Kenyatta. Far from stamping out the movement, this repression provoked a full-scale rebellion that was to be only finally defeated at the end of 1956.

For a time, the rebels held the initiative, but with few modern weapons they could not exploit this advantage. They had overwhelming popular support, which left the British without eyes or ears in the black districts, blundering after the elusive rebel bands in the dark.

Only after the arrival of General Erskine in June 1953 did the British begin to regain the initiative. Nairobi was identified as the centre of the movement and so on 24 April 1954 some 25,000 troops and police occupied the city. They screened its entire black population. Over 15,000 people were interned without trial and thousands more were deported from the city back to the African reserves. Possession of a union card guaranteed internment.

After he had broken the movement in Nairobi, Erskine turned to the white settler areas and then to the African reserves. The black population was screened and thousands more suspects were interned. The intention was to push the Mau Mau into the forests, to cut them off from their supporters and then to hunt them down.

## A million people uprooted

Altogether around 77,000 blacks were interned and another 100,000 were deported from the city back to the African reserves where they were left without work and often homeless. In June 1954 the British began to concentrate the Kikuyu into guarded villages where they could be physically prevented from aiding the rebels. By October 1955 over one million people had been uprooted to new villages where, under the watchful eye of the police, they could sit and starve.

Cut off from their supporters, the Land and Freedom Armies were hunted down. A crucial part in this was played by the 'counter-gang' technique, using renegade Mau Mau, developed by the then Captain Frank Kitson. He is, of course, better known today as the author of *Low Intensity Operations*, a study of counter-insurgency methods for use in Britain itself.

The defeat of the Mau Mau was ruthless and brutal. Torture was routine and the shooting of prisoners commonplace. Alongside the unofficial terror, the British launched an unprecedented official terror. *Over 1,000 Mau Mau were hanged.* Most were hanged for offences less than 'murder', including 290 for possessing firearms and 45 for administering illegal oaths.

Officially 11,000 rebels were killed—the real figure was much higher. Some 6,000 troops and police were killed, only 63 of them white, and only 32 white civilians.

After Mau Mau had been defeated, the British government eventually gave independence to a corrupt, collaborationist black bourgeoisie headed by Jomo Kenyatta. Although the Mau Mau did not gain the fruits of their struggles, it was their revolt which challenged the position of the white settlers and prepared the ground for British withdrawal. ■

John Newsinger



Jomo Kenyatta rode to power on the backs of the Mau Mau