

socialist worker Review

June 1985 Issue 76

60p

THE BACKWARD MARCH OF LABOUR

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Liverpool: interview with Derek Hatton.
Should socialists be in the Labour Party?

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NOTES of the month

THE TORIES

Problems and pressures

AFTER THE rather feeble revolt of the wets in 'Centre Forward' last month, Margaret Thatcher could be forgiven for thinking that none of her opponents in the Tory Party can put up much of a fight. As she made clear to the Tory women's conference, she intends to continue as before. Yet, despite the failure of Pym and his followers so far to dent Thatcher's confidence, their revolt was the sign of much more than a few Tory MPs frightened of losing their seats.

It signified a much deeper worry among sections of the ruling class that Thatcher's monetarist policies are failing to solve any of the problems of British capitalism. They are not convinced that the Tories are winning the war against the working class and the unions with sufficient speed. Worse, the Tories are also presiding over a stagnant economy which isn't allowing British capitalism to complete successfully on a world scale.

Recent criticisms

This explains the recent criticisms of government policy from the heads of both ICI and the electrical combine GEC. Both want a change of course to expand the economy. The government claims such an expansion would be inflationary. But the rate of inflation is going up anyway—largely as a result of government policies.

Looked at from virtually any angle, government strategy isn't working. Thatcher hasn't been able to achieve her very basic aim to cut wages massively or increase profitability. Even her renewed attempt to do so, since her re-election in June 1983, has come up against something of a brick wall. After initial successes, in defeating the NGA at Warrington, and banning civil service trade unions at GCHQ, the government reached an impasse over the miners' strike.

Why don't we ask
the Argies for a
return match?



Although the eventual outcome of the strike was defeat for the miners the cost to the government was massive.

Other groups of workers were bought off to prevent them from fighting at the same time as the miners. The price of the coal strike prevented the Tories from implementing the tax cuts the government had promised. So although the ruling class scored a significant victory over the miners, the nature of the victory has not allowed them to press ahead with the sort of offensive against workers that they would like.

True, the anti-union laws are much more readily accepted by the union leaders today than they were a year ago. This is clearly welcomed by the employers. They know that, even if a sizeable minority of workers want to fight, they can be policed and kept in line by the threat of the law.

But it is also true that the level of wages in the private sector is much higher than predicted or desired. Even in the public sector the government has nowhere near achieved its aim of holding down wages.

As the *Sunday Times* reported last month: 'Pressures are already mounting for awards of more than double the government's 3 per cent public sector target for this year.'

This raises the prospect of 'a midsummer package of public spending cuts to hold the line on this year's spending. Any overrun would also threaten the £3.5 billion in tax cuts which Lawson hopes to make in his budget next spring.'

And, since the end of the miners' strike, the government has been remarkably hesitant to pick another confrontation with workers. Most groups of workers—precisely because of the sectionalism inside the working class—do not feel that they have been beaten. On the contrary a sizeable minority from teachers to post office workers (and even the abortive London tubes strike) have shown a remarkable level of combativity.

That minority will find it difficult to translate their anger into successful action, because of the pressure of the anti-union laws, the lack of organisation on the ground, and the tokenism of the union leaders.

Nonetheless the government is frightened of provoking these or other groups of workers—like the dockers—into a set piece confrontation, which can cost them economically and politically as the date of the next election draws nearer.

As the government falters over which direction to take, so its current pre-occupations must seem faintly ludicrous to those members of the ruling class who do want to solve the fundamental problems of British capitalism. Reform of the rates system, reform of the welfare system, abolition of the metropolitan councils and even privatisation do little to alter these problems. For such reforms to have any real effect they would have to be far reaching. Not only would that mean wholesale attacks on workers. It would also alienate and affect a large proportion of the middle classes—something Thatcher dare not do.

Opinion polls

No wonder the sort of strategy put forward by the wets is gaining increasing ground. A combination of increased public spending plus some sort of social contract with the unions looks much more appealing, even to many industrialists who might have rejected it a couple of years ago. Thatcher must be considering the option of making her own agreement with the union leaders.

But such an agreement would only postpone the problems, not solve them. Her other option would be to continue with all-out confrontation against sections of workers. But this is something which involves vast amounts of spending and the danger of increased unpopularity. At a time when the Tories have slipped to third place in the opinion polls it may be an option that no one is keen to try. ■

NOTES

of the month

LABOUR LEFT

Collapse at the crunch

THE MAIN beneficiary of Tory troubles is increasingly the Labour Party. A recent analysis of the shire county election results last month would give Labour an additional 55 parliamentary seats in the shire counties (highly unfavourable ground for Labour) if voting patterns were repeated in a general election. Unfortunately it is not the left in the Labour Party which is benefitting, but Kinnock and the right wing in the party. The right has regained control. This process has been aided by many erstwhile left wingers.

A couple of months ago we spelt out in this *Review* how the Labour left was lurching to the right. The only thing we underestimated was the speed with which it would happen. Today things are a little clearer, and much more ominous. There are a number of signposts which indicate the sharp rightward direction of so much of the Labour left.

The most obvious is the nearly total retreat over ratecapping. Ken Livingstone paved the way very early on. He already has his reward: Kinnock's support for his candidacy in Brent East. But he has been followed in rapid succession by the collapse of a number of other ratecapped councils—in particular Sheffield and Hackney. In both cases a number of Labour councillors defied the wishes of the people who elected them, and voted with Tories and Liberals to set a rate. They pretended that capitulating to the government policy would not mean cuts.

They have imposed the maximum possible legal rate increases. Their electors are going to have to pay to maintain existing services. And cuts are already being introduced by the back door (not filling vacant posts, failing to renew grants for voluntary organisations).

Livingstone and his supporters claim that they couldn't continue to fight because there was no mass support for opposition to ratecapping. This is nonsense. In the London

Borough of Islington, a recent opinion poll showed a clear majority for maintaining opposition. There is little reason to suppose a different position would have been taken elsewhere. The truth is that the bulk of the Labour councillors who mouthed opposition to ratecapping—and there are some honourable exceptions—never intended the crunch to come. They saw their stand as a bargaining ploy to wring a few more concessions from the government, not as a means of mobilising mass support.

Individuals moving to the right is bad enough. But what is happening in the Labour Party is a lot more significant than that. Those moving to the right are also determined to impose their will on those who still want to resist such a move.

NUPE—the union which was most closely identified with Bennism only three years ago—passed a resolution at its conference last month which opens the way for a witch-hunt. It calls for the expulsion of groups organising separately inside the Labour Party, and specifically names *Militant*.

It is almost certain to be followed by similar resolutions at other union conferences. It is a signal that the union block votes are lining up behind Kinnock to make sure that the right wing policies are adhered to.

Other straws in the wind are the isolation of Benn and Heffer on the Labour NEC; the dropping of Benn and Skinner as recommended left candidates by the Labour Coordinating Committee; and the rupture between Livingstone and his erstwhile allies on *Labour Herald*. None of these events is isolated. They are all part of a coherent and conscious policy.

The future in store

The move to the right now gives some idea how Labour will behave if it gets into office. No wonder Tony Benn and Eric Heffer complain that the document which will form the basis for Labour's next election campaign would be acceptable to the Alliance and even to wet Tories.

The fact that a future Kinnock government will be so right wing makes it even more important to argue for a revolutionary alternative. That is the importance of the SWP's open letter to *Militant*, calling for the building of a revolutionary alternative outside the Labour Party. It is also the idea behind the appeal to socialists which *Socialist Worker* has produced as a leaflet.

Most people in the Labour Party unfortunately accept the arguments for unity put by the right wing. But among the people angered and disillusioned by the sellouts over ratecapping, the betrayal by Livingstone and so on, there are a number who will reject capitulation to the right.

There is every sign that those people can be won to revolutionary ideas, and to the idea of building a revolutionary party which rejects the parliamentary road. The most urgent task of socialists today is to reach those people, and to put the arguments to them.

If that is done, then even despite the defeats, a larger and stronger revolutionary pole of attraction can be built. ■

COMMUNIST PARTY

No future?

AS EXPECTED the Eurocommunists won last month's special Communist Party congress. And they won it by a decisive two to one majority of the delegates.

The Communist Party's weekly *Focus* headlined this 'A vote for the future' and continued, 'The Communist Party has taken the first necessary step towards rebuilding its strength after months of intensive discussion around sharp differences.'

Certainly the Congress was a watershed in the Communist Party's history, but whether it gives the party much future is more doubtful.

The Congress has triggered the mechanisms for the long awaited split between Eurocommunists and Stalinists. There was scarcely any middle ground among the delegates. Nearly a third of them voted against the executive on every contentious vote, broke with previous CP congress tradition and voted against the final resolution, and refused to vote for a single one of the recommended list for the new executive. The majority of these Stalinist delegates are not going to bow to Eurocommunist discipline.

That discipline most certainly will be applied. The two thirds of the delegates on the Eurocommunist side voted down the appeals of each of the 42 Stalinists already disciplined with the same monolithic two to one votes.

Speaker after speaker from the Eurocommunists spelled out their willingness to take further action. As executive member Dave Priscott put it, to loud applause, 'Enough is enough. We are not going to put up with another two years like the last two.'

Those feelings were embodied in an amendment to the main resolution, passed with executive support, and that same two to one majority. It criticised the executive for being soft and called on it take 'swift and decisive action to put an end to undemocratic activities'.

Oppositional activity

By the time you read this article there should have been more than enough oppositional activity by the Stalinists to bring that amendment into play. On 7 and 9 June the two sides will resume combat at the annual general meeting of the People's Press Printing Society (the co-op which owns the *Morning Star*).

Each side will strain every muscle for a full mobilisation of its supporters to vote in the management committee which controls the *Morning Star*. All those who oppose the Eurocommunist official party slate will be

flouting congress and opening themselves up to disciplinary action.

Yet most of the active party members who support the Stalinists (and that's probably nearly half) will turn out to support *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater. The executive can hardly fail to respond. A new and bigger round of expulsions are likely to come in the next couple of months, and with that the possible exit of the Stalinists.

The new Eurocommunist CP that would come out of such a split would be a weak creature. CP membership has declined from the last official figure of 15,691 in 1983. Some oppositionists at the congress suggested that today's figure was as low as 11,500. Of these, less than half are active. A total split with the Stalinists would take away a third or more.

Even if they were successful at this year's AGM, the Eurocommunists would still not control the *Morning Star*—only five of the 17 places on the management committee are up for election. Their only significant political asset would be *Marxism Today*, now with a circulation of 13,500.

The Eurocommunists at the congress were proud of the way *Marxism Today* had put them 'at the centre of debate' and proud of its political content. The rightward drift embodied in the magazine was incorporated in the congress's main resolution. An amendment on the miners' strike criticised the 'focus on centralised mass picketing' as 'internalising the struggle, hardening the division of miner against miner' and 'diverting public attention, and the efforts of the miners, away from more effective campaigning to win the case for coal'.

Mass campaigning

The problem for the Eurocommunists is that however popular the politics of *Marxism Today* (and they certainly are popular today), they provide an argument for joining Neil Kinnock's Labour Party, *not* the CP. It is a problem the Eurocommunists ignore.

The only answer given at the congress as to how Eurocommunists differ from Labour's 'soft left' is that they believe in an emphasis on mass campaigning. The example they cited most was their activity against the Powell Bill and the Gillick ruling. It is a revealing example, for CP turnout on the demonstration against the Powell Bill was tiny.

The sad truth is that the new, purely Eurocommunist CP will not only be small and right wing, it will also be very inactive.

The future of the Stalinist wing of the party seems no brighter. Their performance at the Congress was distinctly lacklustre. It is not simply that they are in practice scarcely more left wing than the Eurocommunists. What is more striking is how, for even the most articulate of them, the clock seems to have stopped somewhere in the 1950s.

Thus one of the best-respected Stalinist intellectuals, historian John Foster, included in his attack on today's *Marxism Today* praise for the turgid and little-read magazine produced by its previous editor, James Klugmann.

And the industrial cutting edge of the Stalinists' congress delegation was provided by delegates like ex-dockers' leader Bernie

Steer, Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions organiser Kevin Halpin, and sacked Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson. The one thing these figures have in common is that whereas they did count for something in industrial muscle ten or fifteen years ago, today they have little or no base.

It must be doubtful whether the Stalinists have the desire or the ability to launch an alternative party when they are thrown out of the Communist Party. More likely they will form a loose grouping around a *Morning Star* which is now effectively kept afloat by its Eastern European circulation (bigger than its British one) and gradually drift into the Labour Party. There they will find a home among an already existing Stalinist section of the soft left. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

A question of power

THE APARTHEID regime in South Africa is in trouble. President P W Botha recently spoke of 'a dramatic escalation of the revolutionary climate'. He was speaking of the revolt which has spread across the black townships of South Africa since last September, leading so far to 38 deaths. But the crisis runs much deeper.

One way of seeing this is to pursue the comparison often made between the present disturbances and the great struggles against apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s.

There are indeed many parallels, some of them rather eerie—the police chose to shoot 19 people dead near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape on 21 March, precisely 25 years after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. The forthcoming trial of black leaders for the capital crime of high treason echoes the marathon

treason trial mounted by the regime against its most prominent opponents in 1956-61.

The resistance is led by two nationalist groups, the United Democratic Front and the National Forum, whose politics mirror respectively those of the historic organisations of the black resistance in South Africa, the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress.

The UDF, like the ANC, seeks to build a broad democratic alliance against apartheid, while the Forum follows the PAC in laying great emphasis on the racial nature of the struggle, refusing to work with white opponents of the regime. Resistance organisation is now more widespread and open than at any time since the early 1960s.

But there is one enormous difference between South Africa in the 1950s and today. That is the astonishing growth and strength of the black trade unions. The 1950s were years of economic depression in South Africa, during which the state and the employers were able without too much difficulty to smash the African trade unions which had been built before and during the Second World War.

The South African economy is in the depths of recession today. Yet the organised black working class has grown astonishingly in size and militancy. African trade union membership rose from 220,000 in 1980 to 670,000 in 1983, an increase of some 200 per cent. Last year 378,000 working days were

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of the month

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM ★ 26



Atlanta—capital of Georgia, central point of growth as the American boom moves to the south and west.

The boom is analysed by Pete Green's article, 'Contradictions of the American boom'.

Colin Sparks: Labour and imperialism
★ Chris Bambery: Marx and Engels and the unions
★ Sue Cockerill: The municipal road to socialism
★ Norah Carlin: Is the family part of the superstructure?
★ Kieran Allen: James Connolly and the 1916 rebellion

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'lost' in black strikes, an all-time record, despite the recession.

It is the combination of the community resistance *and* the black trade unions which poses such a severe threat to the regime. Botha's strategy has been one of divide and rule—political rights for Coloureds and Indians, economic concessions to the 'section tenners' (the minority of Africans who have the right under the apartheid laws to live in 'white' urban areas), intensified controls over the rest of the black population languishing in the tribal 'Homelands', and greater privileges and power for the middle class black councillors running townships like Soweto and Sebokeng.

Black trade unions

The past nine months have blown this all apart. The UDF successfully mounted a boycott of the elections to the new Coloured and Indian chambers of parliament. The township uprisings smashed the collaborationist political structures. And the black trade unions have penetrated far beyond the relatively privileged 'section tenners'. The National Union of Mineworkers now has 130,000 members in the gold and coal mines, an astonishing achievement for a union less than three years old organising a workforce made up largely of migrant workers.

The great stay-away (general strike) last November illustrated the potential in the present situation. It was called by an alliance of community and trade union organisations, marking the first major joint action by the two main independent union federations, FOSATU and CUSA, with the UDF.

Its aftermath was also instructive. SASOL, the state-backed company which converts coal into oil, sacked 6,000 black workers in its Secunda complex for taking part in the stay-away and sent them back to the Homelands from which they came.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union, which had 3,000 members in the complex, mounted a campaign with the support of the rest of the trade union movement. The sacked strikers continued to meet back in the Homelands. Five thousand of the nine thousand blacks employed in SASOL's coal mines signed up with the CWIU. In the end management backed down, agreeing at the beginning of March to take back at least 70 percent of the sacked workers, restoring the union its previous rights within the complex,

and recognising shop stewards for the first time.

The *South African Labour Bulletin* commented on the agreement: 'Whilst this undoubtedly involved compromise on the question of numbers, SASOL's original project—to effectively smash the union—was prevented. This represents a considerable achievement, given the harsh terrain on which the union fought.' It also suggests that the independent unions are increasingly able to organise migrant labourers, and therefore to counter the employers' traditional method of sacking strikers and replacing them with new workers imported from the countryside.

No wonder that *The Economist* recently complained, after the security police had murdered FOSATU shop steward Andreas Ruditsela in custody, provoking 25,000 people to stop work and attend his funeral: 'The South African government is helping to create the thing it dreads: a black South African version of Poland's Solidarity.'

The struggles have forced the regime to backtrack. There are signs that Botha is quietly abandoning what is left of the ideology of 'separate development', under which Africans may only exercise political rights in the tribal Homelands. *Verligte* (reformist) intellectuals in the ruling National Party are exploring, with the encouragement of big business, a 'federal' solution, under which considerable power is devolved to regional authorities in which middle class blacks are heavily represented.



Nelson Mandela

More important is the question of the ANC. It is the most important (though by no means the only) political force among black South Africans, even though it has been banned for a quarter of a century and its leaders are in gaol or in exile. The rise of the UDF from nowhere to two million supporters in less than two years is a tribute to the ANC's enduring influence.

The *Financial Times* observed recently: 'It is difficult to escape the conclusion that, at some time, the government will have to unban the African National Congress and talk to its leaders.'

The ANC embraces a variety of political currents ranging from straightforward bourgeois nationalism to the unreconstructed Stalinism of the South African Communist Party. The ANC president, Nelson Mandela, had no difficulty spurning Botha's offer to release him from prison if he would renounce the armed struggle mounted by Umkonto we Sizwe, the ANC's military wing. What would happen if Botha came up with serious concessions—for example, African political participation in the national government—is quite another matter.

Variety of currents

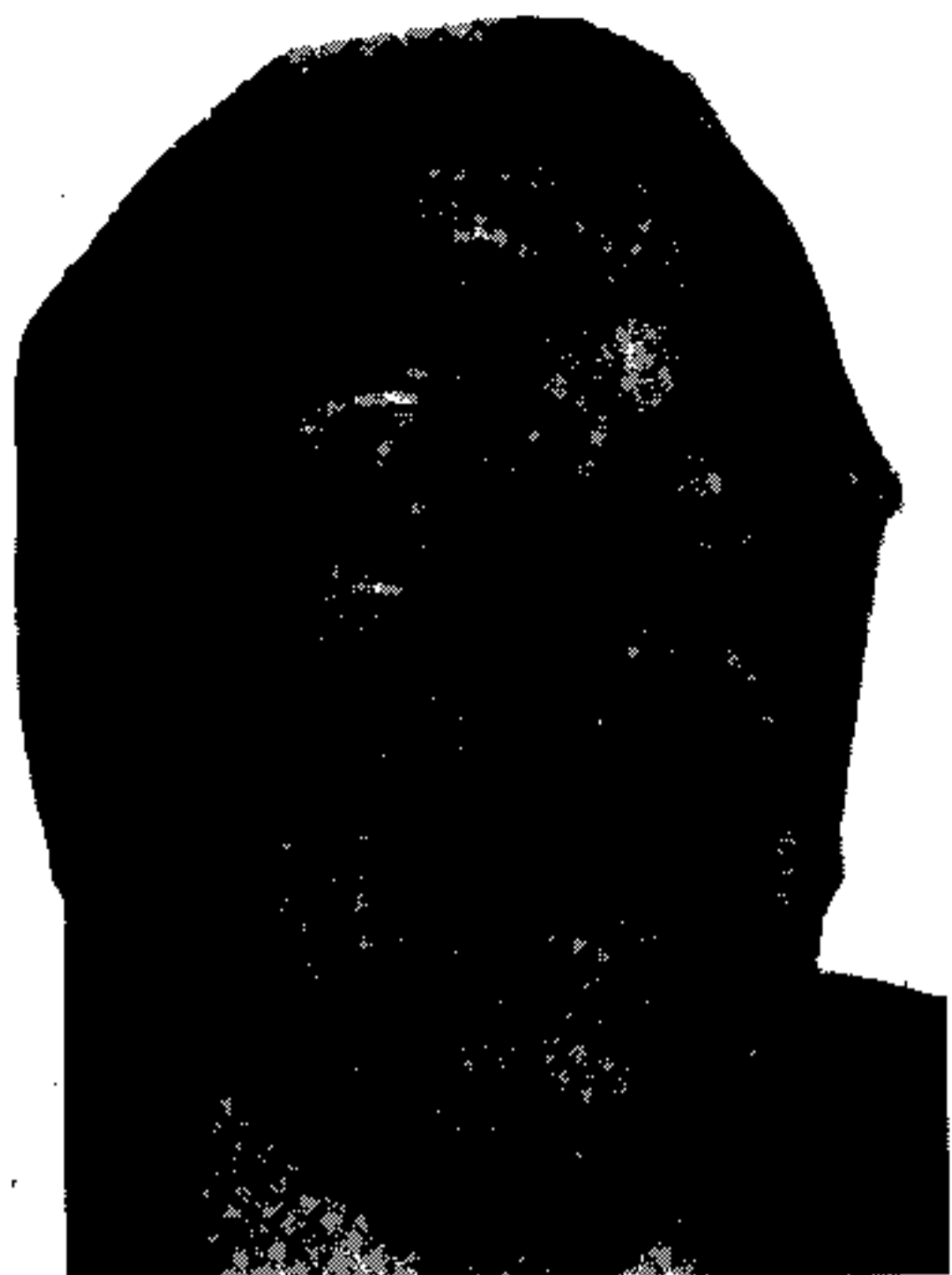
The fact that such questions are now on the agenda illustrates very clearly that what is at stake in South Africa is more than the survival of apartheid. Big business is pressing for quite far-reaching changes in racial legislation in order to ensure that capitalism continues to exist.

At the same time, no one should imagine that the apartheid system is at death's door. The state's monopoly of violence has not been seriously threatened. The regime's enormous repressive resources have yet fully to be tapped. In particular the state has long experience of containing the sort of township revolts which have raged in the Vaal Triangle and Eastern Cape in recent months. The urban riots represent a political defeat for Botha, but they have left state power intact. In that sense, South Africa is still a long way from a revolution.

Urban guerilla warfare is equally unlikely to inflict serious damage on the regime.

The essential question is that of power, which lies with the growing black working class. Debates have raged in and around the independent unions over whether they should affiliate to the UDF or the National Forum. The argument has tended to polarize between two false positions. The union leaders sometimes slip into a syndicalist refusal to look beyond trade union issues, while the UDF demands that the unions subordinate themselves to a class alliance led by the bourgeois nationalists.

Even the best trade union activists do not seem to recognise that working class interests can only be adequately defended through a socialist political organisation. The urgent and arduous task is the building, underground and illegally, of a party which seeks to mobilize workers' collective economic strength against the state. Until then, the potential displayed by recent struggles, to rid South Africa of capitalism as well as apartheid, will not be realised. ■



Santiago Carillo

SPAIN

Communists in conflict

'YOU HAVE gone down on your knees before this minority, Gordon, and it won't be long before they kick you upstairs and treat you like Carillo in Spain.'

If the above remark, made by Tony Chater to Gordon McLennan at the CP congress, has any truth in it, then McLennan should have cause to worry.

For a few weeks ago, life-long leader of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carillo, and nineteen other party leaders were expelled from the Central Committee. This marked the consummation of the most serious crisis in the party's history. There are many parallels between it and that of the much tinier British CP. And there are now effectively two Communist Parties, (PCE's) though neither side is prepared to admit it.

Ever since the first democratic elections in 1977, the party has found it increasingly difficult to define its role in Spanish politics. For forty years, during the Franco dictatorship the PCE had been the main focus of organised working class resistance, so it emerged during the transition with considerable credibility, regardless of their actual politics.

The PCE, like other European CPs, was completely wedded to reformism. Carillo in particular was a leading spokesman of Eurocommunism. In the late seventies they advocated a government which would include all the main parties including that of former Franco minister Manuel Fraga. Predictably, they urged moderation by workers and were only too pleased to sign Spain's first 'social contract' in 1977. But after the first euphoria of the post Franco period, militancy began to ebb, and so did the fortunes of the PCE.

Unable to really differentiate themselves

from their Socialist Party rivals, the PSOE, the party lost ground. Party membership has dropped from over 200,000 in 1978 to around 60,000 now. The decline of membership in the Communist-led union, the Workers' Commissions, (CCOO) has been even sharper. The Catalan CCOO has dropped from half a million to 60,000 during the last six years.

The party's vote halved to one million between 1977 and 1982, while their representation in parliament fell from 23 to four. As a result of this electoral disaster, Carillo resigned from his post as General Secretary, handing the job to the young unknown Gerardo Iglesias. The latter was considered a Carillo protégé—more cynical observers expected him to be a stopgap until Carillo's eventual return. Things haven't exactly turned out that way.

Bankrupt remedies

Even before this latest division, the party was suffering from internal dissent from both left and right. Leading party economist Ramon Tamames left with others, claiming the party wasn't Eurocommunist enough. More serious has been the loss of members to the pro-Soviet factions. These elements want to reclaim the party's loyalty to Russia and 'proletarian internationalism'. Their return to the language of class struggle and a certain basic gut militancy has appealed to many worker militants disgruntled with the PCE's moderation and class collaborationist policies.

The most important split of this kind was in the industrial heartland of Catalonia three years ago. The local party, the PSUC, had always been the PCE's strongest section. Its influence seemed to be reaching Italian style proportions in the late 70s. There, the local pro-Soviets seemed set to take over the PSUC leadership, only to be prevented at the cost of splitting the party in two. Many of the party's activists left to form the new Partit de las Communistes Catalans (PCC).

Meanwhile one of the PCE's leaders, Ignacio Gallego, left to form the new Partido Comunista. Unlike the Eurocommunists the PC is picking up new members who identify with its international stand and crude Stalinist demagoguery.

This brings us to the more serious division between the supporters of Carillo and those

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of Iglesias. On the face of it, the dispute is over conflicting electoral strategies. How can the PCE win back the million or so voters who defected to the PSOE in 1982? Iglesias' plan is to find a new political 'convergence' of left and progressive parties, pacifists, feminists, and trade unionists to build an alternative to the socialists (a 'Social Bloc of Progress').

Carillo has denounced this as liquidating the role of the party and has counterposed an electoral alliance based on the 'unity of all communists'. However Carillo still favours electoral collaboration with other political forces, including former UCD prime minister Adolfo Suarez—who recently has made a sharp turn left.

In the CCOO, both factions have been vying to present themselves as leading a fightback against the government. The CCOO has found itself leading a small but significant, resurgence of workers' struggles rather by default than by intention. The most immediate result of this is the call for a one day general strike in June—the idea of the Iglesias faction.

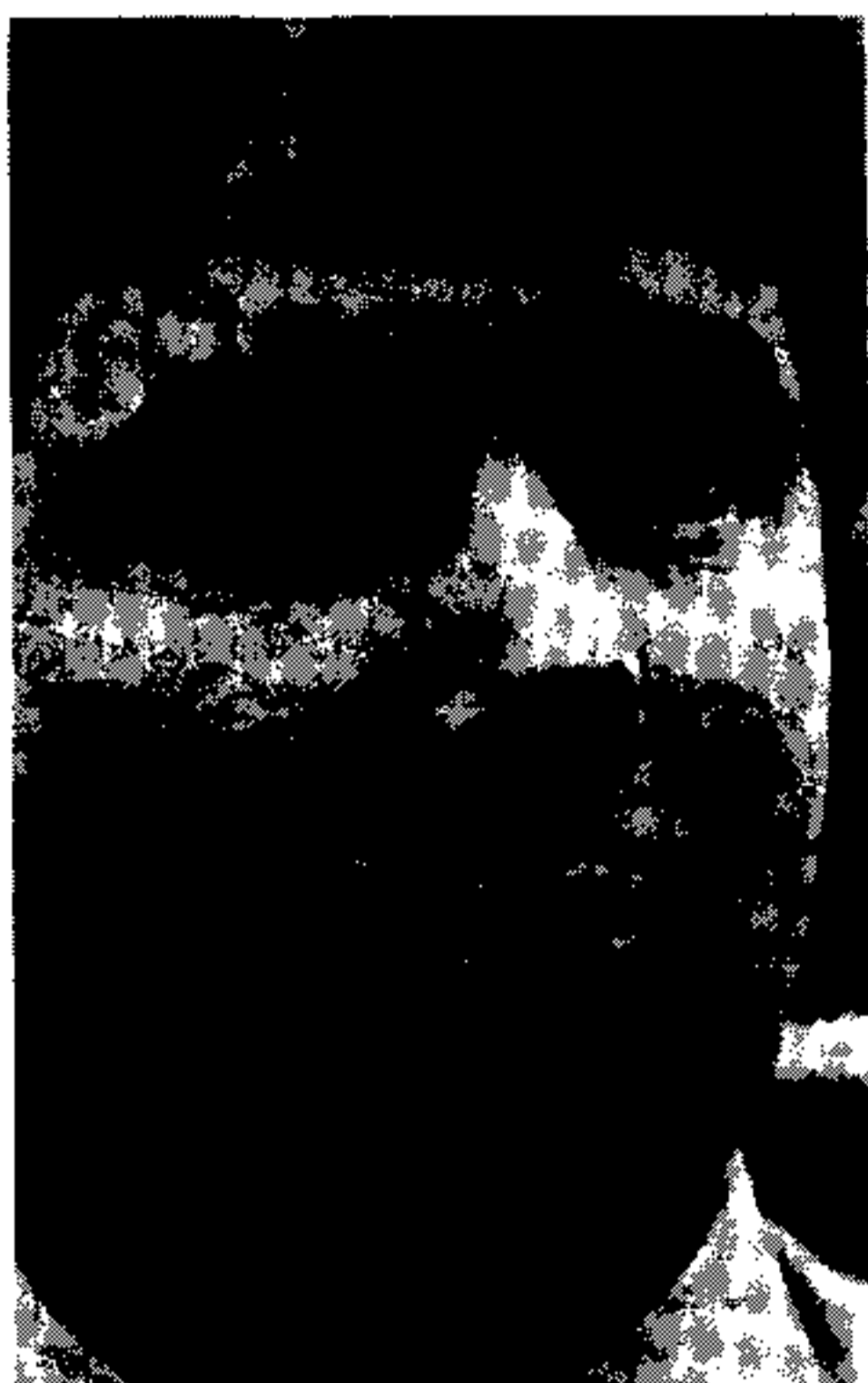
But in reality there is no *fundamental* difference between Iglesias and Carillo, despite the latter's bluster about the 'historic role of the party'. The dispute is about who is going to control the party. Carillo—after over forty years as its principal leader—isn't going to give up easily. The result is a serious division throughout the party, with parallel committees and structures at many levels. In Madrid, both sides claim 80% adherence to their positions.

Elsewhere, such as Valencia or the Basque Country, the official party machine has sided with Carillo.

What's more, when the Spanish elections do take place next year it is highly unlikely that any other major organisation will want to play electoral games with the PCE. The end result will probably be an even sorer mess than before. The truth is that all factions—Eurocommunist, super-Eurocommunist or pro-Soviet—are equally politically bankrupt, tied to the same old reformist and bureaucratic remedies. The creation of a real revolutionary alternative remains outside their ranks. ■

Additional notes from Alex Callinicos, Andy Durgan and Pete Goodwin.

'Still in the frame'



LIVERPOOL COUNCIL is still holding out against government public spending cuts. PAT STACK and MAUREEN WATSON talk to DEREK HATTON, deputy leader of Liverpool council, and Militant supporter, about the council's stand.

Overleaf, an analysis of the council and an examination of its future prospects.

What have been your achievements since you came to power?

DH: When we first came to power in May 83 it was against a background of not only ten years of Liberal and Tory misrule, but also an old Labour Party in office prior to 1972, which paved the way for the Liberals coming to office.

We came to power on the promise of building houses, creating jobs and improving services. So the first thing we did was not to make the 1,000 redundancies the Liberals had budgeted for. We actually created 1,000 extra jobs. That means there are now 2,000 people working in the city who wouldn't be working if we hadn't won the election in 1983.

Secondly, by the end of the year, we will have built, or started to build 3,700 council houses, which is nearly twice the number of every other major city and council in the country put together.

On top of that we were aware that there had never been a fully comprehensive educational system in this city. It was probably the only Labour city in the country where that hadn't happened. It was a real mixed bag, of some comp, some private and some in the middle. It just hadn't worked.

That, coupled with the massive cutbacks in the education budget over the years, had meant that the schools were falling apart. We

then brought in a fully comprehensive, mixed system which is coming on stream in September this year.

And while it's certainly true that when we first announced it there was massive opposition, we finally convinced the majority of the city that it was for the good of all. And that it wasn't the case that the good schools were coming down to the level of the bad schools, but that the bad schools would be coming up to the level of the good schools.

And the public education job of convincing people was actually done. It's probably one of the best examples of it around. **Do you think that you'll be able to achieve the same sort of deal with the government again this year?**

DH: The Tory government are a very revengeful group. And they are revengeful towards us as the people who gave them a smack in the nose last year. And just as the NUM was victorious in 72 and 81, so they mobilised to get back at them. I think they want to get back at us this year because of last year.

What is likely to happen if the government refuse to do a deal and go all out to get their revenge? What then happens to the council?

DH: I think it's very difficult to assess what will happen at that stage in time. What we're saying is that we are involved in a campaign to improve services and jobs and that we are continuing to do so. The ball is very much in the government's court. At each step along the way things are changing. As far as we are concerned, we are clear and consistent in what we are doing. It's them who aren't certain about what they are doing.

And if they force you along the path then you'll actually go to the point where you are surcharged?

DH: We are not prepared to see jobs and services lost in the city. At the end of the day if that means breaking Tory laws then we'll break Tory laws. Although we're not in the business of breaking laws for the sake of it, and we're not in the business of being martyrs for the sake of it, as long as the movement is there and the road that we take is the right road, then we'll go down it.

The key to any fight you have with the government is the support of trade unionists in the city. Now some people have said to us that the feeling that was there last year is not there this year—that last year you were able to produce a deal without them having to do anything and that you will be able to do the same this year. Is that a danger?

DH: One of the things we managed to do last year was to persuade the wider trade union movement that what happened on the city council was of major importance to them.

Last year we persuaded people that it wasn't just a battle over what happened to the city council, but that it was a battle over the very survival of the city.

So on 29 March last year a lot of factories shut down. There was almost a general strike

in the city. This year we have lost some of that because the battle has been taken out of our hands.

This year we are doing it not only against the backdrop of last year, where certainly the government gave us the money before we had to go over the brink. But on top of that there is confusion around as a result of it not just being Liverpool. Last year it was Liverpool who started it, Liverpool who carried it out and Liverpool who finished it.

It has a big psychological effect on workers in the city when they see they are part of a national campaign.

This year they see the crunch coming in London or Sheffield. They don't see Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn or John Hamilton blasting away on the TV or radio. They see Ken Livingstone or David Blunkett.

In some ways Liverpool is seen as a bit provincial in all this.

We weren't last year and we won't be next year. People knew last year that they were part and parcel of all of the decision making. This year we are only one part of it. In fact this year when we go down to national meetings our policies are overturned far more often than we win.

Over what sort of things do you get out-voted?

DH: Well the whole strategy of not setting a rate is one that we are left having to defend when at the beginning we didn't even want it as a strategy.

People who have gone out of the frame are now saying that we should have gone for a deficit budget. You can't win.



Given what's happening, do you think you have put too many eggs in the national basket?

DH: I don't think we had any alternative. Given that other local authorities were making a stand against the government we would have been entirely wrong if we had turned and said that we were going to go it alone.

And whilst we may have disagreements with them, at the end of the day there are a number of local authorities fighting the



government and we have to be part of that fight.

But you will stand firm no matter what the other six councils do?

DH: Whatever the other six do we will stand firm on the question of services. Whether or not we will use the same tactics that we are using at this time will have to be determined by the party, because as I said, we have been left with a tactic that we didn't want in the first place, and we may not necessarily want to continue with it as a tactic.

But whatever tactic we follow it will have the bottom line of no loss in jobs and services.

What do you think about the collapse of the other councils?

DH: I think the fact that we still have seven councils in the frame is a great achievement. Who would have believed last year that we would have had this year, a situation in which a number of authorities are still in the position of non compliance with the government.

On the other hand not many people would have believed last year that Ken Livingstone and David Blunkett would already be gone out of the frame at this stage.

DH: In all fairness I don't think you can say them both in the same breath. Whilst it's regrettable what's happened in Sheffield, David Blunkett did remain firm to the end in terms of what his recommendations were. If the Labour Group went against him you can't really blame him for it.

Whereas Ken Livingstone, I believe, performed an act of open treachery in the movement and completely went against the policies he had been putting forward.

Last year you wouldn't have seen Livingstone and Blunkett rushing to support Kinnock. There is a move to the right in the Labour Party and part of that move is a witch

hunt against *Militant*. What do you intend to do about that and how do you see your own position in the Labour Party?

DH: Certainly the leadership of the party at the moment are completely out of touch with the rest of the Labour Party and the labour movement, of that there is no doubt.

But there is a very strong feeling amongst many working class people at the moment to unite behind one leadership just to get rid of Thatcher. And there are many on the right wing of the Labour Party who are capital-

ising on that feeling.

But soon people will see through quite a lot of what is happening and soon the chickens will come home to roost. Whenever the arguments are put and the work is done you can guarantee that the ideas that are put in the *Militant* newspaper will win the day.

Unfortunately at this moment in time much of the national publicity and much of the national leadership is doing all that it can to ensure the witch hunt happens.

Given the role he played during the miners' strike and the fact that he is likely to put himself at the head of the witch hunt, do you think that Kinnock's leadership should be challenged?

DH: I think that at the moment there are far more important things than whether Kinnock's leadership should be challenged. The important things are that party policy is carried out by the parliamentary leadership and that the NEC are used as the custodians of that policy.

I think that at the next annual conference there is going to be a major campaign to change the composition of the NEC. The parliamentary leadership are able to get away with much of what they do because the NEC are giving them support.

With the NEC changed that would be a different ball game. It's more important to get the NEC changed than to go for Kinnock himself. Whether it's Kinnock or whoever, it doesn't make much difference. It's the way the party is moving which counts.

Isn't that going to be quite difficult given that a lot of the figure heads of the left seem to be moving towards Kinnock?

Let's see what happens at annual conference. I think that when it comes down to it people will see that the sort of line adopted by Liverpool, if translated onto a national basis, is the only way to get rid of Thatcher. ■



City in crisis

'WHATEVER it's faults, the fact is that if it weren't for this Labour Council I would probably be out of a job.' This response from one Liverpool council worker is not untypical of many council employees.

It is hardly surprising. The council saved one thousand jobs and created a thousand new ones. Their 'Urban Regeneration Programme' has led to the building of 3,700 new council houses. Their achievements are an interesting contrast to most other left Labour councils, and their results more impressive.

Labour inherited a city devastated by unemployment and urban decay. After the Toxteth riots in 1981 the Tories made a few token gestures towards the problems. As a striker from the big GEC factory in the city put it, 'Heseltine came, they planted a few trees amongst the rubble, and went away again.' In comparison, the efforts of the city council to solve some of the problems at least seem serious.

The deal the council got last year, despite its many faults, was certainly more impressive than the collapse of Livingstone, Blunkett and the rest this time round.

The deal involved the government removing £20,000,000 of penalties, and conceding an extra £8,000,000 to the council. This enabled the council to continue their policy of no job loss. They helped to finance their policies with a substantial rates rise—paid for by the workers of Liverpool. Nonetheless, they have the image of having stood up and fought against Thatcher.

It is important to understand why Liverpool achieved the deal they did last year. It took place because of the real difficulties facing the government. The miners were on strike and the deal was actually done in the week that the dockers had come out as well. All the pressures were on the government to avoid confrontation on another front—with a council that had shown it could mobilise workers on an impressive scale to support it.

Indeed part of the criticism that *Socialist Worker* carried at that time, was that the council should have opened that second front and not agreed to government concessions. This argument could prove very important to the outcome of the issue this year.

There is little chance of a similar deal being offered this year. As leading Labour councillor and *Militant* supporter Pauline Dunlop put it, 'The government are out to get us.'

Certainly the government got some public egg on its face over the deal, and this year it has no miners' strike to contend with. The collapse of the various Labour councils also strengthens its hand. It is hard to see any such deal being done. What then will the council do?

Pauline Dunlop was adamant:

'At the end of the day Liverpool will

still be there. We were there first and we will be there last. We were on our own last year. So although we would prefer it if other councils came with us, we are prepared to go on fighting on our own. The only options are sacking people and a massive rate increase, or standing firm.'

Whether that resolve will remain if it comes to a choice of being surcharged and handing over to the Liberals and Tories, or managing the cuts themselves, remains to be seen. Clearly the only way that choice can be avoided is if workers in Liverpool are mobilised on a massive scale in defence of the council against the Tories.

Last year the council was able to mobilise on a scale far greater than any of the other left councils. Tens of thousands took part in a one day strike, there were massive demonstrations, in factories as well as among local government workers. When Derek Hatton went to speak at Fords, 1,000 workers turned up to hear him. Because of the deal with the government it was a potential never fully realised. Could mobilisations on the same scale happen this year?

Pauline Dunlop certainly thinks so:

'There's more support amongst the workforce this year although there isn't the same buzz. It's like the Bolsheviks in Russia. There wasn't that support for them until it came to the crunch. When it comes to the crunch for us, people will support us.'

Unshared optimism

This is an optimism not shared by many. The general feeling in the city seems to be that the demonstrations and meetings have been smaller. There's much less talk of militant action, and for many, particularly workers in the private sector, the mood seems to have gone.

A Ford worker told us that the council didn't really seem all that relevant to their problems. A GEC striker said:

'It's hard to assess any improvements from our point of view. There seem to be more buildings going up, but if the rates go up Labour will get the blame for it. I don't think they'll get the same support again! Morally they're right, but people are starting to say that you can't win.'

The real problem facing the council is that, despite all their efforts, they are only really scratching at the surface of the city's problems. Seventeen inner city areas have been designated 'Urban Regeneration Areas'. This still leaves the majority of the city untouched.

The jobs saved and created in local government do little in terms of the overall unemployment of the city. The council houses built cannot be enough to alter the living conditions of the vast majority.

For most workers life seems much the same as before: unemployment, bad

housing, dirty streets, little entertainment or leisure, and very little money. A picket outside GEC put it this way: 'The only thing we have to look forward to on Merseyside is our football teams.'

And a council worker and NALGO member explained the problem of building a fight back from another perspective:

'The campaign this year has slithered to a halt and that's basically because there doesn't seem to be any movement.'

'Last year we had the deadline till the end of March, and we all honestly thought that we would either end up not getting paid or get the sack. Then the deal happened and eventually it was all sorted out in July, and now people seem to feel it'll be alright—they'll sort it out in July again.'

Others have said that tying Liverpool to the national ratecapping campaign has weakened its ability to mobilise.

Another serious problem involves the contradiction between the council as socialists and the council as employers. This contradiction has led them into a number of messy disputes with their own workforce, and led to criticisms of their 'dictatorial' attitudes and refusal to negotiate.

Last year when workers from the housing benefit office went on strike the council refused to even talk to them. And there have been a series of disputes this year, particularly with NALGO. The council is also embroiled in legal action with the local NUT.

Perhaps the most well known affair is the now infamous Sam Bond dispute. This dispute centres on the appointment of a *Militant* supporter to the post of Principal Adviser to the city's Race Relations Unit.

It has gained national publicity, led to NALGO boycotting the unit, and to torrents of abuse being heaped on the council and *Militant*. Some of the left even accused them of being racist.

Others complained that it was a political appointment. This is something the council does not deny.

'As far as we are concerned,' said Pauline Dunlop, 'on the Sam Bond issue, we are quite clear that some appointments are political. There are some people who are deliberately obstructive. There are enough of them already. For that reason we make political appointments. Race Relations Councils are usually about putting out glossy leaflets and telling people they shouldn't be racist. We wanted someone who would go out into the community and lead a campaign against racism.'

The main opponents of the appointment are the local Black Caucus who feel the job should have been given to one of their number. They claim, and others have claimed on their behalf, that they represent the black community in Liverpool. It is a claim Pauline Dunlop disputes:

'Most people in the black community don't know anything about the Black Caucus. If the black community really objected to Sam Bond we would have had hundreds of letters. We haven't. If these same people were in charge they would want their policies carried out. We're in charge and we want our policies carried out.'

There is little doubt that the whole issue raised a number of problems and could have been handled more sensitively. It is also true that *Militant* have angered many activists by lining up with Kinnock against black sections. But there is nothing racist about Dunlop's assertions. Her honesty about political appointments is in interesting contrast to the hypocrisy of many who have attacked her, while pretending that the GLC, Sheffield and the like don't make political appointments.

The whole affair has become one which those to the right of *Militant* use as a stick to beat them with.

The Bond issue has become part of a campaign of vilification and hatred from the right wing and the local press. The Liberals, who for years ran an inefficient and lazy council which sat idly by as the great mass of Liverpudlians saw conditions getting worse and worse, now carry a vicious campaign against the council, and in particular against Derek Hatton.

The *Liverpool Echo* faithfully reproduce every allegation and throw every bit of mud they can, and with some success. In a recent bye-election in the solidly working class area of Dingle, Labour lost to the Liberals. There were a number of reasons for the defeat, but certainly one was a systematic campaign of smears against Hatton.

Added to all this is the increasing witch-hunt against *Militant* in the Labour Party. With sections of the left moving into the Kinnock camp, and with others having to defend their own climbdown over rate-capping, it is unlikely that there will be much support for Liverpool should the council decide to go it alone.

Attacks on the council have come from some interesting quarters.

The *New Statesman* ran an article alleging corruption by leading city councillors and the *Morning Star* ran a disgraceful article entitled 'Danger: Militant in Merseyside' in which it didn't even bother to look at the council's record. Instead it attacked the evils of Trotskyism. The article states:

'*Militant* itself, however, is not interested in what it sees as "bread and butter" politics. In other words there is a bigger responsibility than working to involve people in ongoing struggle on issues that affect people's daily lives.'

If this is true of a council that has saved jobs, built twice as many council houses than all other councils put together, and is still involved in the fight over ratecapping, then what conclusions does one draw about the rest of the Labour councils?

The problems facing the council are very serious ones. Only a small minority actually benefit or see that they benefit from the council. Anything short of all-out confrontation is likely to lead to job loss and service losses, or massive rate rises. Yet all-out confrontation either has to have industrial action as its pivot or it is doomed to failure. Even the best of Labour councils is caught in the trap of trying to operate in a capitalist world, and not lose the support of workers.

The dilemma facing the council is a classic one for reformists. The problem is that once you try and work within the framework of the existing system and change that system



Is the support still there?

you are forced to accept the logic of the system. This is not a problem that goes away merely because the leading participants in the Liverpool experience, like the *Militant* supporters, do not see themselves as reformist. They are trapped in exactly the same logic as Labour governments or the government of Mitterrand in France.

It is often the case that such governments can and do carry out a number of reforms in the early stages of their office. But they find that they have to bow to the demands of the system, particularly the system in crisis.

Mitterrand's first year in government saw a series of reforms and nationalisation on a relatively wide scale. It was held up by many on the left as showing the immense possibilities for reform. The story since then has been a sorry tale of betrayal and disillusion, and policies very similar to those of Thatcher.

The pressures on the Labour council can only increase. This year there is no miners' strike, no dock strike, and less apparent active support from workers in the city. Any strategy based on uniting with other councils is an illusion, as one after another they cave

in like a house of cards. The council is very isolated.

The temptation to do some sort of deal can only get greater. The argument 'if we hadn't done it the Liberals would be running the city' can become more and more popular. The danger then is that the Labour council can end up doing the Tories' dirty work for them: making cuts, introducing redundancies, holding down wages, and all with the justification that the alternative is worse.

If this is how it all ends then it can only lead to demoralisation and cynicism, and strengthens the hand of the right. The question of what the council does is therefore important for all socialists. We must support the council and the workers of Liverpool against the Tories. But there must be no dirty deals.

If this means the councillors being surcharged then that is what must happen. In the end the key to avoiding a defeat though will not lie merely with the actions of individual councillors, but on how successful they are in mobilising the great majority of workers to take up the fight. ■

Bring out your dead

THERE IS an old joke that while the *Daily Express* is read by people who want the country run like it was 50 years ago, the *Daily Telegraph* is read by people who think the country is run like it was 50 years ago.

Even a cursory look at the *Telegraph* shows that there is more than a little truth in this. The paper is the last Fleet Street stronghold of old-fashioned conservatism, of the retired army colonel and elderly twin-set pearls and blue-rinse brigade.

The rest of the millionaire press feels obliged to make some sort of a positive effort to win readers over to their view of the world. This is true whether it be the *Sun's* amoral Tory populist individualism, the *Mirror's* moderate Labourism or the *Express's* little Englandism. The *Telegraph* is so confident of the strength of conservative values among its readership that it makes no such effort.

There is no real attempt to argue the Conservative case in the paper, because it is secure in the knowledge that its readership is already among the converted, and so immersed in old-fashioned Toryism as to be deaf to argument. For example, it needn't bother to attack trade unions, because the readership is already so solidly anti-union that it doesn't need convincing or, at least at the present time, mobilising.

Court Circular

This musty old-fashioned conservatism shapes the *Telegraph's* form, as well as its content. The paper has a peculiarly mummified quality about it, so that each new issue looks out of date even before you buy it. Excitement of any kind is avoided scrupulously, presumably because many of its readers' hearts wouldn't stand the strain: indeed one suspects that a significant proportion of its readers are dead already!

For anyone who has not got a mind like a dusty, cobwebbed sitting room full of old furniture and dead flowers, or is not already dead, the *Telegraph* is an excruciatingly boring paper to read. Typically, it still prints the Court Circular every day, so that its readers will always know what the Royal Family is up to. What possible interest this could be to anyone other than a potential assassin is, of course, a complete mystery.

While the *Telegraph* does not usually bother to editorialise against the unions or the left, the occasions when it does, gives a good insight into its system of values. At long last the teachers' dispute is obviously beginning to cause the government some concern, and so the *Telegraph* has made its own position 'clear', if that is the word.

Amazingly, state education was referred

Daily Telegraph

to as 'the nationalised sector' an interesting indication of the paper's assumptions: that private education is the normal healthy thing, and that state education is some kind of foolish aberration undermining the national fibre. Indeed, all the current problems can be traced back to the Butler Education Act of 1944.

The paper concedes that teachers are poorly paid, but it blames this on state control of education, which has made teachers dependent on 'tax-generated handouts'. Inevitably, being employed by the state has led to teachers being 'proletarianised' and to their becoming 'proletarians', so that their low pay only reflects their decline in status. However, many teachers are so bad at their jobs that what pay they do get is, in fact, more than they are worth.

Things are not helped by the fact that education authorities are dominated by 'race relations witchfinders and maniacs of one sort or another'. Obviously drastic measures are necessary to restore standards, and the paper advocates sacking large numbers of the 'lower-quality' teachers in order to divide their pay among the grateful remainder. There is no discussion of what the teachers' unions would think about all this, because of course, in an ideal *Daily Telegraph* world there wouldn't be any teachers' unions.

As part of its VE Day coverage, the *Telegraph* inflicted on its readers the full text of Ronald Reagan's eloquently hypocritical speech at Bitburg in Germany:

'I am a Berliner, I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-semitism; I am an Afghan; and I am a prisoner in the Gulag. I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam; I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban,

and a Mistito Indian in Nicaragua.'

Whereas Thatcher didn't know which country she was in on her recent tour, Reagan didn't know which country he was from. Leaving aside the man's chronic identity crisis, what stands out most is that he is not a black South African, a Salvadorean trade unionist, a Guatemalan peasant or a Palestinian refugee.

His homely little story of American and German soldiers fraternising on Christmas Day 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge was later revealed to have been lifted from an old *Readers' Digest*, along with the rest of his knowledge of international affairs. What is astonishing is that the *Telegraph* believed its readers would want to read the whole of Reagan's nauseating exercise in self-justification.

The *Telegraph* gave space to that arch cold-war warrior Robert Conquest, to pour scorn on those who objected to Reagan's Bitburg visit. Did they object, he asked when their leaders attended Chernenko's funeral, because after all he had served with NKVD forces in Kazakhstan, that were responsible for a number of massacres? Or what about their leaders' rubbing shoulders with Russian Vice-Premier Gaider Alier who had served in the notorious State Security, torturing and murdering in Azerbaijan for 28 years from 1941?

Good questions. We must not allow ourselves any illusions about the criminal nature of the Russian ruling class, but, as always, Conquest uses his considerable knowledge not just to attack the Soviet regime, but also to apologise for Reagan and Thatcher. He even hints at Russian funding for CND! What is worth remembering, however, is that Stalin was Churchill's ally and Roosevelt's ally. He was never ours. ■

John Newsinger



Unnatural relations?

AMONG the string of 'moral issues' currently obsessing the popular press, a new topic and a new term have entered the field: surrogate motherhood. Why has so much argument been generated by this issue? Why do even socialists disagree among themselves about its implications?

The term 'surrogate mother' is not, in fact, a new one, but it has been turned on its head by the press in recent months. Until the current outburst of discussion, a surrogate mother was simply a woman who substituted herself for a child's biological mother when this 'natural mother' was dead, absent or incapacitated. This was always regarded, in discussions of child development, as a positive role—second best, perhaps, in the eyes of conservative child psychologists, but necessary and helpful.

Now, it seems, the 'surrogate mother' is the one who hands over the baby she has borne to another woman to rear, and the *Sun* leaves us in no doubt that this is a very negative act, a hitherto unheard form of unnatural behaviour and a measure of the moral degeneracy of our society.

Many socialists have reacted strongly against the commercial element in the much-publicised case of Baby Cotton, who was conceived by artificial insemination (not outside the womb, as many people seem to believe) and handed over after birth to her natural father and his wife who would otherwise have remained childless.

The class prejudice of the judge who allowed the baby to be handed over, on the grounds that her father and his wife were rich and respectable, was revolting. Why should rich couples obtain a child in this way, which working class people could not afford and could not justify in this judge's terms? But if this is the only issue, why should this service not be available for all childless couples, free and on the National Health? The biological mothers who were prepared to offer this service could then be paid a decent reward, whoever they were. There are far worse ways of earning a living.

The separation of babies from their biological mothers is very far from new. Up to the middle of the last century, it was very common indeed. Large numbers of mothers, both rich and poor (though for a variety of different reasons) sent their babies out of their own homes to wet-nurses almost as soon as they were born. The babies did not usually return home until they were weaned, at any age between one and two.

Until much more recently, when many working class couples had more children than they felt they could support, it was common for one or more of them to be handed over to a childless aunt or a grandmother to be brought up, receiving more individual love and attention than they could have had in a large and poor family, and it could not be argued that this did anybody any harm.

Meanwhile, rich women even at the present day divide the most intimate care of their own babies by employing nannies who change the nappies and soothe the screams, leaving the pleasanter contacts, the cuddling and cooing, to the natural mother if she is not too busy or tired. Even Freud noticed this in passing when he remarked that babies at first pay most attention to 'the people who look after them' before transferring their interest—as he thought natural—to their biological parents.

But until very recently the commonest form of separation of mothers and babies was probably the enforced surrender of newborn babies by unmarried mothers, who in many cases did not want to have them adopted but were placed under intolerable pressures to give them up, and often suffered years of mental and physical agony as a result. The new moralists are completely silent about this, though it is worth remembering that if they have their way over the restriction of abortions there will be many more cases of this 'unnatural' separation. Indeed, the shortage of babies for adoption (a shortage only of healthy, white babies at present) is sometimes used as an argument against the 1967 Abortion Act by those who want to do away with it!

in all class societies children have been and still are regarded as property

The so-called natural bonding between mothers and their new-born babies is far from universal. Many mothers reject their babies soon after birth, for all sorts of physical and psychological reasons. The very use of the word 'reject' in these cases shows the pressure mothers are under to conform, to behave 'naturally' even though this is against their true feelings and reactions. Again, severe physical and mental problems are often the result.

The normal, expected relationship between a mother and baby is not natural but social. In the past, mother and baby were usually surrounded by other family members, neighbours, servants or the village community, a whole range of people who could and did intervene with advice and assistance. Our present-day society shuts the two of them up together in the small family home—in the light of most human history, an *unnatural* way to bring up children. Too much dependence may be a bad thing for both mothers and young children.

On the other hand, many women who want to have children cannot conceive or carry a baby to full term. They feel their childlessness as an acute and painful loss, partly because our society puts such a high

value on motherhood as women's chief role in life, and women who do not succeed in becoming mothers are made to feel that they are failures.

But the sense of loss cannot be wholly put down to social pressures. It is undoubtedly true that many women, and men too, have a capacity for loving and caring parenthood which is wasted by their childlessness.

This leads some people to say, in defence of surrogate motherhood, that there will always be the problem of childless people who want children of their own, even in a socialist society. I believe that this argument is quite wrong, and shows the very strong hold that conventional ideas of the family have—ideas produced by class society, not by nature.

The key to understanding the issue is: children of *their own*. For in all class societies children have been and still are regarded as *property*. The very word 'proletarian', which we now use for the working class, originally meant, in ancient Rome, people who have no property except their children. One seventeenth century English Leveller remarked that 'every man hath a property in his wife and children'. We are rightly opposed to wives being regarded as property; we should be equally shocked by this view of children.

Children in our society are not only property, but monopoly property: some people possess them, others don't. There is an enormous gulf between parents and non-parents, often reflected in the comments, 'Well, *you* chose to have them,' and 'I can't stand kids, myself'. This last is an appalling thing for a human being to say. Would we accept the same person saying, 'I can't stand blacks' or 'Homosexuals get on my nerves'?

In a socialist society, there would be no private property in children. They would belong to the whole community, as they do in many primitive societies, and be entitled to the care and attention of all adults rather than being thrown back on one or two. Socialism does not mean 'taking the children away' (as I recently heard one elderly male socialist say), or segregating them in nurseries and schools where someone else will look after them. No one should be so totally cut off from children as to believe that they hate them.

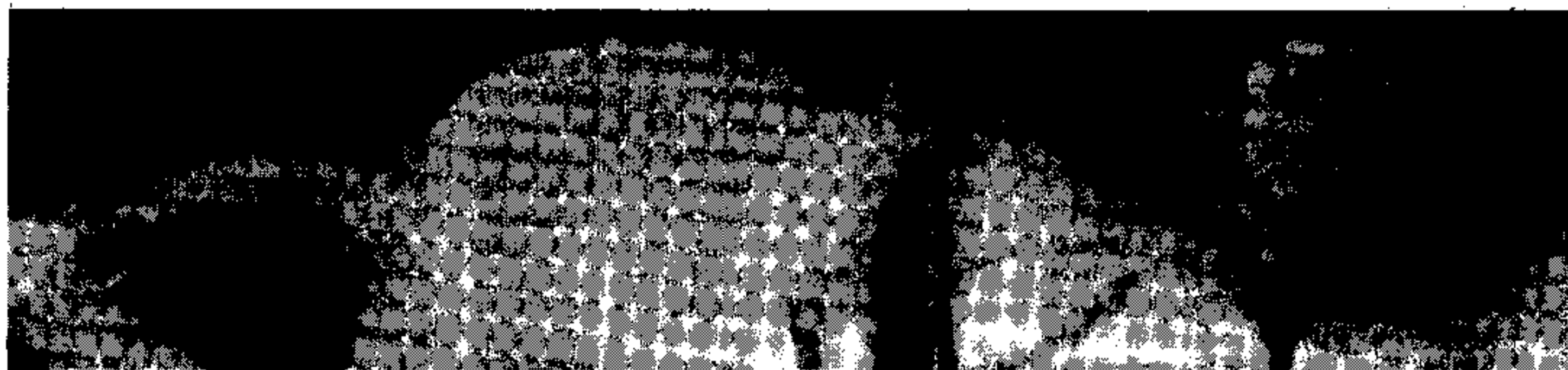
From the children's point of view, socialism should mean freedom—freedom to take part in society in their own right, to learn, work and play among adults and other children without compulsory submission to the authority of their 'natural' parents.

For there is a connection between the surrogate motherhood debate and the Gillick judgement, which insists on the property rights of parents over their children. In fact, a whole generation of young adults, dumped by Tory policies between a crumbling, authoritarian education system and mass unemployment, are being redefined as children, that is as private property and none of the state's concern. 'Unnatural' parents can then be blamed for vandalism, riots, football hooliganism, drug abuse or whatever the current moral panic happens to be. Surrogate mothers are only one of the scapegoats in the Tories' campaign to return to Victorian values. ■

Norah Carlin

Thinking
it over...

Where is China going?



THE LEADERSHIP of the Chinese Communist Party is an endless source of surprises. Is it possible that all those slogans of the Cultural Revolution 'Bombard the Party headquarters', 'Down with responsible persons in positions of authority taking the capitalist road'—could so swiftly have been replaced by 'Peasants, enrich yourselves' and 'Learn from capitalism'.

Yet consider the latest straws in the wind:

- A number of state companies have issued shares for general sale to private buyers.
- Shanghai municipality has proposed the creation of a stock exchange by 1987 to trade in shares.
- Foreign companies may now own one hundred per cent of the stock of any Chinese subsidiaries
- The state is relinquishing its monopoly of foreign trade to competing publicly owned companies
- The state is reducing its participation by privatising the housing stock.
- The People's Liberation Army has recently been urged to modernise by borrowing, entering joint ventures to manufacture consumer goods, and trading.

It is a programme that, on the face of it, is more drastic than Mrs Thatcher's who has not so far suggested privatising the Grenadier Guards.

The history of the People's Republic of China is one of a constant interaction between two contrary imperatives—the maximum rate of accumulation on the one hand, and the need to retain a monopoly of power in the hands of the party on the other. The interaction has taken place in conditions of grave external threats and great domestic poverty—two outside forces that threaten at each stage to jeopardise the imperatives. The ideological commitments flow from this struggle rather than being its source.

Thus, the establishment of party control dominated the first phase, after 1949, in the social elimination of the landlords and the move to collective forms of agriculture. The Korean war forced greater centralisa-

tion and the slow expropriation of private business. Simultaneously, the rate of economic growth was extraordinarily high until the economy had made up the losses of the pre-1949 period and reached the limits of capacity by 1956. No outside help—from the Russians—was forthcoming to escape the limits, so for a dizzy six months, Mao and his associates launched the cadres upon China to force an expansion of output by brute strength: the Great Leap Forward.

Deep slump

The leap failed: party control destroyed accumulation, since workers produced vast increases, but mainly of rubbish. Peasants hid their crops from party expropriation. Between 1958 and 1962 the country was in deep slump, brought on by the party. There was evidence of famine, armed revolts and, in the northwestern province, mass flight into the Soviet Union. The retreat of the party allowed the re-establishment of rich peasant control on the land in alliance with the rural cadres, and it was here the party began a purge in 1962. Whereas in the preceding four years, the issue of party control had been subordinate to economic survival, now the struggle to restore control took priority over most other issues.

This was the so-called Cultural Revolution.

The second four year phase embodied the struggle of one section of the leadership to establish its—and the party's—total power. Just as the peasants stopped the Great Leap Forward in 1958/59, the Russians stopped the Cultural Revolution in 1969 with armed clashes on the northern border. From then to the death of Mao in 1976, the party leadership endeavoured to secure external protection (through the United States) and internal modernisation of the armed forces to counter the Russian threat, but the process was constantly paralysed by the unresolved political issues of the Cultural Revolution. The death of Mao resolved the paralysis.

For two years after Mao's death, there

was an interregnum in which the leadership tried to expand the economy without reforms. From 1979, the policy has been one of increasingly radical reforms and an embrace of market mechanisms to force the pace of accumulation. But unlike the years before 1979, for the first time, the stress of accumulation has not been upon the growth of heavy industry, but the growth of agricultural and light industrial output. In retrospect, the Cultural Revolution has become a bad dream.

What have been the key changes since 1979? The most dramatic has been in agriculture which occupies the majority of Chinese. The 'production responsibility system' has broken up the old communes in order to lease land to, in the main, cultivating households. Originally the lease period was for three years, but this has now been extended to fifteen. In all but name, this is the official reestablishment of a private peasantry after over thirty years of its disappearance in collectives. The price for agricultural goods paid to cultivators has been sharply increased, and public procurements cut. Peasants are now increasingly able to decide what they will grow and what prices they will try to get in the increasing number of private rural markets.

In industry, the government is moving towards freeing all enterprises to produce what they will at whatever prices they can get, except in heavy industry.

However, the government has not yet ended all subsidies nor decontrolled consumer prices nor allowed enterprises to be shut down as the result of running deficits. Nor have they yet conceded the right to managers to freely hire and fire or set wages levels as they wish (although the vastly expanded bonus system goes a long way towards achieving this). But there is to be a major wage reform this year.

The incentives to foreign capital to invest in China have been considerably increased, and joint ventures are now permitted to compete with Chinese operations.

The performance of the economy during the same six years has been remarkable.

Agricultural output, blessed with good harvests, has expanded by about six per cent per year, and foodstuffs by 10 to 12 per cent (grain yields rose between 1979 and 1983 from 2,947 kgs, per hectare to 3,655, one of the highest levels in the world.) Industrial output increased by some seven per cent per year—3.3 per cent for heavy industry (compared to 13 per cent, 1952-79) and 11.9 per cent for light (compared to 9 per cent). Incomes in urban areas are said to have gone up by nearly 5 per cent per year in the towns, and half as much again in the rural areas. Urban unemployment is said to have fallen from 15 per cent in 1979 to two or three per cent. In 1984, there was again a great surge in output, increasing by 14 per cent (against the target of 4-5 per cent).

Visitors universally testify to the prosperity that has become apparent. How patchy it is remains unclear—but it seems the process must have considerably widened differences both between rich and poor and between advanced and backward areas. Furthermore, the state has found its control slipping. Inflation has officially risen to 5 per cent, but it is said to be 50 per cent for some commodities because wages have expanded so much faster than output.

Corruption

The banks competed to lend, and so overlent. Furthermore, corruption seems to have become endemic. There were 36,000 arrests and 5,000 executions for economic crimes between 1983 and 1984—ranging from speculating in raw materials, bribery, levying special taxes or commissions, to the sale of illegal imports and visas to Hong Kong. The splendid Auditor General Yu Mingtao is said to have 'lost' the equivalent of 1.67 billion US dollars in 1984.

The use of the market to expand output (and secure peasant loyalties) is not new. There were versions of this in China between 1959 and 1962 (after the Great Leap) and 1969 and 1973 (after the Cultural Revolution). But these were strictly temporary and for limited purposes. What is happening in China now is much more far reaching, and short of a major break in the leadership group, unlikely to be reversed. This does not seem just another zig in the tortuous zigzags of the party.

The supporters of the old Gang of Four (known as widowists in some quarters, after Mao's widow) say that the new order represents counter-revolution, a restoration of capitalism. This is phrasing designed to imply socialism existed under Mao—particular great heroes have one or other word attached as a sort of shadow. But there has been no radical change in the social structure of China, only some changes in the leadership clique. If China was socialist before, it must be so now; if it is now capitalist, it must always have been so. In fact, the Chinese ruling order has been consistently dominated by the task of capital accumulation since 1949, although not always with the same intensity or in the

same form. The factional dispute in China is not about ending capital accumulation, the 'abolition of the wage system' but about whether accumulation should take place through state direction or a market (or rather what ought to be the precise mixture of each).

The process of economic liberalisation in China is only part of a much wider world change affecting not only the Third World, but as much, Mrs Thatcher and Reagan. The Chinese have been slightly more radical than the Hungarians, slightly less so than the Yugoslavs. The Poles tried and came a cropper. Virtually all Third World countries are doing something similar—not least in India with a new liberalising prime minister and Seventh Plan.

In retrospect, we can see that what was called 'socialism', the autarchy and state dominated planning of the newly independent countries in the fifties, was no more than a phase in primitive accumulation: both forced on the backward countries by the world market, and embraced by them as the means to defend their newly won political independence. Once that phase was over, continued accumulation demanded reintegration in the system. It is a return to the world economy, to world capitalism, now that the first phase of accumulation has been accomplished.

There were special problems in China. The condition for working class passivity in 1949 and the intensified exploitation that followed was the promise of a guaranteed if austere standard of living, the 'iron rice bowl'. But moderating the insecurity of a wage system inhibits the possibility of increasing exploitation and sustaining accumulation. The party tried many tricks to make up—campaigns (with considerable intimidation), sending workers down to

rural areas, diluting urban labour with peasant lads—but none could do more than have a temporary effect, particularly when wages were very low as well. The party is now employing the world market to achieve a change in the balance of class power, to end the 'iron rice bowl' and thus its neutralisation of the working class.

Petit bourgeoisie

The party leadership can begin the process, but insofar as they are successful in freeing the market, they become victims of events. Not only is the nakedness of class relations exposed—particularly with reference to urban workers—but also they permit the emergence of China's overwhelmingly largest class, the petit bourgeoisie. The rich and middle peasants dominate here, but in the cities, the new policies promote the creation of a significant class of self-employed artisans, petty traders, small businessmen, many of them fashioned out of the Cultural Revolution warriors who marched off to the countryside with messianic hopes and have now slunk back illegally into the cities.

It will be difficult to restore the old forms of party control or authority in such circumstances. The party tries to match its economic liberalisation with tight ideological control—over meetings, posters, publications, speech, culture—but the one will inevitably erode the other, even if in the short term this only produces deep mass cynicism. Given that external challenges have by no means ended, that the weather and other natural hazards still affect agriculture, that the domestic class struggle is likely to increase, China in the future will produce no fewer surprises than in the past. ■

Nigel Harris

socialist worker Review

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The new defeatism

IN THE wake of Thatcher's election victory in 1983, right wing trade union leaders coined the term 'new realism'. It was a phrase designed to facilitate accommodation with the employers, a rejection of any notion of class struggle and a generally non-political approach to trade unionism.

There was little talk of the 'new realism' at last year's union conferences. The miners' strike forced even the most right wing trade union leaders to make concessions to the need for some sort of struggle against the Tories.

This year, however, the term and its proponents are back with a vengeance. CPSA president Alistair Graham, who first used the phrase, delightedly heralded the demise of *Militant* at the recent CPSA conference. Election results announced at the conference saw the right wing regain control of the CPSA executive. Their victory was only made possible by the fact that the left was split. The combined left vote was in fact higher than that of the right wing.

Broad Left split

Last year the CPSA Broad Left was split by the Communist Party and some 'soft' lefts, who set up Broad Left 84. Conference was marked by the speed of Broad Left 84's move to the right. At times it resembled a honeymoon between them and their erstwhile enemy Alistair Graham. He now clearly sees them as more serious long-term bedfellows than the right wing.

Leading BL 84 members managed to outdo Graham in their enthusiasm for the new defeatism and the vociferousness of their witch-hunting speeches against socialists, especially those in the *Militant*. Their arguments centred around 'deliverability'. It would not be possible to deliver the members for action against the law on pay, or to defend jobs. The union should adopt more 'realistic' positions.

Similar arguments were put at the conference of the post office workers union, the UCW.

Alan Tuffin succeeded in getting endorsement of the deal he had already agreed with the Post Office on mechanisation, new technology and new revision procedures. He also pushed through making the present voluntary local productivity scheme into a compulsory one. And he persuaded delegates to give him authority to negotiate on the Post Office's proposals to massively increase the number of part time workers. He thus reversed the union's policy which had been reaffirmed early in March.

Behind these victories for the 'new realism' was a reluctant acceptance of the dominant message that had been argued by the union leaders. There is nothing you can do in the face of an aggressive management backed by a ruthless Tory government other

than knuckle under until a Labour government can be elected.

No wonder the Post Office management, who were sitting in the visitors' gallery all week, are happy with the way the conference went.

The conference of the public sector workers' union, NUPE, showed a similar trend. Again, the idea of fighting over issues was condemned as unrealistic. And a highly significant resolution attacked the *Militant* tendency, and called for the expulsion of any group within the Labour Party which contravened the constitution. SWP members often found themselves heckled and booed and some delegates wore badges bearing the inscription 'Trot busters'.

What is perhaps most surprising about the shift of the NUPE executive is the fact that over the past few years the union has been closely identified with the 'leftward' moves inside the Labour Party. That trend certainly seems to be over, at least for the time being. The bulk of the union leaderships are lining up very clearly behind Kinnock.

Yet despite the marked rightward swing of the conferences, there were signs among delegates that at least a sizeable minority were prepared to reject the approach of their leaders. At the CPSA conference, the right's attempts to overturn the ban on casuals and overtime was defeated. On other issues, the left was able to win substantial minorities at conference.

And although Tuffin has continually painted a picture of despair and lack of fight inside the UCW, the reality is somewhat different. Recent examples include the Mount Pleasant strike and the action which started at Northampton and rapidly spread throughout the Midlands until it affected

Manchester and a number of London offices as well. There is also the support given by the counter staff to the days of action against high street post office closures.

And a number of recent disputes against privatisation show that NUPE members are often prepared to take action against attacks on wages and conditions. Yet the longest running such dispute, that of the Barking women, received little prominence at NUPE's conference.

The problem is that although there is often a willingness to fight, there are few channels through which to organise independently of the union leaders. In the absence of such channels, the pressure on much of the left will be to follow those moving to the right inside the various unions. Even groups like the *Militant* can be under such pressure. Their response to some of the witch hunting has been very low key. At the CPSA conference they put out only one bulletin all week, and tended to play things down—even to the extent of not defending themselves at times.

The pattern of these three major conferences is likely to be repeated at others in the next month or so.

The temptation in the midst of all this is to believe that the best way to fight the rightward drift is to put forward an electoral left alternative. Yet such a strategy that doesn't take as its starting point building organisation at the base of the unions amongst the rank and file, will solve little and in its isolation can succumb to precisely the same pressures. Most of those aligning with Graham today, in Broad Left 84, originally founded a broad left to fight him, and NUPE's traditional left wing stance hasn't prevented its 'left officials' moving to the right.

The process of rebuilding strength at the base, particularly at the workplace can be a slow and arduous one, but electoral shortcuts will not provide a real alternative to today's new realism. ■

Lindsey German

•Thanks to SWP members in CPSA and UCW.



Angry women workers from Newcastle show how privatisation can be fought

Should socialists be in the Labour Party?

PROVING to socialists in the Labour Party that their party has a rotten record in office is relatively easy. It is not difficult either to show the current rightward shift will produce a Labour government as bad, if not worse, than the last.

Despite this, many socialists in the Labour Party refuse to draw the obvious conclusion and leave in favour of the revolutionary alternative. They hope, against all the evidence, that the Labour Party can be changed. They refuse to believe, again in defiance of all the evidence, that they will either be sucked into the machine or become marginalised and demoralised.

Despite the role played by Kinnock during the miners' strike, despite the collapse over rate-capping, the capitulation of the soft left, the isolation of Benn and the renewed witchhunt against *Militant*, they say it is vital to remain in the Labour Party. They need, so they claim, to provide an alternative leadership to those rank and file members who are disgusted by the behaviour of both the right and the soft left.

They draw a parallel between the trade union movement and the Labour Party. You don't get out of the trade unions just because they are dominated by the bureaucracy. You don't set up new, revolutionary unions, which would then leave the rank and file in the old unions to the tender mercies of the leadership. So why should the attitude of socialists to the Labour Party be any different?

The argument can then become an attack on the 'inconsistency' of revolutionaries like the SWP, who work inside the unions but take an 'ultra-left, sectarian' attitude to the Labour Party.

The parallel between the trade unions and the Labour Party appears plausible. It is natural to most people to speak of them as the two wings of the labour movement. There are close links—most trade union activists are members or supporters of the Labour Party (though in a fairly passive way). They share from top to bottom the common ideology of reformism.

Yet the parallel is fundamentally mistaken, and we need to understand the basis of both to understand why.

CENTRAL to trade unionism is the recognition by workers of the need for unity in struggle against the bosses. It is the most elementary form of class-consciousness. This is why marxists (in the main) have always stressed that the path to revolution develops out of the experience workers gain in trade union struggle of their collective power.

At the same time, however, trade unions have

their limitations. They exist to get the best value out of the sale of their members' labour power, not to abolish the need to sell labour power in the first place. They accept the continued existence of capitalism.

Trade unions are therefore highly contradictory phenomena. On the one hand, they cannot fight the system to the finish; on the other, they can only exist as fighting organisations. Since their basis lies in collective working class refusal to accept the terms of their exploitation, struggle always threatens to break out, however backward and accommodating to the system trade union leaders are.

This explains why even extreme right-wing ones vacillate. They are forced to respond to their members' discontent—if only to strengthen their hand at the bosses' negotiating table.

So, if trade unions are the most elementary form of class consciousness—one based on economic struggle—their limitations need to be overcome by a higher form of class consciousness, one based on the need to smash the system, smash the capitalist state and replace it by a state based on workers' councils.

But purely economic trade unionism also has its politics. The choice which all socialists face lies between politics that build on the element of collective struggle which defines the most valuable experience of trade unionism, and politics which use the limitations of trade unionism as an excuse for avoiding battle with capitalism. The former is revolutionary politics; the latter is reformism.

The dominance of reformism is not surprising. Trade unions do not simply exist at the high points of struggle. They are permanent institutions spanning long periods of social 'peace'. In such circumstances, as well as in the aftermath of defeat, the virtues of struggle are not apparent. The politics of reformism—of negotiating improvements in preference to fighting for them—is the 'natural' politics of trade unionism.

We can therefore explain the mass base of reformist politics. Although the creation of the Labour Party was the organisational expression of the interests of the trade union leaders (seeking to complement their conservative role with the political need to represent their interests in parliament), it also came to fit the experiences of the mass of trade unionists.

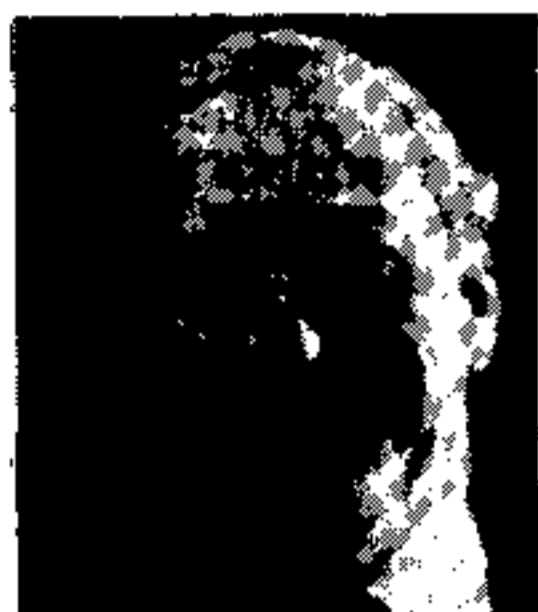
Fortunately for us, that is not a static situation. A minority will always exist who make the connection between trade union struggle over immediate economic issues and the central tenet of revolutionary socialism, namely that socialism is the self-emancipation of the proletariat.

Except during the high points of struggle, making that connection doesn't cut with the

Socialists are active in trade unions, because the vast majority of workers belong to them, and through them are drawn into struggle. But if this is true of the unions is it not also true of the Labour Party? Here Gareth Jenkins looks at the argument.



Neil Kinnock



Tony Benn

grain, and it was Lenin who drew the conclusion that only a socialist organisation free from any reformist illusions would be able to hold that minority together against the pressure of majority experience.

But what he also pointed out repeatedly was the need to test the connection in practice as a way of overcoming the isolation of that minority. Therefore participation in the struggles led, by and large, by trade unionists in the workplace (trade unionists who would mostly be reformist in outlook) meant a priority placed on working in the mass reformist organisations of struggle, ie the trade unions.

Revolutionaries would also look to lead these struggles, again to prove in practice the superiority of revolutionary over reformist methods.

HOW does the Labour Party measure up in this respect? What is immediately clear is that the Labour Party is not based on struggle. It will reflect that struggle but its essential activity is electoral. Voting for other people to do things for you is the very reverse of the self-activity that can lie at the heart of trade unionism and is the basis of revolutionary politics.

The strategy of electoralism defines the limits of all tendencies inside the Labour Party. But it does not affect them equally. The right wing are at home in electoralism. For them getting out the vote is the sum total of politics. The left wing, on the other hand, are at a profound disadvantage. They are divided between the logic of the Labour Party's electoralism and their own instincts for change and the pressure of struggle.

Socialists in the Labour Party are therefore always fighting a losing battle. The electoralist nature of the Labour Party pulls in only one direction—and that is against socialism.

The logic of electoralism is to emphasise respect for the process of getting and keeping a parliamentary majority. With that goes an emphasis on the need to preserve the electoral system as sanctified by law and custom. Tied up with that is a belief in the virtue of the state that preserves the electoral system. But the state under capitalism has one and one object only—the preservation of the domination of capital over labour.

Kinnock's statement at the last Labour Party conference about how we cannot break the law we aim to use in power sums up the inherently conservative nature of reformism.

This is important, because socialists in the Labour Party often present the domination of the right-wing as something temporary or accidental. They believe that the party can be won for socialism. While it is true that from time to time the Labour Party presents a radical manifesto or the left wing make gains, these advances are limited. It is not just the record which shows this. It is the electoralist nature of the Labour Party itself which proves the point.

For all the convergence between trade unions

and the Labour Party in the realm of politics, the essence of each tugs in opposite directions.

THOSE advocating working in the Labour Party might agree on the basic distinction between it and the unions. But they might well still argue that even though the Labour Party is not an organisation of struggle there is still some point to working in it. Didn't after all Lenin and Trotsky urge something of the sort?

Lenin's speech to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 on the question of affiliation to the Labour Party categorically rejected the idea that the Labour Party is 'the expression of the workers organised in trade unions'.

He stated:

'Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are working men. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we have before us a political party of the proletariat.

'Regarded from this, the only correct point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers...'

It was in the context of this harsh and unflattering estimation of the Labour Party that he was arguing the case for affiliation. But he was arguing the case on the clear understanding that the British Communist Party would retain its open political and organisational independence.

Lenin believed that the peculiar conditions of the Labour Party at the time permitted a peculiar tactic in respect of relating to the masses of workers in the Labour Party. (As it was, the tactic was unsuccessful: affiliation was repeatedly turned down by the Labour Party.)

For our purposes what is important in Lenin's discussion about the Labour Party is his refusal to see it in any way as an organisation capable of advancing workers' interests. It was only because he was so unyielding in his judgement and so insistent on the need for separate and open revolutionary organisation that the tactic of affiliation made any sense.

He would have been instantly suspicious of any present day characterisation of the Labour Party as the mass party of the working class or of the idea that 'an entirely peaceful transformation of society is possible in Britain' (*Militant, What We Stand For* 1981) and 'that the struggle to establish a socialist Britain can be carried through in Parliament, backed up by the colossal power of the labour movement' (*Militant International Review*, June 1982).

He would have been suspicious despite the conditions *Militant* is careful to attach to these

statements—the rather vague condition that ‘the full power of the labour movement is boldly used to effect this change’ (*What We Stand For*). He would have understood this kind of statement as an attempt to dupe workers and to spread illusions about the parliamentary road to socialism.

NOW, it is quite possible that Lenin was wrong or that circumstances have so changed that his argument no longer applies. If we look at the Labour Party today we can see that his characterisation of it remains correct but that the case for affiliation is no longer practicable.

Those like *Militant* who claim to represent the marxist tradition in the Labour Party and who argue that working within it overrides all the qualifications and conditions Lenin placed on the tactic of affiliation are obliged to fudge the nature of the Labour Party. They have to equivocate on whether the capitalist state has to be smashed.

Whatever their private beliefs, their public statements stress that it is perfectly possible for the Labour Party to make the decisive break with capitalism via parliamentary methods. True, they add a rider to the effect that the labour movement outside parliament will have to be mobilised with a clear marxist perspective. But one could quite legitimately demand that if millions are being mobilised what difference are 600 MPs going to make?

In other words, despite the marxist language peculiar to *Militant*, they make fundamentally damaging concessions to the parliamentary road. Like other socialists in the Labour Party they are committed to electoralism. In the end they can only reinforce the illusions they claim to oppose.

The appeal to Trotsky fares no better than that to Lenin. Trotsky’s conception of entrism was based on the notion of a raid designed to pull leftward moving workers out of reformist parties. Again, Trotsky’s watchword was refusal on the part of revolutionaries engaged in this tactic to pander to the illusion that reformist parties could be transformed.

Long-term entrism Trotsky would have thought a contradiction in terms. Of course, conditions may have changed to invalidate his ideas, and it is true that the forerunners of the SWP spent over fifteen years in the Labour Party. But in the boom conditions of the fifties and early sixties there was little choice.

Can one now say that the only method to reach workers is via the Labour Party or that a clear statement of the need to smash the state and for the building of a revolutionary party hinders revolutionaries?

For all these reasons, the idea that socialists should work in the Labour Party because they work inside trade unions is wrong. The only consequence of continuing to work within the Labour Party will be to reinforce the illusions workers have about it.

Even in the remote likelihood that the Labour Party, under the stress of enormous class struggle, develops a sizeable centrist current—one in the process of rejecting the parliamentary road—the only conditions under which socialists will be able to intervene is if they have already built a revolutionary organisation outside the Labour Party, capable, because of its day-to-day practice, of constituting an alternative pole of attraction.

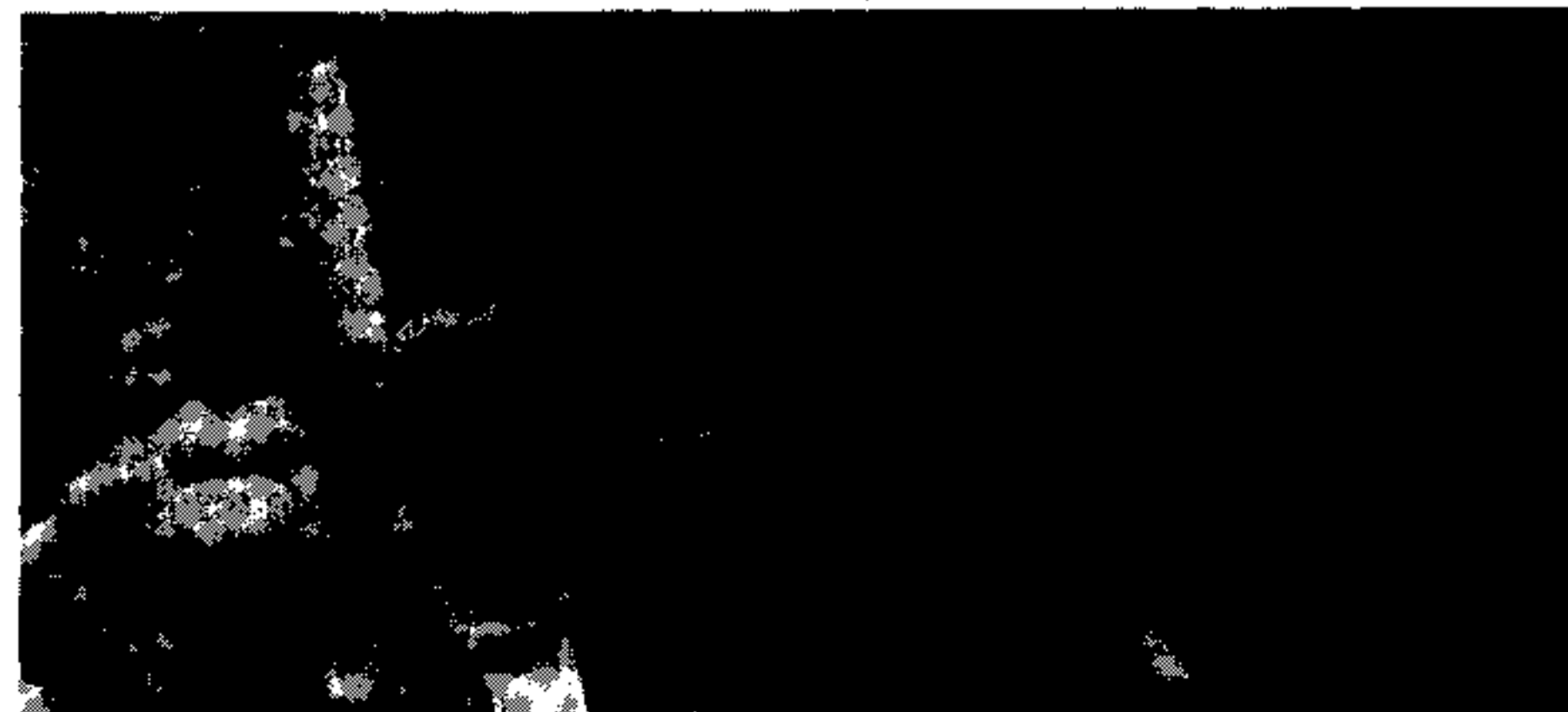
OF course, that doesn’t mean we are indifferent to what happens inside the Labour Party. Just because it is a ‘bourgeois workers’ party’ we do not ignore the tensions and shifts within it. For although the Labour Party runs capitalism like any other capitalist party, it has to do so by deceiving those whose interests run counter to capitalism. A left wing is an inevitable consequence.

We welcome any leftward move against the right. But we have to keep up our criticism of the overall parliamentary politics that tie a left wing to the Labour Party.

We cannot work within the Labour Party because the environment is profoundly hostile to the socialism we stand for, socialism from below. Of course, we will continue to say vote Labour. We prefer the class traitor in office to the class enemy. The Tories in power mean that more trade unionists have illusions in capitalism than have illusions in reformism. And given that choice, it is better for workers to have reformist illusions because that at least is some kind of recognition that their interests differ from those of their Tory bosses.

But if socialism is the self-emancipation of the proletariat, is what masses of workers do for themselves collectively in struggle, it runs absolutely counter to the traditions of the Labour Party. But it runs in exactly the same direction as the experience gained by rank and file workers in their day-to-day trade union practice of fighting management.

That is why we make every effort to operate alongside workers in trade unions and that is why it is in the workplace and trade unions, rather than in the Labour Party, that we take up the essential political task of fighting the dead-weight of reformism.



Parliamentary or extra-parliamentary struggle?

VIETNAM

Simon Terry looks at the background to the war the Americans couldn't win

THE SUCCESS of any attempted US invasion of Nicaragua tends to be regarded, particularly in the wake of Grenada, as inevitable.

The myth of American invincibility was even stronger twenty years ago, but was shattered in the unlikeliest corner of the world—Vietnam. Ten years after the Vietnam war ended, Reagan and his supporters are trying to reclaim it. But the significance of Vietnam cannot be over-emphasised: it showed that American imperialism could be defeated.

US military intervention in Vietnam dates roughly from 1965, but the roots go back to the end of the Second World War. France, the dominant power in Indo-China before the war, decided to recolonise the region, supported by successive American presidents. France was a crucial bulwark against Soviet 'expansionism'.

The strategic importance of Asia to the Americans, however, soon became more and more apparent.

By 1950 China had been 'lost', South Korea was under threat, the Philippines were in ferment and the Japanese Communist Party was organising large protests against the American military presence. The prospect of a 'Red Asia' inspired by Peking and financed from Moscow, began to haunt the American ruling class.

American military aid in 1954 was a hundred times greater than it had been in 1950. Vietnam was becoming a test case for American imperialism.

BUT financial aid without popular support was useless. The French encountered widespread opposition in Vietnam. Ground down by Ho Chi Minh's nationalist guerillas, the dispirited French army decided to make its stand at Dien Bien Phu. Ho's forces accomplished the amazing feat of wheeling large artillery pieces up the surrounding mountain sides and launched a massive bombardment on the garrison. On 7 May 1954 Dien Bien Phu fell, and French involvement in Vietnam effectively ended.

The Geneva Accords, which followed the French defeat, established a temporary partition at the 17th parallel (with the nationalists—the Viet Minh—controlling the North), and provided for elections to be held within two years to unify the country.

America, however, refused to sign the Accords, cancelled the election in the South, and threw its weight behind the Saigon regime led by the petty dictator Ngo Dinh Diem.

Diem's predominantly Catholic regime was blatantly corrupt and received no support from the masses of the population, 80 percent of whom were Buddhists. The opposition began to

grow and organise. Diem labelled them Viet Cong (Vietnamese Communists) and they established the National Liberation Front as their political arm.

The NLF intensified the struggle, directly disobeying orders from Hanoi who did not want to provoke a confrontation with the South. But the NLF had no choice—either they fought back or they would be exterminated.

Some 2,000 men did go to the South in 1960 but nearly all were ex-Viet Minh (the anti-French nationalists) who had lived there before 1954. The bulk of the Viet Cong were recruited in the South and captured their equipment from Diem's army. Not until late 1960 did Ho Chi Minh, forced by events in the South, give his formal blessing to the NLF.

It was the overwhelming support of the peasantry for the NLF which held the key to the conflict. The Americans made futile attempts to isolate the Viet Cong from this base, like the 'strategic hamlet programme'. The idea was to bring the peasants together into defensible hamlets and thus prevent the Viet Cong from recruiting, raising funds and hiding among them.

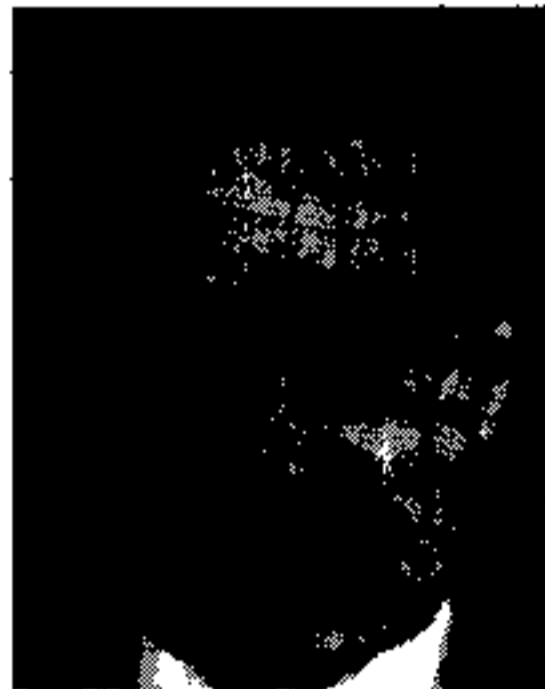
In practice however, the hamlets were little more than concentration camps, which the peasants were forced to live in after being forcibly evicted from the land their families had lived on for generations. The programme turned thousands against the government.

Its offspring, the 'hearts and minds' policy was equally useless. When South Vietnamese troops took a village they brought the landlords who collected back rents, often covering the past five years. American troops, meanwhile, proved totally incapable of distinguishing between 'friendly' hearts and minds and the Viet Cong, and so treated them all with the same contempt and brutality.

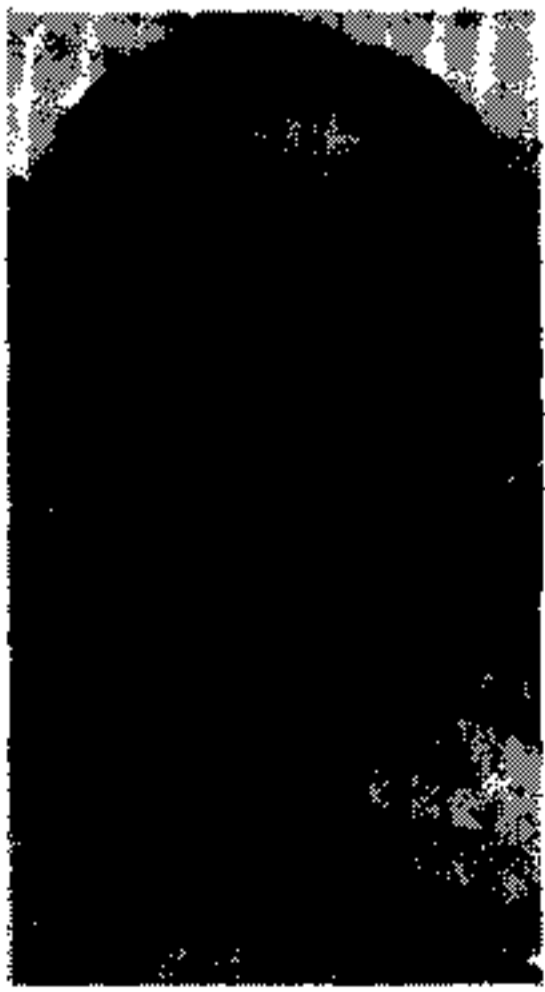
THE Viet Cong on the other hand enjoyed a solid base amongst the peasantry, built on mutual aid and cooperation. When they liberated a village they handed the land over to the peasants, they instituted an uncorrupt judicial service, and schools and hospitals were established.

This was the reality of the Viet Cong's main support. Films such as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter* which portray the nationalists as brutal thugs who terrorised the people into providing food, press ganged the men into the army and only fought because they wanted the chance to torture an American soldier, are pure fantasy.

Many American troops were baffled at the contradiction between government propaganda which depicted them as saviours of the Vietnamese people and the reality of a war in



The hated Richard M Nixon



Ho Chi Minh, the nationalist leader

which they were universally hated by those very people.

The fragility and unpopularity of the Saigon government was reflected in the complete ineptitude of the South Vietnamese army (ARVN). The officers were hated and morale was appalling. By 1966 ARVN had the highest desertion rate in the world.

But in Washington the basic premise—that it was both necessary and possible to defeat the Viet Cong—remained the same. As President Lyndon B Johnson explained: '...if we don't stop the reds in Nam they will be in Hawaii and next week in San Francisco.'

America stumbled blindly on, confident that its military might would prove irresistible and decisive. But it was the resistance of the NLF and the tide of public opinion in America which was to prove irresistible.

The attempt to bomb the North into surrender, 'Rolling Thunder', not only failed but also expressed the full horror of the American presence to the world. The statistics boggled the mind. By 1968 more bombs had been dropped on North Vietnam than in the whole of World War Two. By 1970 more had been dropped than on all targets in the whole of human history.

NAPALM and Agent Orange defoliated the countryside. The brutality of the war was intruding into the lives of families all over America who watched the bombs rain down on the women and children of Vietnam on their TV screens. Many began to be more directly affected as the troop commitment rose to 500,000 and the coffins began to come home in increasing numbers.

The growing opposition to the war exploded in 1968. In February, on the religious holiday of Tet, the NLF launched a huge offensive throughout the South. It was the beginning of the end for America in Vietnam. It showed that the Viet Cong was not being beaten and the war could not be won. Moreover it sparked massive social unrest at home.

Racism became a burning issue highlighted as it was by the brutal recapture of an ancient cultural centre at Hue and the massacre of hundreds of civilians by Lieutenant Calley and his company at My Lai. Riots erupted in the ghettos of Detroit, Los Angeles and Newark, even spreading to Washington following the murder of Martin Luther King in April 1968.

Many of these protests involved black servicemen, against whom the draft was heavily weighted, returning home and finding that American society still treated them as dirt, just as the army had done. Young working class draftees were using their military training against cops in the streets of America.

The colleges erupted. Students burned their draft cards and fought the police on the campuses rather than the Viet Cong in the paddyfields. In May 1970 at Kent State University, Ohio, the National Guard shot dead four students who were protesting against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia.

As American society was being ripped apart, the economy nose-dived. The massive cost of the

war, which had risen from 10 billion dollars to 30 billion dollars a year, began to take effect. Large sections of the ruling class turned against the war.

By 1971, America's balance of payments went into the red for the first time since the Second World War. Nixon was faced with the prospect of having to devalue the dollar.

The third element of the pressure to end the war was the simple fact that the American army in Vietnam was falling apart. By 1969 virtually all land patrols had ceased, except for the non-conscript psychopaths in the Marines and Green Berets. The conscripts just refused to fight. They turned on their officers, simply shooting or 'fragging' them—when ordered to go into battle they threw a fragmentation bomb at the officer instead.

AT the height of the discontent there were no less than seventy rank and file anti-war papers circulating amongst the troops, and disaffection was further reflected in the massive drug abuse. Over 15,000 troops were known to be heroin addicts. America was physically incapable of continuing the war.

In addition a major beneficiary of the war was Russia. Russia made a dramatic recovery in world affairs between 1965 and 1971.

France, the former colonial power, condemned the 'foreign intervention' of the US. Meanwhile none of the European nations would commit combat troops. Of the forty nations linked to the US through treaties, only four (Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Thailand) sent troops. Thailand and Korea did so only after the US promised to pay handsomely.

Nixon had to get out of Vietnam and by February 1973 had done so—though not before perpetrating the most murderous crimes of the war by bombing and invading Cambodia and Laos and the barbarous 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi. Within two years of the American withdrawal, the NLF had liberated Saigon and the defeat of mighty America by little Vietnam (Johnson called it 'that raggedy ass fourth rate country') was complete.

Nixon boasted of a 'diplomatic victory' but the rhetoric could not hide the reality of America's humiliating defeat.

The statistical legacy of the war is numbing. Approximately 2.8 million troops fought in Vietnam, of whom 57,000 died in the process of slaughtering at least two million Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians. Today about two thirds of those American veterans, 1,750,000, are men still officially described as being in need of psychiatric care.

In America the skeleton of the 'Vietnamese experience' is well and truly out of the cupboard. Under Reagan, the lesson of Vietnam is not 'never again' but rather 'next time we'll do it right'.

When Reagan invades Grenada to 'restore democracy', when the Nicaraguan Contras become freedom fighters, and the Sandinistas 'dictators', the spectre of Vietnam lurks nearby.



More than just a union

EIGHTY years ago in June 1905, a group of socialists and trade unionists met together in Chicago to form the Industrial Workers of the World. It was a breakthrough in American trade unionism.

For the first time a union existed which was prepared to organise all and any workers, regardless of their sex, race or skill. And, for the first time, a union existed which actively encouraged the struggles of those workers to improve their living and working conditions and to finally take on their bosses in a battle to create a new classless society.

The backdrop to the formation of the IWW—or the Wobblies as the union became known—was the stark class warfare of early twentieth century America. Workers had to fight for the most basic of rights—the right to organise, the right to strike, the right to picket. Many went to prison for their efforts; others found themselves blacklisted out of any kind of job. All were up against vicious employers who had the police and judiciary on their side as well as their own private armies of strike-breaking thugs.

America's industrial workforce was largely unskilled, with a high proportion of immigrant labour lured from Europe with the promise of fat wage packets and pleasant working conditions.

The reality, of course, was quite different:

long hours of labour in dirty and dangerous factories for poverty wages. One 1911 study of a textile mill found that workers were even charged for cool drinking water.

Union organisation in places such as this was almost non-existent. Trade union membership was almost exclusively restricted to skilled, male, American-born workers. These unions, under the umbrella of the American Federation of Labour, saw the organisation of unskilled, female and immigrant labour as a direct threat to their members' relative privileges.

The IWW had very different ideas from the AFL's hand-in-glove-with-the-bosses approach to workers' organisation. The Wobblies' founding statement set out two main objectives: to better the conditions and protect the interests of members, and to 'offer a final solution to labour problems.'

One Big Union

Their proposed method was childlike in its simplicity. First, recruit all industrial workers into One Big Union. Then call a general strike, an occupation of all the factories, and—bingo!—you boot the bosses out and have workers' control.

Hand in hand with this strategy was a hostility towards 'politics'. It understandably

arose from a scepticism among the IWW leadership about ballot-box politics and the election of socialists to positions within the existing political structure, which the IWW believed to be a dead-end in the struggle for a classless society. However, the IWW leaders turned a healthy scepticism about ballot box politics into an outright rejection of anything other than industrial activity.

In concentrating on industrial struggle, the Wobblies proved themselves to be effective organisers. Probably the most famous of the battles in which the IWW played a key role was the textile workers' strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912.

Thirty thousand workers, of 25 different nationalities, were employed in the town's mills, which were mostly owned by the American Woollen Company. The bosses used traditional divide and rule tactics, playing one group of workers off against another, enormously helped by the lack of union organisation.

In January 1912, the American Woollen Company implemented a new law cutting the working week by two hours. Wages were cut correspondingly. The amount was only 30 cents but for the vast majority of workers it was the difference between bare subsistence and starvation. Within two days, 20,000 workers were on strike with the slogan, 'Better to starve fighting than to starve working.'

The tiny IWW branch which existed in Lawrence immediately cabled for help from the union leadership. Within a few days two IWW organisers arrived and set about getting the strike on a secure footing.

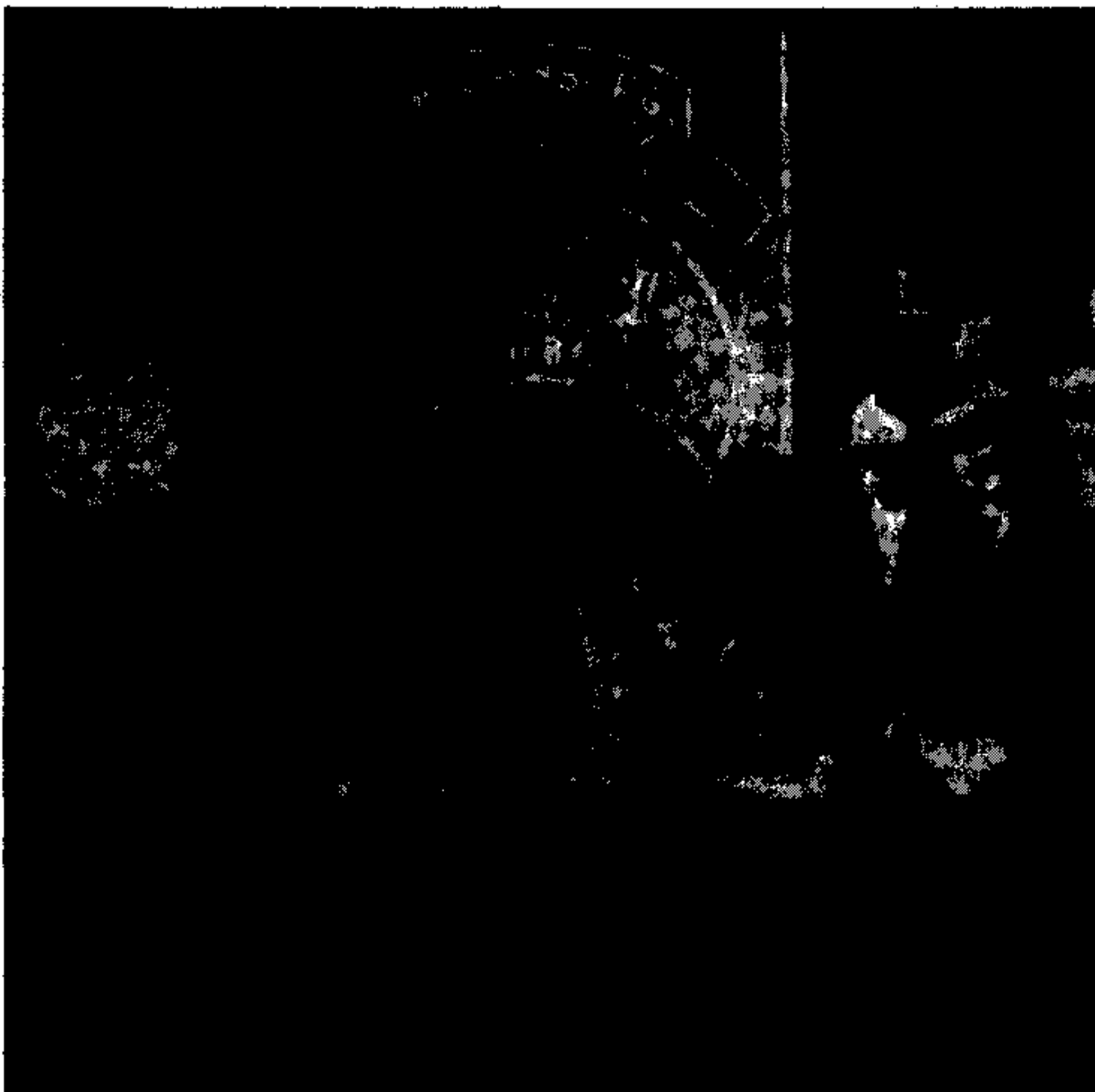
A strike committee was elected to represent different language groups. Mass meetings were held with simultaneous translation for the thousands of workers who couldn't speak or understand English. Sub-committees to deal with the distribution of food, clothes and medicine were set up.

But the Wobblies went beyond practical organisation. As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, one of the IWW leaders, recalls in her autobiography:

'We talked to the strikers about One Big Union, regardless of skill or lack of it, foreign-born or native-born, colour, religion or sex. We showed how all differences are used by the bosses to keep workers divided and pitted against one another. We spoke to nationalities who had traditionally been enemies for centuries in hostile European countries, like the Greeks and Turks and Armenians, yet they marched arm-in-arm on the picket line. We said firmly: "You work together for the boss. You can stand together and fight for yourselves!" This was more than a union. It was a crusade for a united people—for "Bread and Roses".'

The strikers found themselves up against the forces of the state. Before the strike was a month old, 25,000 armed men were stationed in the town with orders to shoot anyone seen on company property. Two strikers were killed and hundreds more were sent to prison. But after five months of bitter struggle, the workers won their demands from the employers.

By the end of the Lawrence strike, IWW



An IWW hall after a police attack

membership in the town had soared to about 4,000. A year later, it was back down to a handful—a reflection of the IWW's failure to build and consolidate. This was repeated in town after town across the States.

The pattern of organising set by the IWW leaders was to swoop on a strike, do a good job and then leave for the next bit of action. The IWW was right in believing that people change through activity, but wrong in assuming that workers *stay* changed without organisation and political understanding.

At its height, in 1912, the IWW had just over 18,000 members—not too impressive for a general union whose only criteria for membership was 'wage-slavery'. Serious decline started in 1917 when America's entry into the war resulted in a vicious crackdown on all union activists and in particular IWW organisers.

The declining membership of the union led to activists wondering what was wrong. The IWW paper, *Solidarity* carried a letter from one such member in 1914, which said:

'... We enroll a large membership during a strike. We teach a solidarity which is sublime and infuse a militant spirit into the workers that is rare. But in all this chain of revolutionary thinking there seems to be a weak link that gives way almost as soon as the last mass meeting is held and the strikers return to work.'

The Wobbly leadership tried to reassure by saying there was nothing fundamentally wrong and that, in any case, the IWW's influence far exceeded its actual membership—which was undoubtedly true.

Between two stools

The problem was that the IWW fell between two stools. It was neither a trade union nor a political party. The Wobblies couldn't even offer workers the protection of traditional trade unionism as the IWW's 'revolutionary principles' forbade it from signing contracts with the employers regarding wages, conditions or union recognition. A leading IWW organiser, Joseph Ettor, summed up the Wobblies' position:

'Can there be any dispute that if the IWW struck bargains with employers, compromised its principles, signed protocols, contracts, had the employers collect the dues and acted as "good boys" generally, we should have half a million members? But rather than sacrifice our principles, kow-tow to all sorts of freak notions, declare a practical truce with the enemy, and have a large number of dues-payers, we have preferred to be true to our own purpose in spite of all opposition. Our men have sweated blood in carrying on the propaganda for a revolutionary labour body—revolutionary in method as well as final purpose.'

But the IWW also failed to build a *revolutionary* organisation. It was, in fact, very much a broad church. 'A working man may be an anarchist or a socialist, a Catholic or a Protestant, republican or democrat, but subscribing to the preamble of the IWW he is eligible for membership. And we are not responsible for his individual views and activities,' the IWW declared.



Gurley Flynn in later life

But the root of the IWW's failure was its misunderstanding of the revolutionary process itself.

Although there were differences of view and often splits within the IWW, generally the leadership saw the main way of fundamentally changing society as being through the use of industrial muscle by workers organised into a revolutionary trade union. A general strike called by the union would, of necessity, force the ruling class to hand over the factories to the workers. The working class would then be in power.

Unfortunately for this theory, general

strikes don't work like that. The ruling class will fight tooth and nail to hang on to its power—and it has a whole array of forces to back it up. Even if the workers control the factories, the ruling class still controls the institutions of political power, the army and so on.

This situation is only temporary: either the ruling class will regain control of the factories or the working class go on to take political power. But the important point is that a general strike only raises the question of workers' power; it isn't workers' power itself and it doesn't automatically lead there.

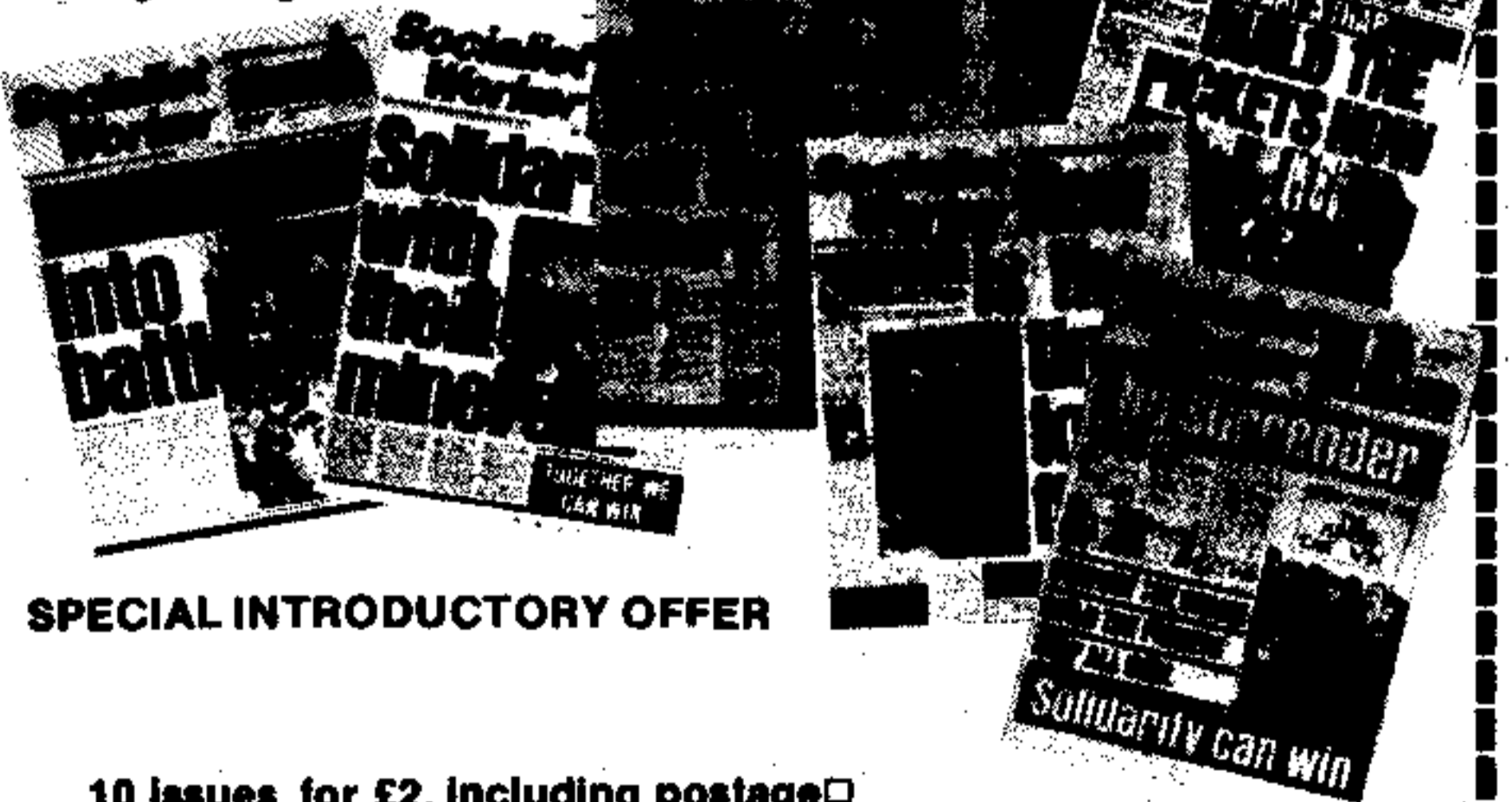
The Wobblies didn't understand that in order to achieve socialism there must be revolutionary leadership within the working class capable of taking the class *beyond* industrial struggle to political power.

In many ways the IWW was a magnificent organisation. Its leaders were brilliant strike organisers who never lost their gut class hatred. It organised workers who had never been approached by a union before—textile workers, agricultural workers, lumber and construction workers, the travelling 'hoboes', unemployed workers.

It was involved in heroic and courageous struggles. It's precisely because the IWW's history is so inspiring that its failures are all the more a tragedy.

Harriet Sherwood

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What do
we mean
by. 

Syndicalism

WHEN they hear the term 'syndicalism' most people will tend to think of past history. Syndicalist ideas found their greatest expression among the working class in the early years of this century. In those years the ideas of syndicalists, initially gathered in small propaganda groups, produced something like mass movements in France, Britain, Italy, America, Australia and Latin America.

In Britain the activities of Tom Mann and others helped fuel the 'Great Unrest'—a series of mass strikes between 1910 and 1914.

That influence carried on after the outbreak of war, into the great engineering strikes, the birth of the first shop stewards' movement and later the early British Communist Party.

In Ireland the modern trade union movement was more or less built by those like Jim Larkin and James Connolly who accepted syndicalist ideas. Even after the high point of syndicalism had passed, anarcho-syndicalist ideas retained a mass following in Spain, and were important in the outcome of the civil war.

But syndicalist ideas aren't just a historical curiosity. Their emphasis on industrial struggle and their rejection of specific political organisation makes them still relevant in many circumstances—especially in a country like Britain with a developed trade union movement.

Despite various forms syndicalist ideas took—varying from anarcho-syndicalism to industrial unionism—one central core remained. Syndicalism was a movement committed to destroying capitalism through revolutionary industrial struggle. Parliamentary democracy or reforms through the capitalist state were rejected in favour of the power of the working class through their economic organisation. A new society would be based on workers' control.

The turn of the century saw massive industrial development connected with the growth of imperialism. But this increase in the potential power of the working class contrasted with the increasing reformism of the leaders of the existing unions and socialist parties.

As the capitalist state grew in power and certain reforms were granted, the ruling class was keen to integrate these leaders so they could police their own supporters.

Syndicalism then grew as a reaction to this class collaboration. Instead of fighting for piecemeal reforms, placing any revolutionary change in some mythical day in the future, the syndicalists looked to mobilise the industrial power of the class.

Their instrument for change was the unions. They were the organisers of class warfare and within them were to be found the embryo of a new classless society. Within

militant day to day struggles lay the possibility of revolutionary change.

Most European syndicalists looked to transform existing unions to a revolutionary position. But others, influenced by the ideas of the American, Daniel De Leon, looked to build 'dual unions'. Effectively they were new, separate, revolutionary unions uniting workers across racial, craft or sectional divisions. In the 1910's the idea came to life in the American Industrial Workers of the World.

But for all syndicalists militant direct action, solidarity and finally the general strike could win workers full possession of the means of production.

Marxist education was important to many syndicalists. But in a real sense syndicalism is best seen as the generalised experience of working people living under capitalism. Above all it was in action, in the aggressive struggle of workers against boss and state, that syndicalist ideas took root.

Trotsky, at the second Congress of the Communist International described the syndicalists as follows:

'I see Scheidemann (one of the sell-out leaders of the German SPD) on the one side, and on the other American or Spanish or French syndicalists who not only wish to fight against the bourgeoisie, but who, unlike Scheidemann really want to tear its head off.'

He characterised syndicalism as a revolutionary tendency in the working class movement, very close to marxism, but far from fully developed.

No party

Trotsky pin-pointed a number of serious flaws in syndicalist theory.

Firstly, the syndicalists failed to grasp the real nature of trade unions. While they are a defensive weapon in the working class's fight against the boss they also act as a means of social control—as a means of incorporating the class into capitalism.

Syndicalists were wrong to believe that sectionalism and union structure were the basic problems and amalgamation and industrial unions could solve them. Class collaboration based on the union bureaucracy is a far more fundamental problem—whether the union is craft, general or industrial.

Secondly, while syndicalism represented a step forward, with its stress on workplace organisation, it failed to provide a political alternative to reformism.

One example is the Clyde Workers Committee during the First World War. This was led by revolutionaries like Willie Gallacher. But unlike the Bolsheviks they refused to mobilise against the war. Instead Gallacher and his comrades argued that this issue was

beyond the committee's bounds and it should limit itself solely to issues like wages and conditions.

Such a division between economics and politics mirrors reformism. To deny politics and rely simply on economic struggle handed the political initiative to the reformists.

By taking control of the factories, syndicalists believed workers would topple the existing social order. The realities of the capitalist state weren't recognised. The error stands out clearly when set against Marx and Lenin's ideas. They argued that only after achieving political power and smashing the capitalist state could the workers gain control of the means of production.

It is precisely because ends are always directed to the means for achieving them, that within the syndicalist movements there is no conception of the political role of the vanguard of the working class organised in a revolutionary party. Trotsky wrote a flurry of letters to the French syndicalists explaining how the trade union could never be a suitable tool to smash the capitalist state.

Trade union consciousness is inevitably lower than socialist consciousness because unions by their nature include all workers, Tory or Labour, backward or advanced. They therefore reflect the unevenness of the working class. The revolutionary party starts from a position of recognising the different levels of consciousness within the class and then fighting to overcome them. The vital job is how, as Trotsky put it, 'the initiating minority' in the working class is organised into the revolutionary party. It is the party that unites the economic and political struggles and ultimately makes possible the conquest of political power.

The high tide of syndicalism was prior to the Russian Revolution. Following the Bolsheviks' success many syndicalist militants joined the new communist parties.

But our differences with syndicalists remain important. In Poland four years ago the free trade union, Solidarnosc, organised millions of workers. But it tended to avoid the central political questions and particularly the need to destroy the state. In the end that state engineered the coup which suppressed *Solidarnosc*.

Political questions couldn't be avoided. But what was lacking was a Marxist current, the embryo of a revolutionary party which could connect the struggles of workers with the political object of taking state power.

Finally, in the Britain of 1985 any perspective that begins with simply changing the unions will collapse into the sectional outlook which dominates the class. With the defeat of the miners and Kinnock's rightwards march it is perhaps tempting for socialists to busy themselves in the unions. But the sectional and reformist ideas of most workers will pull them rightwards.

Our starting point is the general ideas of revolutionary change and the need to win support for them in the class. Our job is to build across the sectional divides through developing a revolutionary minority in the working class. ■

Phil Taylor

WORK PLACE NOTES

This month we interview a worker at a large photographic company in North West London, where the main union is the Transport and General Workers Union with about 1,700 members.

OUR FACTORY is such a massive place with lots of different buildings and a maze of roads that I haven't been around most of it. The factory is divided into areas which deal with each part of the production process. Each area is made up of work centres which are simply groups of machines.

The factory operates all the different shift patterns under the sun. That's important because it's one of the main ways management are able to divide us up. There are people you can never come into contact with because of it. Even people in the same area have staggered tea breaks. The eating arrangements are also divisive.

Because of the way management have carved up the workforce the people you can effectively build around are in your own work centre on your own shift. That means 12 people. If there's anyone particularly good in another work centre you can go and see them. But there are problems because it often means talking to people while they are working, so you have to be careful.

We are lucky because most of the production area is in darkness. This is useful because it means management can't see what's going on. There have even been cases where supervisors have been hit over the head and nobody's found out who did it!

Production capacity has been significantly increased in the past year. Machines are now run on all three shifts instead of two in some areas.

Well over a hundred new people have been taken on in the past year. Lots of youngsters have been recruited. This will change the conservatism of some of the areas where there are older workers.

The company is into Japanese management techniques. When I first started six years ago we used to have these 'contact' meetings. Management stopped bothering with them some 18 months ago when they started to just tell us what they wanted with no discussion. The hard cop bit. This led to a number of small disputes. For example in my area we had an overtime ban on one machine for nine months.

They have now re-introduced the 'contact' meetings in a more sophisticated form. They started at Easter. They take place every three weeks and last about an hour. Whereas before they just used to announce production figures and say we should work harder, now the meetings are clearly designed to undermine the role of the union. You are encouraged to take problems to 'contact' meetings which you would traditionally have gone to your shop steward with. Now if you complain about something

they can say, 'Why didn't you bring it up at the contact meeting?'

Another example of these new techniques is the spreading of the supervisory role over other grades. Higher grade operators are now expected to have more control over production. Management have got rid of shift supervisors. Most of their job content has been passed onto the leading hands.

I've recently noticed cracks in the company plans. Three higher grade operator jobs recently went to blue-eyed boys. This has caused general resentment. Instead of reinforcing the management's 'we're all in the same boat' idea, it weakens it.

In the past year there have been a number of small disputes. In particular one in our own area concerning the introduction of new technology. Management were unwilling to negotiate an increase in payment for operating it. A couple of operators were suspended for refusing to work the new machinery.

This was greeted by an overwhelming majority voting to strike. Before the strike we had a meeting in the canteen. Management came along and told the senior steward that he could be holding his future employment at risk by having the meeting. He repeated this to the members. It was greeted with shouts of derision—people yelled, 'We're holding it here.' Management retreated to the nearest telephone and personnel told them to back off.

Solid Dispute

Out of 200 people only three tried to scab. Management sent them home to stop the situation getting worse. It was the most solid dispute in the plant for years. There were two reasons why. First there was a lot of anger because in previous years we had accepted a lot of changes without getting anything for them. Second, the miners were on strike at the time. Strike action was part of every day conversation.

We'd had about 40 percent giving on some sort of basis to the miners. The collection started by pressure from myself inside and the fact that another SWP comrade put the senior stewards on the spot at a Trades Council meeting where there were miners present.

The factory leadership were using the dispute as a negotiating counter. By the start of the second day the morning shift was told to stay in the canteen implying that a resolution to the dispute was close at hand. Some of the senior stewards suffer from 'I' trouble—I've won this, I've won that—putting the emphasis on their negotiating skills not on the strength of the shopfloor.

A joint management union committee was set up to look into it. The militancy evaporated. After four weeks we imposed an overtime ban because management didn't come up with anything different. A few weeks later management offered us the increased grades but added flexibility strings—staggered tea breaks, flexibility between work centres and reducing manning levels on some machines whilst maintaining the same output. That was thrown out after we had narrowly won the vote for all-out

'AT 'CONTACT' MEETINGS PROBLEMS NORMALLY DEALT WITH BY SHOP STEWARDS ARE TAKEN TO MANAGEMENT'



strike action.

So the company created three new jobs and negotiated the remaining conditions, work centre by work centre, thus splitting up the original 200. Now we're in the position where half the work centres have accepted the new conditions.

Throughout the dispute there were two or three other blokes arguing alongside me. They work in my work centre. I told them that it wasn't enough for me to do the talking. You need a lot of voices at a meeting to sway people.

In my work centre the two other shifts voted by a narrow majority (5-3 and 4-3) to accept the company proposals. We rejected them 8-0 and so overturned them. It shows you have a certain amount of power if you concentrate on your own section rather than having grandiose ideas about swaying mass meetings which only occur once a year anyway around the wage claim.

There is no shop stewards committee. Only about a dozen senior stewards meet once a week. Sometimes they ask a couple of the ordinary stewards to turn up. I've been arguing for the need for all the stewards to meet as a full committee. I want to stand for steward later this year when I will be able to argue the case more effectively.

I have been asked by a senior steward to change shift and become a steward where there is a vacancy. I've refused. I would rather argue with the people in that particular section to elect a steward themselves and stay in my own. I think we're on the way to having a very strong section which will be an example to the others.

The T&G ballot this time around was conducted in the entrance to the canteen. Last time it was in a room on the third floor. But there weren't many voting either time. People just didn't bother to bring their union cards. There were two leaflets put out by the senior stewards which were basically providing information, with a very short recommendation to vote for Ron Todd at the bottom. There was also the official T&G candidates' election addresses on the notice boards. There was no real campaign. ■

Down the tubes

'THE troops let us down'. That was the common reaction from the National Union of Railwaymen's leadership to the collapse of last month's tube strike on the London underground.

The NUR is one of the main unions with a Broad Left leadership. There can be little doubt that the strike's collapse was a major blow. The London Transport District Council which organises NUR branches on the tube was one of the strongholds of the left in the union.

After years of right wing control the District Council has increasingly fallen under control of the left. Its executive committee is controlled by the left—and the hard left at that. A majority are associated with far left groupings in the Labour Party.

The impetus for the all-out strike call came from the District Council. It centred on the introduction without agreement of OPO (one person operation) on the East London Line. The new management running the underground, following its removal from GLC control, were stepping up the attack. It was part of an assault on staffing, wages and conditions overall.

Faced with management provocation the strike call was the only response. But with the decision being taken on the Thursday, it left the union leaders a lot to do before the action began on Monday.

No campaign

The NUR's national executive, which has a Broad Left majority, endorsed the decision. But from the beginning there was the feeling that some union fulltimers hoped the threat of a strike was all that was involved to get negotiations going. Rumours flew that they hoped the District Council would fall flat on its face. At this stage general secretary Jimmy Knapp was missing.

But it was quickly becoming clear to activists that there were problems. The union's previous agreement to one person operation had created much cynicism. The other main union on the tubes, ASLEF, was prepared to accept its go-ahead on the East London Line, where its members outnumbered those of the NUR. Underground staff had clearly not had the arguments explained. Many saw the issue as only affecting guards.

The blame for some of this must lie with the executive of the District Council. Its powers were very limited, but they included being able to produce propaganda. But it is only in the last two or three months that bulletins, of fairly poor quality, have been issued.

The Broad Left, as on the national executive, operated informally. Its power lay in securing elections from NUR branches. That didn't depend mainly upon having support in the individual departments or depots.

NUR rules prevent any political content in

election manifestoes so even elections lack a cutting edge. In addition, no attempt was made to link up with with drivers and guards in ASLEF. Despite last minute attempts to pull in other activists it was clear that organising the strike was going to be difficult. With one exception, union fulltimers did nothing to organise action.

On the day itself, militants faced immense obstacles. On the Sunday, Knapp had returned to start negotiations. After three and a half hours they ceased, but rumours started that Knapp was waiting for a national executive meeting to call the strike off. On Monday morning press reports announced the NUR would settle that afternoon. In the event that is what happened.

On the day itself the stoppage provided a picture of how real union organisation was. Union organisation on the tubes has been traditionally weak. But from the beginning it was clear that the strike was being undermined by the failure to mobilise against London Transport's attacks.

Even worse, it became clear that some of the most outspoken left wingers on the District Council had little or no support on their depots. This was particularly true on

the Central Line, where one of the leading figures on the hard left of the council's executive couldn't even organise a picket line.

There were exceptions where leading figures on the District Council worked hard to build the picket lines. Where these existed the response was good. On the northern end of the Piccadilly Line, 30 pickets cut services to a third. On the Jubilee and Bakerloo, services were hardest hit. On the northern end of the Northern Line, which had a reputation for bad organisation, a dozen or so active pickets halted scabbing. One of those explained that an influx of younger staff had helped generate a feeling that something had to be done.

Examination of the best areas shows the good results weren't accidents. On the Jubilee and and Piccadilly Lines one activist linked the response to the existence of miners support groups that had helped organisation. At Neasden the strike was successful. There a number of guards had been transferred after the introduction of one person operation on another line. But they had tried to organise unofficially, drawing in 20 or so militants. That experience helped build the strike pickets.

The lesson must be learnt by other activists in the Broad Lefts. Simply winning electoral victories doesn't create the organisation needed for a fightback. That rests on building in the individual sections and departments. ■

Chris Bambery



A lovely day tomorrow?

MARX was fond of saying history repeats itself, first as a tragedy, then as a farce. The Second World War, resulting in the loss of 56 million human lives, the wholesale destruction of cities and the reduction of countless people to semi-destitution, was a tragedy of unparalleled international dimensions.

Forty years later, the celebrations to commemorate the end of the war proved to be, with their bickerings and Bitburgs, not only a farce but an insult to the fallen.

Why were so many prepared to die? What did they think they were fighting for? In the German capital a Russian woman soldier scrawled on a shattered wall of the Reichstag: 'We have fought from Stalingrad to Berlin to put an end to war.' Similar sentiments were expressed by a young British tank commander named Edward Thompson, a veteran of the Italian campaign. This is how he described the future as foreseen by himself and his fellow soldiers:

'All of Europe, from the Urals to the Atlantic, was moved by a consensual expectation of a democratic and peaceful postwar continent. We supposed that the old gangs of money, privilege and militarism would go. Most of us supposed that the nations of west and southern Europe would conduct their anti-fascist alliance towards some form of socialism.'

Alas, despite all the fervent wishes, the glittering tomorrow never came. The real tragedy of 1945 was that the new society, desired almost universally by working people everywhere, was so nearly in their grasp and yet so far away. Never before had the various ruling classes been so vulnerable, so isolated. Never before had the working classes been so well armed and so angry. A united states of socialist Europe could have been built. The big problem was that neither communist nor socialist parties wished to see fundamental change.

Yet, as the example of Germany reveals, the plight of the capitalists was parlous. All the German ruling class had been Hitler's accomplices: big business financed the Nazi Party's rise to power, benefitted from Hitler's policy of territorial aggrandisement, used slave labour in their wartime factories until the workers dropped, and then despatched them to the gas chambers. Likewise in occupied Europe, the vast majority of politicians and businessmen collaborated; resistance came overwhelmingly from the working class.

Even in countries like Britain, almost everybody wanted to see drastic changes. In the course of the war, the British public's attitude altered, as its experiences led it to view the 1930s in a new, more critical manner. The idea that, to quote Vera Lynn's song, 'It will be a lovely day tomorrow' was essential for the war effort.

The creation of the welfare state after 1945

needs to be seen against the background of a determined and well-organised working class menacing the existing order.

As the years passed, however, the danger receded, and those reforms have gradually been whittled away. The much-vaunted Beveridge Plan, abolishing the dreaded Means Test and providing security, as a right, to all from the cradle to the grave has vanished.

The NHS, in its original conception as a free and comprehensive health service, has become a thing of the past. And then, of course, the promise never again to allow human beings to suffer the hopelessness and degradation of being thrown on the industrial scrapheap has been dishonoured.

Now Thatcher rules in the spirit of the 1930s rather than that of 1945.

Workers suppressed

How did we get into the present mess? Why did the optimism of 1945 evaporate?

An imperialist peace followed an imperialist war, not really fought against fascism but rather over spheres of influence, raw materials, markets. At international conferences politicians showed scant regard for the wishes of subject nationalities; workers wanting to secure some control over their own lives were unceremoniously suppressed.

In the East Stalin imposed ruthless dictatorships in each country, weeding out militants and other undesirables. Significantly, in both halves of Europe the rulers relied on civil and military personnel with disreputable Nazi pasts.

Despite the savagery with which the German Sixth Army had swept through Russia, its commander—General von Paulus—became a good comrade, a Kremlin-appointed spokesman for the 'Free Germans'. Similarly, in Italy the Americans and British appointed fascist General Badoglio, responsible for using poison gas during Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, to run the Allied 'liberated' Italy.

France provides a good illustration of what happened in that honeymoon period of East/West co-operation. The French Communist Party joined a coalition government led by the reactionary General de Gaulle.

The British Communist Party played an equally reactionary tune in 1945. After some hesitation, the Labour leaders decided to break the political truce. They went on to fight the general election as an independent party, trouncing the Tories and winning a large Labour parliamentary majority. This, at the time, was much to the left of the Communist Party, which wanted to see a coalition government, including Conservatives and Liberals.

When at the 1946 Labour Party conference the Communist Party applied for

affiliation, Herbert Morrison, for the NEC, quite rightly pointed out that the CP's position, had it been adopted, would have meant ditching what was to be the first majority Labour government.

In those days, the Communist Party was immeasurably stronger than it is now. Far from finding a need to distance itself from Moscow, the CP basked in the Soviet Union's prestige, proud of the unparalleled progress made there. But as the years passed by, that image became tarnished; not merely were there the revolts against Russian rule—East Germany 1953, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1980—but also the split with China and the revelations of the 20th Party Congress. As a result, the Communist Parties in Europe would be unable to play again the counter-revolutionary role as effectively as in 1945.

Likewise Labour reformism has lost, over the years, much of its dynamism and popular appeal. Though not fundamentally changing the social system, the Attlee government nevertheless introduced the most important improvements ever enacted by a parliamentary administration in the general conditions of working people. But subsequent Labour governments have, in most areas, nibbled away at the post-1945 achievements.

The decline of traditional organisations (Labour and Communist) has led some individuals, such as Professors Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall, to assume they are a symptom of the decline of the working class itself, and have gone on to propose some desperately right-wing remedies. But what these individuals overlook is the existence of a political tendency—Trotskyism—that has grown greatly since 1945.

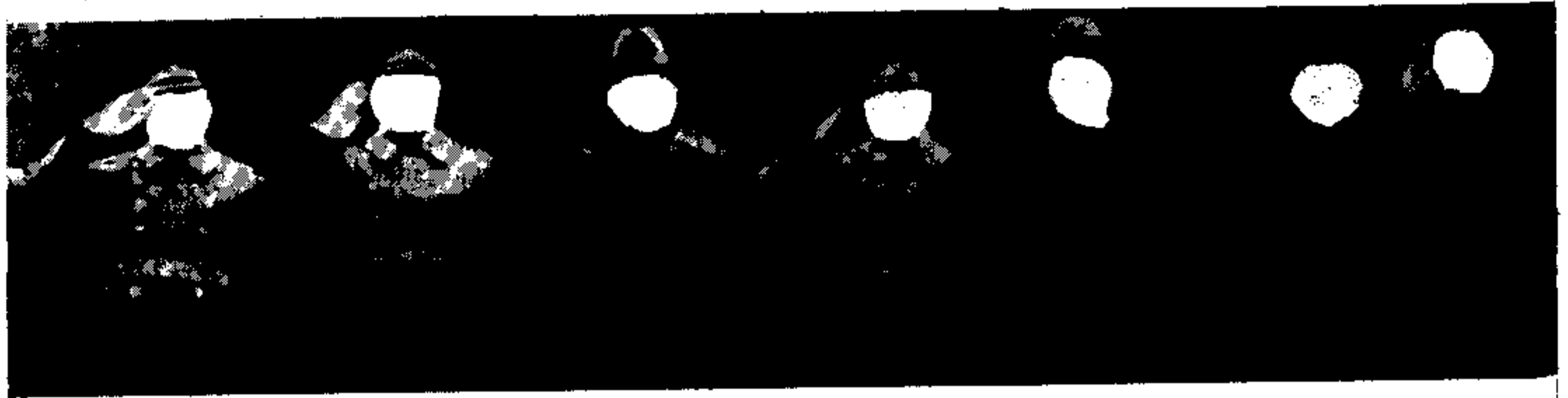
Turn to its publications at the end of the Second World War and you will find, broadly speaking, the same points that I have made in this article, namely, first, that the imperialist horse-dealings at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences would not provide the basis for an enduring peace; secondly, that Stalinism and reformism would play a counter-revolutionary role; and, third, that the working class itself, through its own struggles, was the only force that could bring socialism.

The tiny Trotskyist organisation in 1945 had a membership of less than a tenth of the SWP today and probably less than a twenty-fifth who consider themselves now to be Trotskyists. Simultaneously, in that period the amount of Trotskyist literature has increased both quantitatively and qualitatively while penetration into the class, involvement in class struggles, has also greatly expanded.

In 1938, Trotsky had prophetically written: 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.' Seven years later people everywhere yearned for peace and prosperity.

Yet, despite the weakened and discredited state of the various ruling classes, no serious attempt was made to overthrow the existing system. 1945 was a missed opportunity—next time it comes it must not be missed again. ■

Raymond Challinor



A cautious ruling class

Nomenklatura: An Anatomy of the Soviet Ruling Class

Andrei Voslensky, preface by Milovan Djilas
Bodley Head £12.95

THIS should by rights be a most powerful weapon for the workers' movement. Yet the author offers it blithely to 'the West', as yet more ammunition for the enemies of socialism.

Why? Because although Voslensky makes out a devastating case for the USSR being an exploitative class society with a fully-fledged ruling class—the 'nomenklatura'—he claims this is an inescapable consequence of the politics of Leninism; in particular the concept and practice of the Leninist revolutionary party.

That's something we can discuss another time. The main point is that this book is, however unwittingly, a systematic justification of the SWP's analysis of the class nature of the 'communist' countries, written by an insider and from a Marxist point of view.

The following is his opening argument. The Russian state categorically denies the existence of class antagonisms and of an exploitative ruling class, and claims that the social system is 'actual socialism' run by and for 'the people'. But Marx and Lenin expected the state to wither away as class conflict disappeared under socialism. In Lenin's words: 'The state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class conflict.' Yet the Soviet state has not withered; on the contrary, it has become extremely strong. Either Marx and Lenin are wrong, or there is irreconcilable class antagonism in the USSR.

The SWP describes the system in the USSR and its satellites as 'state capitalism'. 'State capitalism' has done more to shape our politics than almost anything else. In particular it has helped us rescue the revolutionary democratic idea of workers' self-emancipation which for so many decades has been crushed under the dead weight of reformism and Stalinism.

After all your attitude to the social system in the USSR, Bulgaria, Vietnam and the rest has deep practical implications.

If these states are socialist, as they

officially claim, then presumably we should be fighting to build similar regimes here. *We are not.*

If we believe that the USSR is a workers' state which has degenerated or deformed, then we should both take its side automatically in the global conflict and also argue that it can be reformed or re-generated without the need for an insurrectionary revolution. We hold neither of these views.

Worst of all, if we believe, as some people argue today, that the USSR is a new type of society to which Marx's basic ideas do not apply, then we should be obliged to question the validity of Marxism as a system. In fact the class nature of Russian society reinforces the views of Marx.

We think that the theory of 'state capitalism' solves these problems quite eloquently, but the question of class and property rights often causes arguments. Voslensky sets out to prove by Marxist reasoning that the USSR is a class society in which a clearly definable ruling class exploits the workers in its own interests.

Officially, the USSR only contains two classes—workers and peasants, plus the 'intelligentsia', the professional, managerial and administrative layer, which is supposed to be a specialised sub-group of the working class.

However, Voslensky shows that inside the intelligentsia is a special layer which he calls the 'nomenklatura'. These gentry, who number about 750,000 (plus families) are the ruling class. They occupy every position of power in the state.

This means the communist party, government, state administration, diplomatic service, armed forces, security forces (KGB etc), youth organisations, trades unions, industry, agriculture, the legal system, the media, education, science, sport, culture and even religion. The word 'nomenklatura' means the secret lists of these high positions and the bureaucrats who fill them, all of whom are completely immune to control from below and are 'confirmed by higher authorities'.

The nomenklatura is a collective: no one in it has a private stake in the means of production, but nevertheless its collective interests are exceptionally powerful and cohesive. Its income and living standards are

vastly superior to those of the ordinary Russian citizen, and unlike them, it can actually spend its money—in the special shops selling special rations and high quality goods unobtainable elsewhere.

Then there are the chauffeur-driven cars, the foreign travel, the 30 days' holiday at double pay (to cover additional 'expenses') and even an amazing private telephone system, the 'vertushka'. These and a host of other privileges which Voslensky describes in extensive and lively detail are carefully concealed from the ordinary Russian citizen.

But there's more to a ruling class than consuming an unfair share of the surplus product. It has no legal title to ownership, but in practice the nomenklatura has actual possession of the USSR's total means of production. It makes all the decisions on investment, social conditions, rates, wages, the rate of exploitation (which is extremely high, according to Voslensky) and the disposal of the surplus value created. The workers and peasants, despite what state propaganda says, have no power whatever over these matters.

Nor of course does any individual nomenklaturist have a legal title to any piece of 'state' property which gives him the right to sell it off at will. But compare this with advanced 'private' capitalism. An individual shareholder in a big multinational like ICI does not own some corner of the factory which he can sell off at will. Instead he has a share, a stake in the surplus value which all ICI workers produce. The Russian bureaucrat similarly has a stake in the surplus value extracted from all Russian workers, by virtue of his occupation of a nomenklatura post.

Once in, you keep your share for life, unless you make an outstandingly stupid error. If Academician Servily Narcissovich Ignorantov (Voslensky likes inventing funny names) falls from grace, he is not hurled down into the ranks of the working class. Instead, a painless transfer to some well-paid but harmless post: in the Armenian Ministry of Transport, or the Far East Opera School, or the Bovine Feedstuffs Distribution Commission.

The ruling class has 750,000 such posts to dispose of, and there is no fixed hierarchy. Apart from certain specialities like the army, the structure of the ruling class is both

immensely complex and strangely amorphous. Individuals move from industry to education to agriculture to party or state administration in an apparently haphazard way—they are fully interchangeable professional controllers.

What's more, the ruling class is in practice hereditary. The sons and daughters of the Russian ruling class do not become bus drivers, textile workers or roadies for Ukrainian reggae bands. No, they enter the intelligentsia, join the party and are moved smoothly into the nomenklatura.

Mind you, things can be tough at the top. Everyone is watching everyone else like a hawk, so any bureaucrat who wants to 'get on' (and they all do) has to act with exaggerated caution at all times. A minor mistake can blight your career. The boss is watching, and so is the party (the KGB is watching their workers).

All decisions become tortuously bureaucratic, mired in red tape because everyone's first priority is to 're-insure' his position by getting the widest possible approval for any action. Nomenklatura decisions have always been collective. It is this process which accounts for the chronic stagnation and backwardness of much of the Russian economy and its consistent failure to meet output targets (except in arms, where maximum resources are employed).

Understandably the workers have no desire to increase output, when it benefits only the bosses. But nor have the individual

nomenklaturists. Caution is the watchword. Line managers set targets as low as possible. Setting higher targets and failing to meet them means a black mark. The factory boss goes along with this: a failure lower down would reflect on him. The same applies right up to the ministries and party departments which countersign the plan. Go for something easy, meet the target, and everyone gets a medal and Brownie points. Ambition and initiative can only bring disaster in the end.

Mystical concept

All this is music to our political ears. Where Voslensky goes off the rails is in stating that the Russian ruling class is only interested in power for its own sake. This shows how shallow his Marxism sometimes is. A mystical concept like 'power' is meaningless in itself. The nomenklatura needs power not for its own sake but to guarantee its survival as a class and the survival of the state capitalist system.

Its obsession with heavy industry thus has a wholly practical basis, since it is a strength first to prevent the system being swamped both militarily and economically by western capitalism, and second to enforce a fearsome rate of exploitation on an alienated and unwilling workforce. Hence the huge proportion of investment and output which goes on arms and security.

On the other hand, in this supposed workers' state the workers themselves are

seen at best as a necessary evil. The need to provide them with food and consumer goods is regarded by the ruling class as an irritating diversion of resources which must be minimised.

All good stuff: oppression, class conflict, exploitation: the state capitalist ruling class revealed in all its repellent glory—and there's much more than I have mentioned here. So much so that all through the book's 455 pages, as Voslensky's case piles up and up, I kept dying to sneak a look at his conclusions. (Only my revolutionary self-discipline prevented me.)

What thunderous denunciation would Voslensky sound forth to the oppressed masses of the USSR? How shall the workers throw off the yoke? How long until they storm the Kremlin gates and reconquer the world they won in 1917? How long before the Gorbachevs go up against the wall?

But at the end, after all the thunder, after all the indictments and the anger, there is nothing. Not a word to the workers. Only the traditional Solzhenitsyn-style 'warning' to the West. Beware the Kremlin's honeyed tongue. Russia wants world domination and must be resisted at all costs.

Nevertheless, Voslensky has done us a favour with this book, although at nearly 3p a page, and with some nasty drawbacks in it, it's one to borrow, not to buy. And I suggest comrades save time and brain damage by starting at chapter three. ■

Howard Senter



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.

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.

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SPEAKERS ★ Ken Livingstone ★ Chris Harman ★ Tariq Ali ★ Tony Cliff ★ Alex Callinicos ★ Lindsey German ★ Ralph Miliband ★ 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.

It's never a fair cop

More Rough Justice
Peter Hill & Martin Young
Penguin £2.50

IT'S EASY to scoff at a book like this, so I will. It's a spin-off from the BBC series of the same name (scoff) written by a BBC producer and journalist (scoff) examining the cases of three of the 47,600 men and women currently in prison (scoff).

The BBC's motives in this are all too apparent. *Rough Justice* had the quality the BBC admire most in television: it was cheap to make. No expensive sets, no expensive stars, no costumes, just a camera crew and a TV journalist. And the subject is perfect BBC material; controversial but safe; serious—but popular.

The punters love a good murder, especially when, as in these three cases it is spiced with a bit of sex as well. It's the heady formula that sells two million copies of the *News of the World* Sunday after Sunday. If this book does well, it will no doubt be followed by *More and More Rough Justice*, and then by the T-shirt and then by the 12-inch maxi-single. Scoff, scoff, scoff.

And yet; a large measure of cynicism is certainly justified, but the fact is that *Rough Justice* made very powerful television, and if as a result three innocent people get out of jail then that alone puts the programme several million miles in front of the mind-rot usually served up as television 'art'.

What's more as a book *More Rough Justice* proves to be both well-researched and readable, and in its own way quite moving. But more important still, this little book tells us something quite fundamental about the society we live in, and that makes it very rare indeed in the wonderful world of books.

In all probability the authors didn't entirely intend or even want this. They simply set out to prove that two men and a woman were the victims of a miscarriage of justice, and most of the book concentrates on these three cases. Only in the final chapter does Tom Sargent from the legal ginger group Justice go on to generalise about some of the wider problems in the British legal system.

So far, so liberal. Sargent catalogues page after page of judicial outrages only to conclude with a single practical proposal: he suggests that Britain should adopt the French method of criminal prosecution.

I seem to recall that Alfred Dreyfus was not quite so impressed by the French legal system.

In fact the whole idea of a 'miscarriage of justice' is a liberal bed-time story. It implicitly assumes that, in normal circumstances what takes place in British

courts is a *carriage* of justice, which is simply nonsense. Ask almost any one of the nine thousand odd miners who've recently been on the receiving end of British 'justice'. Or alternatively read this book. Either would soon prove to you that what the courts dispense isn't 'justice' at all—it's class law. The police, the courts, the prisons, the whole due process of law, is an institution of the ruling classes to keep us lower orders in our place.

All the victims in this book were ordinary working class men and women; the murder victims and the other victims, the poor sods wrongly convicted of the crimes. Margaret Livesey was a housewife with a husband on permanent nights; Ernie Clarke was a black chemical worker; George Beattie was a retarded teenager, employed in a Lanarkshire steelworks.

In fact, it was this very ordinariness which made them fair game for the state. The most obvious fact to stare at you from this book—so obvious that even the dead-hand of BBC 'neutrality' can't disguise it—is that Margaret Livesey, Ernie Clarke and George Beattie were all found guilty of crimes they did not commit, because they were fitted up by the police.

Suppressed

The police interrogated Margaret Livesey while she was still in a state of shock after the murder of her son, and bullied her into a 'confession', which she has denied ever since and which simply does not fit the known facts. In the case of Ernie Clark, he became a police suspect primarily because he was almost the only black living in South Shields. Once he had been charged, the police merely suppressed all the forensic evidence which would have threatened their circumstantial case.

With George Beattie the police used a mixture of both methods. First George—who has the mental age of a child—was questioned, alone, for over twenty hours. At the end he was so bewildered that he produced not a confession, but hysterical gibberish. Instead, the police returned to his house, which they had searched four days earlier, and this time to everyone's astonishment they discovered two paper hankies with spots of blood, a blood group that the murdered girl shared with 55% of the Scottish population. The police literally produced a tissue of lies on this occasion, but it was enough to put George away for the past twelve years.

The places vary, the names are different, the details change but the police operation is basically the same. There's the murder which

attracts sensational publicity. The police set up an incident room (usually in the saloon bar of a convenient pub) and collect what clues they can. If these lead to the actual murderer, then hip, hip hooray for our wonderful police force.

But at some stage if they can't find the guilty, then the innocent will have to do. After all, someone has got to go down for life or the public reputation of the police might take a knock. Worse still, the police will be made to look silly in front of their drinking cronies, and no civilised society could allow that, could it?

So some innocent party, usually someone too upset or too dumb and always someone too socially unimportant to resist is put in the frame. Any evidence that doesn't fit is simply forgotten; where there is no evidence it's simply manufactured. That is what happened in every one of these three cases; and what makes them exceptional isn't that the police fitted them up, it's that the BBC took the trouble to prove that they did.

But the police aren't the end of the story. The courts of law also have their part to play. Anyone who has ever been in court as a witness, defendant or a juror—and I must confess to have been all three—at different times—will know that the jury is essentially there for the show.

A trial is totally dominated by the judge and by the barristers, and together they remotely control the verdicts that most juries dutifully return. And just as all the victims come from the lower classes, so all the judges and all the barristers come from the upper classes. Frankly what does it matter to these parasites, if some depressed housewife, or a black chemical worker, or a simple-minded train spotter is banged up for the rest of their lives? It's no-one they know, no-one they go to the opera with, no-one they went to public school with, no-one they will invite to supper, no-one they are ever likely to even meet outside a courthouse.

You might think that this description is altogether too over-the-top and crude. Read *More Rough Justice*, and you will find that if anything, I'm going under the top.

Margaret Livesey and Ernie Clarke were both convicted on evidence so thin that it would be laughable were it not so serious. Yet their lawyers did not even bother to lodge an appeal. George Beattie's trial was even more blatant: his barrister didn't bother to lodge a defence.

I'm not saying that everyone found guilty in court is innocent, far from it. Not everyone the police try to fit up is sent down. Murderers are caught and sentenced, and juries do

occasionally assert their independence like the Ponting jury.

But these are the exceptions which prove the judge's rules. If fruit machines didn't sometimes pay out a jackpot, everyone would see them for the money-making con they are and no one would stick money in them. But that isn't what they are for. Fruit machines aren't there to redistribute the wealth of the world to the needy; and no more are the courts there to dispense 'justice'.

More Rough Justice proves that beyond reasonable doubt, although Hill and Young can never summon up the courage to say it openly. Justice isn't blind, it's partially sighted. For the lower classes justice is *always* rough. There is no other kind available to us under this system. Only the upper classes get smooth justice, because only they are tried by their peers.

It's a chilling thought that twenty one years ago any, or even all three of these innocent people could have been judicially murdered by the state. Not that that would have stopped the police and the courts, as the cases of Timothy Evans and James Hanratty prove. Both were innocent, both were fitted up and both were hanged.

Sympathetic

In that sense, Livesey, Clarke and Beattie are lucky. They are also lucky to have been selected by the BBC for a re-trial by television. Having your case taken up and pursued by a sympathetic journalist—as Ludovic Kennedy did for Timothy Evans or Paul Foot for Hanratty—is the only appeal that British 'justice' offers to someone wrongly convicted. For Hanratty and Evans, of course, the exoneration had to be posthumous.

Let's hope Margaret Livesey, Ernie Clarke and George Beattie do have their cases re-opened and do get their freedom. But since their fate will eventually lie in the hands of the reptilian Leon Brittan it's hard to be too hopeful.

But Hill and Young have at least tried to see justice done. I wouldn't want to let *More Rough Justice* off scoff free: it's a book with important limitations. It is restricted by its origins at the BBC and by the authors' refusal to draw general conclusions from their own evidence, but it's nonetheless a good and a politically instructive book.

And there is a sense in which just because this is a BBC publication, and just because it does concentrate so exclusively on three individual murders, its indictment of British 'justice' is even more devastating. ■
Bob Light

In Marx's workshop

The Making of Marx's Critical Theory: A Bibliographical Analysis
Allen Oakley

Routledge & Kegan Paul £4.95
Marx's Critique of Political Economy: Intellectual Sources and Evolution. Vol 2
Allen Oakley
Routledge & Kegan Paul £16.95

FROM around 1844, Marx set himself a vast task which he never came near to completing. His aim was to produce a complete critical theoretical account of the workings of capitalist society. His work was interrupted by the 1848 revolutions, by the demands of political activity, by ill-health, by the need to earn a living through journalism, by his defence of the Paris Commune. His progress went in fits and starts.

Sometimes he would put the work aside for several years. At other times, he 'worked like mad' at it. He was always overly optimistic (especially to publishers!) about his progress. Quite apart from the inherent difficulty of his task, Marx faced huge problems of presentation. An enormous mass of material must be put into a proper order, presented as 'an artistic whole', and written in a way which would make it accessible to communist workers. In the end, when he died in 1883, only Volume 1 of *Capital* had actually been pub-

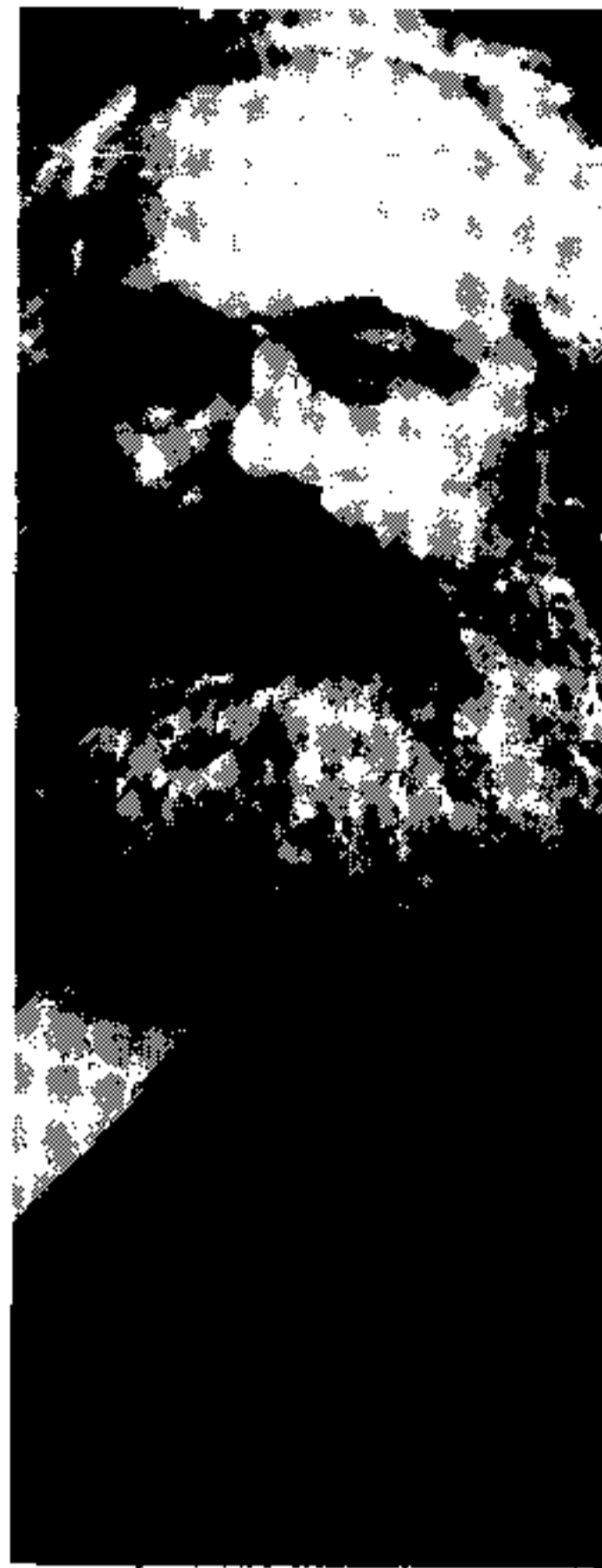
lished. Marx twice worked over this, in an effort to make it more comprehensible.

His friend and comrade, Frederick Engels, spent the next decade labouring over the mass of manuscripts and notebooks Marx had left behind. From these he produced what we know today as *Capital* Vols II and III.

In *The Making of Marx's Critical Theory*, Allen Oakley has traced the complex development of Marx's ideas, indicating in the process what an unfinished work *Capital* really is. Indeed, as he emphasises, we cannot be sure, finally, even *what* it is that is unfinished, for Marx kept changing his own mind about the scope and scale of his great project. There is a good case for seeing *Capital*, as we have it, as only a small fraction of Marx's intended project.

Labours

As part of his immense labours, Marx produced, between 1861 and 1863, a huge manuscript in 23 notebooks (in total some 3,000 printed pages). Ten of these notebooks, together with extracts from five others, were published by Karl Kautsky as *Capital Vol IV*. They have been re-edited in Moscow as the *Theories of Surplus Value (TSV)*. These are the subject of the second volume of Oakley's study of the



development of Marx's ideas.

As he shows, the *TSV* should *not* be read as *Capital Vol IV*. They are not even the draft form of a work intended for publication. Rather, they are a huge set of extended notes Marx made for his own purposes. He had already, in the *Grundrisse*

notebooks of the late 1850s, worked out the main basis of his own theory of the economic functioning of capitalist society.

What he was doing in the *TSV* notebooks was to clarify and develop his own theories, by confronting the ideas of Smith, Ricardo, Malthus and others. Thus, the *TSV* are not Marx's 'history of political economy', for Marx was reading the great (and not-so-great) political economists of previous generations with particular purposes in mind. He did not deal with all the relevant writers, nor with all the topics they raised.

He focussed chiefly on how they treated the question he himself had labelled the production of surplus value. Additionally, he was concerned with sorting out the contribution political economy had made to understanding the *dynamics* of capitalism—an aspect of the problem Marx had not previously taken very far.

Oakley focusses on this actual process of self-clarification, as it proceeds in Marx's notebooks. He thus provides a fascinating insight into the labours going on within Marx's own workshop.

Oakley's books are models of scholarship. His exposition of the ideas both of Marx and of previous political economists is exceptionally clear. Taken together, these are a most useful addition to our understanding of the Marxist critique of political economy. Every half-decent library should be persuaded to buy them. ■

Colin Barker

Eurosoap

The View from Inside
Jane Jenson & George Ross
University of California Press \$28.50

TWO North American social scientists—funded by the German Marshall Fund, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and Carleton and Brandeis Universities—spend a year working as members of a Communist Party cell in Paris.

A clandestine operation, you may imagine, with our heroes risking exposure as CIA agents at any moment. Such would indeed have been the case in the good old days, but Jenson and Ross came in the late seventies, as 'participant observers', and were received openly by a 'Eurocommunist' cell anxious to prove that it had rid itself of all that Stalinist nonsense about 'security' and 'infiltration'.

The book is the story, in 350 pages of painful detail, of the day-to-day life of the cell. In their concern to merge the personal and the political they often seem to be dredging up material for a soap opera—'The Euros—an everyday

story of left reformist folk?' But petty quarrels, low attendances and demoralisation are not much of a good read. The response of any SWP reader will be that our poorer branches are immeasurably livelier, better organised, more active and above all more political than this.

It cannot be said that the book adds very much to our knowledge of the long-term decline of the French CP, but a few interesting points emerge. Firstly, the base of the cell studied, in southern Paris, was almost entirely non-working class—intellectuals, professionals, self-employed, with only one industrial worker. The following gives a taste of the life-style:

'Christmas and New Year, like the summer, bring French politics to a halt. Along with much of the Parisian population, our friends (from the cell) dispersed in all directions for the holidays. Janine and Gérard went to their country house near Marseilles; Alexandre and Nicole went to their retreat in the Rhône valley; and others went to their own *résidences secondaires* (second homes), to those of friends, or

off to ski in a resort.'

Small wonder that cell members felt the party put too much stress on a 'soak the rich' line.

Secondly, the essential undemocratic nature of the party comes out clearly. Certainly there is free discussion in the cell. Members are openly abusive about the party leadership and all kinds of weird and non-Marxist notions are aired. Virtually no discipline of any kind seems to exist. But all this discussion has nothing to do with the decisions, which are imposed from above in traditional Stalinist fashion. One member compares the CP's 'democratic centralism' to a tall house in which the leadership have the right to pour buckets of water down the staircase—and the membership have an equal right to pour water back up again.

Backwardness

Sexual questions consumed a lot of the cell's time. Here what comes out is the amazing backwardness of the discussion. One argument began with a letter to *L'Humanité* from a woman who had been raped at a *fête* organised by the CP! A worker member of the cell immediately commented that all rape victims were asking for it. The

cell apparently never gave any consideration to any form of child minding arrangements for meetings. In this climate it is hardly surprising that many women members were attracted by various forms of abstract and unpolitical feminism.

But behind the anecdotes lies the problem of the decline of the French CP—and this neither of the 'participant observers' really understand. They declare sympathy for the 'Eurocommunist' current in the Party, and seem to believe that if it had been able to exercise more influence the Party's decline could have been halted. But the Eurocommunist project was to turn the CP into an openly reformist party—and France had one of those already. Why vote for a wolf in sheep's clothing when there were real sheep on the ballot?

One member particularly admired by Jenson and Ross speaks of the 'sensible' attitude of the Italian CP—but the Italian Party has failed to get even as far as the French in its quest for governmental office. The decline of the French CP is historic and inevitable—to understand that one needs, not 'participant observation' but politics. ■

Ian Birchall

Lost in London

London for Beginners
Nita Clarke and Phil Evans
Writers and Readers £3.95

THERE is a saying that no army can stop an idea whose time has come. That may be so; but it is certain that no publicity can save a book whose time has passed, and this is such a book.

Produced to cash in on the campaign to save the GLC, it has come a few months too late to make any money. Introduced by Ken Livingstone, its arrival on the streets coincides too closely with his treachery even to appeal to his former admirers, and I don't see Kinnock buying it either.

To be fair, it is not entirely uncritical of the old style Livingstone, but it does say:

'What is there left to say about

Ken Livingstone?... Over a period of three years Livingstone held together a Labour group which spanned the political spectrum, and ensured that radical policies were put into practice...'

I don't, somehow, think that there will be a second edition which will allow the authors to correct that embarrassing little misjudgement.

To be fair again, no book with Evans cartoons can be wholly bad, but even here woolly politics seem to be taking their toll. Some of the stuff is as good as ever, but unfortunately some of the stuff is also the same as ever. Page 61 appeared in *Socialist Worker* long ago, as did the one on page 163 (twice before, as it happens). Don't bother. ■

B Rutus

After the fall

THE LATEST edition of *Granta* is well worth thumbing through. The main article is James Fenton's *The Fall of Saigon*.

It's an eye witness account of the final collapse of South Vietnam and the North Vietnamese takeover of the capital by someone who didn't take the last US helicopter out of the doomed city but stayed on to witness the victory he'd long hoped for.

It's a fascinating account of events in Saigon combined with some rather feeble soul searching by Fenton. Fenton 'wanted to see a communist victory' but in the end, he ran away from Saigon deeply distressed by the actions of the victors.

Fenton's problem was simple. He was a voyeur. He wanted to be there

when history was made. When he went to Vietnam he was a member of the International Socialists (the forerunners of the Socialist Workers Party).

But he obviously didn't understand the IS arguments about Vietnam. Otherwise, the illusions which in the *Granta* article he is at such pains to deny, wouldn't have been so obviously shattered.

Despite Fenton wingeing, the article is worth reading—as are three shorter pieces also on Vietnam. Two are by right wingers and they are a useful example of how the US establishment is trying to reclaim something from the Vietnam debacle.

Finally, Noam Chomsky, in an excellent piece looks at the terrible

mess in Indo-China today and questions whether the US really lost the Vietnam war at all.

'The countries of Indo-China will be lucky to survive. They will not endanger global order by a social and economic independence that denies the west the freedom to exploit them; they will not infect the regions beyond, as had been feared, by a model of social reform that might be meaningful to impoverished peasants.'

Other *Granta* articles—there are 18 in this issue—deal with the Belgrano sinking and the Ponting trial, and radioactive pollution of the Cumbrian coastline around Windscale.

Michael Crick has a weak piece on reporting the miners' strike. Of use, I suppose, is his admission that the coal board were lying when they said that the Nottinghamshire coalfield was working normally last spring, but that's it.

The rest of the article is an apology for the lousy reporting of the dispute. 'I'm determined to cover the National Working Miners' Committee...but I'm stuck without decent pictures. The story falls by the wayside.' And Crick works for Channel Four—by far the best news broadcast!

With incredible lack of insight he complains that the Yorkshire miners are more hostile to the press and TV crews than those in South Wales.

Different traditions, muses Crick. It didn't occur to him that the Yorkshire miners' level of activity was much higher than that in South Wales. They had more direct experience of the press and media lies and behaved accordingly.

According to the cover, *Granta* is a 'literary magazine'. Don't be put off. There is some good accessible stuff between its covers. ■

Mike Simons

Drinking workers' beer

The Militant Worker
Scott Lash

Heinemann Educational Books

THE subject of this book is certainly of great interest. Scott Lash sets out to explain why there are such sharp differences between the traditions of working class political ideas and industrial action in the various capitalist countries.

He concentrates on France and the United States, because they represent the extremes of radical and conservative working class movements, but he attempts to extend the analysis to other countries which he sees as lying somewhere on a political spectrum between France and the USA.

Lash starts out with an advantage over most American sociologists studying workers' movements: he is sympathetic and enthusiastic:

'Like so many others of my generation, I cut my political milk teeth on the student, anti-war and counter-culture rebellions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. I travelled to Europe at the end of 1972 and, quite unintentionally, stayed. Initially taking up residence in Paris, my most overwhelming culture shock—though I had been in the abstract, prepared for it—and probably my greatest delight was to rub shoulders with a Marxist working class; actually to drink beer with manual workers who quite concretely thought, as I, from time to time, rather more theoretically did, that capitalism was a bit of a swindle.'

Later he worked for a short time in the building trade in Chicago and was struck by the political indif-

ference and conservatism of his fellow workers and by their militancy in defence of trade union rights and material interests.

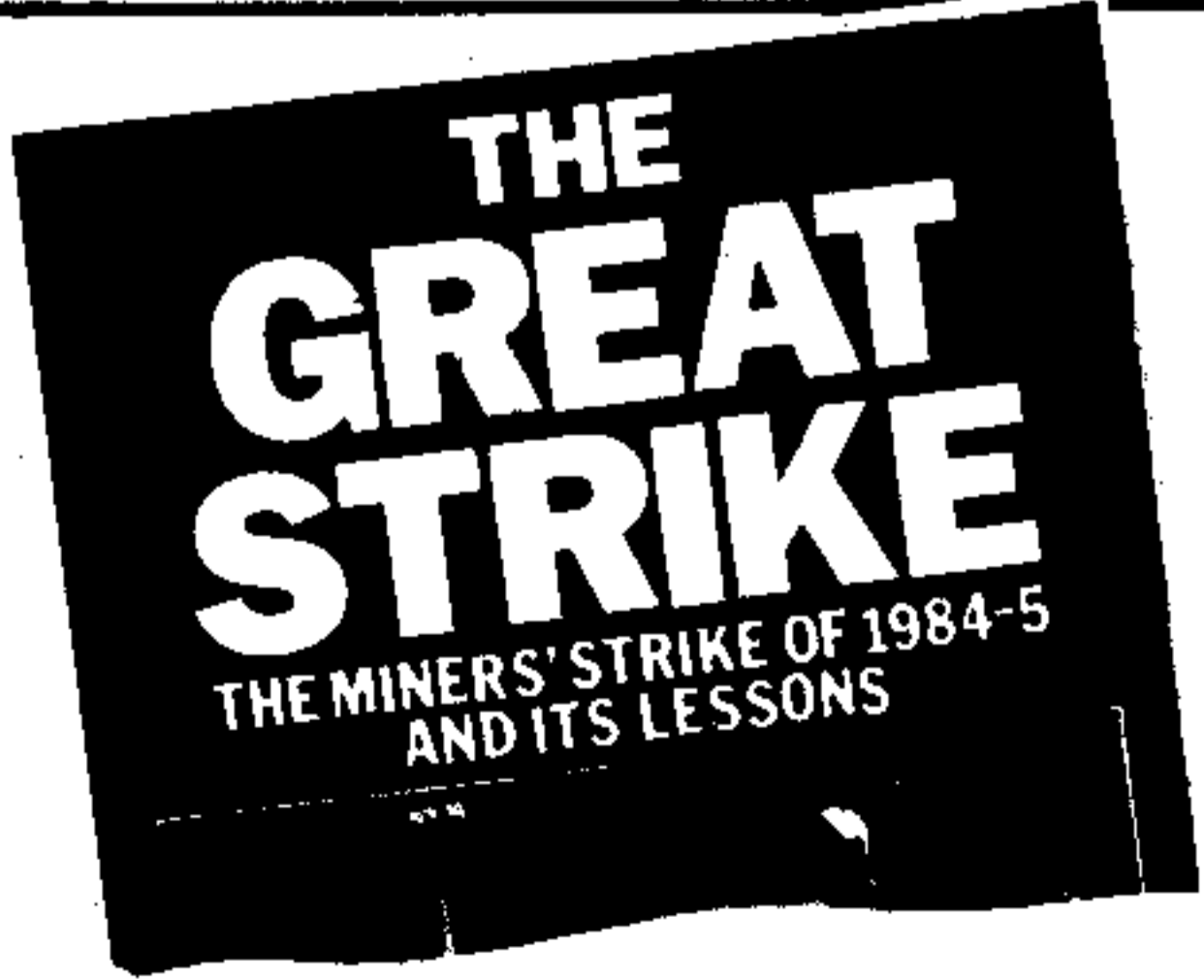
Lash concludes that contemporary sociological explanations of variations in working class consciousness, in terms of 'affluence', skill differentials or industrial technology, explained very little.

This is especially true when applied on an international comparative scale, rather than to fairly small, fairly homogeneous groups of workers in one factory or area.

He concludes that the differences in workers' attitudes both between countries and regions in the same country are most likely to be explained by the political ideologies which are available to workers and by the class relations which have formed those ideas; in other words by the whole history of class struggle, rather than by the specific conditions of the particular factory, or short term economic or technological differences.

Lash interviewed several hundred workers in factories and workplaces with similar technologies and occupational structures in regions of France and the United States with radically different political traditions. But very little of the flavour of the workers' experience actually comes through in the book. The initial enthusiasm which raises our expectations of seeing something of the very different worlds of French and American workers is largely submerged under the atomising methods of opinion survey research. ■

Fred Lindop



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

Tommy turned his gun

Soldiers' Strikes of 1919
Andrew Rothstein
Journeyman £3.95

'REVOLUTION will never happen. What will we do about the army, the navy, the air force and the police force?' That's the sort of common objection raised by people who sympathise with our overall politics but can't envisage how socialism would become a reality.

That is why *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919* is a good book. It begins to point in the direction of the masses taking decisions for themselves—and the armed forces at that! Rothstein catalogues the resentment felt in the armed forces after the ending of the first world war at deliberate delays in demobilising the vast conscript army.

The soldiers rightly assumed that the war was over but the British ruling class (amongst others) had other ideas. For international capitalism the enemy was now the new Soviet Republic. In no time at all some German units were 'rehabilitated' and allowed to keep their arms as long as they killed their share of Bolsheviks.

But an overwhelming proportion of the armed forces at the disposal of the British state had no desire at all to intervene against the new workers' republic—in fact rightly

welcomed by much of the working class. And those soldiers who did not sympathise with the Bolshevik revolution simply felt they'd done enough and wanted out of the continual round of terror and slaughter.

Rothstein details strikes and demonstrations for improved pay, conditions and quicker demobilisation occurring during 1919 at Folkestone, Dover, Shortlands, Biggin Hill, Maidstone, Uxbridge, Grove Park, Fairlop, White City, Upper Norwood and Park Royal—as well as other sites the authorities would not admit to. The press was heavily censored to attempt to stop the contagion spreading. The actions of the soldiers were mostly successful in gaining improved conditions and quicker demobilisation. The authorities were very worried. Soldiers' committees were set up in almost every case and the imposition of discipline by officers was, for a time, very difficult.

But this is not the best. Rothstein also catalogues a whole series of further incidents where soldiers took action because they feared and objected being sent to Russia to fight their comrades in arms. The list is impressive. Action took place at Folkestone, Osterley Park, Park Royal, Aldershot, Bedford and Calais among others.

Not an earthly

World View
Pluto Press £2.95

THIS is a tale of doom and gloom. It is about the depressing mess that we are in and the despairing lack of power which the 'popular majority' have to do anything about it.

The book attempts to summarise the important issues of 1984 which are divided into five sections covering ecology, ideology, the peace movement, the world at large, and business and labour. It takes a radical perspective and aims to present 1984 from the point of view of the dispossessed, the poverty stricken, and the helpless billions whose lives are dictated to and controlled by powerful men, their governments and their multinational corporations.

Through the forty-three articles, the book informs us of 'Lands Rights Struggles in New Zealand and Micronesia' plus other current issues such as 'Privatisation and International Restructuring'.

The two themes which emerge are firstly, the mess is global and secondly, capitalism, understood as the irrationality of the system, is responsible. But it cannot explain why Reagan, Thatcher, and their ilk

are re-elected while a 'popular majority' exists which oppose their policies. The power of the wealthy is counterposed to the helplessness of the majority leaving no room for the wretched to free themselves. The conclusion is the need for a rational system which will not produce the casualties the book documents.

Some incredible conclusions are arrived at. One article argues in favour of protectionism because it is in the interests of workers:

'The French experience under Mitterrand's presidency shows that any attempt at social change in favour of workers (wage increases, reduction in working hours) is impossible without some degree of protectionism'

If you want a yearbook with soft left politics, then you could do worse than spend £2.95 on this one. But you will not learn a great deal about the ideas that revolutionaries argue—that revolution is the struggle whereby the working class emancipates itself and thereby creates the conditions for the liberation of all people. ■

Laurence Wong

In Calais there was a really massive disturbance involving thousands of men. Officers were ejected from the camps and one of the soldiers' demands was to be allowed leave to attend a 'Hands Off Russia' meeting in the Albert Hall, London. Speakers at the meeting were John McLean, George Lansbury and Sylvia Pankhurst.

All this is the book's great strength: it shows the ruling class attempt to send one million men in arms to intervene in the new workers' state as a total flop. The British expeditionary force was tiny and in any case fairly soon withdrawn—soldiers fighting in Russia itself were becoming infected with the Bolshevik disease.

But having said that, the book is fundamentally flawed by its lack of any wider analysis.

Nowhere does Rothstein expand upon the real impact of the 1917 revolution upon the British working class (in uniform or

otherwise). If the British working class in general did not sympathise with the Bolsheviks, would the soldiers have acted the way they did? Rothstein tries to present his ideas in a vacuum. But the soldiers themselves were part of the overall balance of class forces and as such were to some degree conditioned by the much larger civilian population. This has always been the way. If the armed forces were hermetically sealed off from the rest of society then the 1917 revolution itself would never have been successful.

Nevertheless, as it is, the book is still very much worth reading. It is a marvellous counter to all those who tell us it will never happen because of the state's monopoly of violence. Such events show that such a monopoly is conditional upon the soldiers accepting the present system and its dictates. We know that at times of crisis this acceptance can wholly or partly break down. ■

Steve Barnett

No roots in the class

Green Politics
Fritjof Capra & Charlene Spretnak
Hutchinson £10.95

IT'S VERY easy to sneer at the Greens. The road to human liberation is seen as eating goat's yogurt and practising foot massage. It's even easier with this particular book, written by Californians whose ideas are likely to make Marxists smirk.



But the ideas of the Greens remain a powerful force in Europe and, to a lesser degree, America. They require a better reply than just sneering, fun though that might be.

The Greens start from a half-truth. The world's ecosystems are not managed in the most sensible way. Forests die from acid rain. Deserts spread because of over grazing. Top soils are washed away through lack of wind breaks and over-cropping. Rivers are polluted. So much is true.

The destruction of the environment is caused by a system based on the creation of profit. Just as it destroys, oppresses and exploits people, so it wreaks damage to the environment. But the Greens start

from an understanding of one of the consequences of the system—not from an understanding of the driving force of the system. So their politics assume the continuation of the status quo, and seek to modify just one part of it.

The Greens are pulled between the two poles of reformism and utopianism. Both are based on an acceptance of society as it is at present, though the two approaches can and do provide great tensions and argument inside the Greens.

Within the context of Green politics this book is of the reformist and conservative wing. The new society is to be brought about by tax changes and progressive governments supporting ecologically sound industries. It is a cross between enterprise ecozones and SDP tax policy. In parts the book comes near to red-baiting, with a constant hostility to the left.

What is so sad with this book and many of the Greens is that, starting from a rejection of the system and its destructive effects, they end up proposing quite reactionary programmes.

The other issue on which the Greens constantly founder is that of class and class struggle. They try to ignore class or to pose the problems as ones above class.

In denying class they find that it reappears within their midst, for example in internal wrangles which have been a feature of the German Greens since their election victories.

The very existence of the Greens demonstrates the need felt by many people for a new and better society. Unfortunately, this book shows how some sorts of politics pull people in every direction except the one which can solve the problems. ■

Noel Halifax

Prison letter

I AM a Republican Socialist prisoner, and founding member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, currently on remand in Belfast Prison. I am one of a number of people held since May 1983 awaiting trial on the uncorroborated testimony of the supergrass Harry Kirkpatrick. I have enjoyed reading your material. As Republican Socialists within the prison we organise our own discussion-analysis sessions, and find many of the articles in *SWR* useful for this purpose.

The operation of the law/legal system here, during the last three years has been increasingly politicised with the supergrass system relying on suspect and uncorroborated evidence to enable them to remove 'unwanted members of the public', à la Brigadier Frank Kitson.

I am writing in the light of the invitation expressed in the January issue of *SWR* for contributions. My reasons for doing so are many, and include a desire to inform opinion and contribute to debate and to impress upon less advanced elements within our ranks that British socialists can and do express 'active' solidarity with the Irish people in struggle.

The growing belief that British withdrawal from Ireland is inevitable is now shared by increasing numbers of people. However, for socialists in the Republican tradition the question remains: what social forces will unite the country, and what nature of regime would the British hope to leave in their wake? Any form of disengagement which sought to extend the current 26 counties status quo, or create a new national bourgeois democracy of the ruling class is not likely to meet the increased needs, aspirations and consciousness of the Irish working class.

The precise nature of a British withdrawal, the conditions accompanying it, and the positions of the various social forces in the period will determine the success or otherwise of any strategy for socialism. In attempting to harness and direct these forces the current Republican Socialist analysis of the six counties British state as an armed colony, the existence of which is a fundamental obstacle to working class unity, provides the moral and political justification for the war of national liberation being conducted by the Irish people under

the IRA and INLA.

And, whether one agrees 'tactically' with every aspect of that war or not, once you concede the British presence to be an armed colonial one, the war itself has an indisputable legitimacy. The history of the Irish people, and moreover of the six counties state, rule out any notion of the reformist stages theory favoured by the Stalinists.

That the Republican Socialist struggle is not simply one of 'war', cannot be overemphasised. The nature of the forces ranged against the Irish people determine their response to it. Socialists are primarily concerned with winning control of what Connolly defined as the 'means of life', and securing them for the working class. Arguably, for the first time in Irish history the armed struggle for national liberation is firmly in the hands of that class, thereby safeguarding against a repeat of the betrayal by the nationalist bourgeoisie of the 1920s. The successful transition in this phase from one generation to another has ensured a steady flow of activists into every aspect of struggle, and undoubtedly reflects the confidence of the Nationalist working class.

However, as it is neither wise nor practical to hope that Protestant workers, now the backbone of Unionism, will embrace their historical class role overnight, on the eve of British withdrawal it is fundamentally important for Republican Socialists to target and expose that ideology which binds Protestant workers to an unnatural inter-class alliance within Unionism.

Given the almost total lack of practical daily contact between Protestant and Nationalist workers in the six counties state, due to decades of institutionalised sectarianism, the role of theoretical analysis inside those agitational campaigns that do exist takes on a greater importance.

And, while this is not an easy task, the only prospect for fragmenting monolithic Unionism and forging principled working class unity, lies in the direction of a strategy which compels Protestant workers to confront the class contradictions within Unionism.

At present, the Protestant working class are devoid of any proletarian leadership and

analysis capable of defining their objective role as a barrier to workers' emancipation. In the midst of yet another global relocation of capital the 'economic and social privileges' that traditionally bound Protestant workers to the ruling class are increasingly absent.

The Unionist *raison d'être* of the 1900s, and early 1960s no longer pertains. No amount of 'loyalism' on the part of Protestant workers will persuade the multinational corporations that replaced the now failed home grown industries of light engineering, textiles and (despite a temporary government inspired revival) shipbuilding to cut their profit margins, or defer 'rationalisation' in recognition of Protestant fidelity to the British crown.

In order to create the conditions necessary to facilitate such a realignment Republican Socialists must relentlessly pursue and expose the opportunism of these elements which masquerade as Labour leaders, both British and Irish. This process, if consistently pursued, will pose the contradictions for all workers tied to inter-class alliances in such a way that the ruling class can never again be guaranteed a captive or uncritical audience.

Similarly, in the light of any withdrawal scenario, the role of the theoretical analysis geared towards developing revolutionary consciousness around agitational campaigns in the twenty-six counties — where recent history reveals immense working class potential for militancy — will prove central to defeating any imposed imperialist solution in a post-withdrawal period.

Of course, the most favourable conditions for implementing any strategy for future struggle in Ireland will be greatly enhanced by the consistent support of our British comrades for all aspects of the Irish struggle for national liberation and socialism.

The next few months will be very interesting in many ways, not the least because the verdict in our trial is due to be made public in early July. We do not expect to be acquitted. There are twenty-seven of us and *no* independent or corroborative evidence against a staggering twenty-five people! However, we have 'heard' that it has been decided already that we are not to be acquitted. How accurate the information is, is maybe subject to question. Yet I am usually well-informed. ■

Jimmy Brown
HM Prison
Belfast

Party coup?

LESLEY Hoggart's review of *Emma Goldman: an intimate life* (April *SWR*) is, in places, misleading and as a result gives a totally false picture of anarchism.

I agree with many of Lesley's criticisms of Goldman but some of the statements lead to a false impression. The image from the review is that the anarchism of Goldman is the anarchism of every anarchist. This is not the case, just as the socialism of Kinnock is not the socialism of the SWP.

It is very misleading to write, 'Even a fellow anarchist, Berkman, criticised her because presenting lectures for outside and chance audiences did not build a movement.' There were many anarchists who attacked her for this, and not just one. The importance of Berkman criticising her was that the two of them were very close personally—they were former lovers, they lived together, they worked together, they went to prison together, and they were deported together.

As with Goldman all anarchists oppose the formation of revolutionary parties, but not because they stifle the individual (which they do) as Lesley infers, but, when in power, they stifle the whole class they intend to liberate—the working class. In power the revolutionary party becomes the ruling party and takes over all the tools of coercion—like the secret police and the bureaucracy.

Anarchists were not opposed to the Russian Revolution, but they were opposed to the coup d'état of the Bolshevik Party. The party under the leadership of Lenin suppressed the revolution. The soviets were the organs of working class power, as Lenin noted prior to the October coup d'état with his call 'All power to the soviets'. The following year after the coup d'état the call had changed to, 'All power to the party'.

The rise of Stalin and the bureaucracy was inevitable if the party remained in power. The destruction of the Kronstadt soviet, the obliteration of the Ukraine soviets and communes, and the total suppression of the anarchist movement all took place under the rule of Lenin.

Being opposed to revolutionary parties does not mean that anarchists are opposed to revolutionary organisations. As an anarcho-syndicalist I believe very much in the large revolutionary organisation—the revolutionary union which is based in the workplace and the community. We believe that the emancipation of the working class lies with the rank and file and not with some party bureaucracy.

I S Manson
Middlesbrough

The secret road to socialism?

I THOUGHT the *Workplace Notes* in April *SWR* were quite intriguing. I found a number of errors made by the engineering worker attempting to build a union. They were natural consequences of the starting points. One root of the problem seems to lie in the (understandable) fear of talking to anyone. If we fail to establish some sort of working political relationship (on however low a level) with a few of the workers around us then no amount of secret leaflets, dark glasses and Thixofix can substitute. Once you begin operating secretly, you are trapped. Politics is linking up the general ideas with people's specific concerns. If this is not achievable then nothing is achievable. (That statement might well be questionable if we were living under a fascist dictatorship, but we are not.)

Whose rights?

MARGARET RENN recognises (*SWR* 75) that many socialists and many women are against abortion 'for good reasons of their own'. She also realises that their anxieties will greatly increase as pro-abortionists are forced to stress what has always been the implicit logic of their campaign namely 'abortion on demand up to the moment of birth'.

Until now pro-abortionists have been able to calm worries about abortion by talking about foetuses, blobs of a few cells etc, and arguing the absurdity of comparing the rights of these with the rights of women. Unfortunately as medical advances bring down the number of weeks at which a foetus becomes 'viable' any argument based on foetal viability becomes impracticable. Hence the inevitable move to the much stronger demand of abortion up to the moment of birth. But this means that things which are fully identifiable as babies can be destroyed. How can we persuade those who are worried by present practice to accept this?

Margaret Renn has a simple answer—'You may not like abortion ... but ultimately every woman has the right to control her own body, without interference from experts or pressure from others because of their beliefs.' Simple, yes; but hardly convincing. How about—'You may not like scabbing but ultimately every worker has the right to go to work without interference from strikers or pressure from others because of their beliefs.'

It's strange to read this stress on individual rights in the *SWR*. Surely socialists believe that rights are social/collective and involve responsibilities to the rest of society. Does Margaret Renn support the individual rights of NHS doctors and

The specific concerns of the engineering workers were 'the conditions, the wages, the disorganisation and the waste'. The answers to those are not primarily at Companies House. It has to be possible to establish discussions with individuals on those subjects. Secrecy means that even if a leaflet generates lots of interest, you can never be sure that those showing the most interest are not management stooges.

The way around the problem lies in us being willing to operate around the tiniest of issues—so small that you wouldn't actually be sacked for mentioning them, and our ability to involve other workers in doing something about them. That way we can begin to discover who we can trust.

A second underlying problem

nurses to refuse to help with abortions? Would one Area Health Authority have the individual right to refuse to participate in national policy? Will society provide the means by which abortions will be effected, but have no say whatsoever in their use? Does each individual woman have the sole right to determine what should happen to the foetus right up to the moment of birth?

It's difficult to understand why a woman should have this absolute property right over what would be 'at the moment of birth' another human being especially when elsewhere in *Socialist Worker* publications it is argued that the woman as a parent has few if any rights over her children.

Pro-abortionists used to argue that abortion was only contraception a few weeks late. If we get abortion up to the moment of birth will there be a short period of grace, say two weeks, after birth in which a woman can change her mind especially if the baby is born early? What is the difference between a 38 week old child inside a woman and a 39 week old one outside?

Furthermore, it's no argument in favour of abortion to expose the dubious motives of some of those who oppose it.

Abortion raises fundamental issues for socialists and they are moral ones. Admittedly we lack a properly developed materialist ethics but it is still amazing to see debates about the sanctity of human life being dismissed as moralistic. ■

Claire Gray
Pinner

• We would welcome comments and contributions on this letter.

may lie in the fear of being simply a trade union militant, rather than a revolutionary socialist. The point is that we *are* trade union militants—but not *only* trade union militants. If we cannot 'lower' ourselves to being the best people at picking up on the trade union issues then we will confine ourselves to the periphery of the class for eternity.

And when it comes to the question of building the party in a workplace like that (phew!) or any other workplace we must remember that our politics are not simply something abstract—they have their concrete expression, most particularly in the sense that our faith in workers' ability to change the world must express itself in our practice—that is, in our *behaviour*.

We have a vision which goes way beyond that of the trade union militant. That vision must have its expression in our willingness to demonstrate (not state) our faith in other workers or we will either achieve nothing, or the wrong thing entirely. ■

Ian Wallace
Sheffield

SWR SHOULD be highly praised for publishing the *Workplace Notes* that ran in the April issue. Here was an article which all revolutionary workers must learn from, it was an object lesson in how *not* to operate as a socialist in a non-unionised workplace.

From conditions described in the factory it was obvious management had been on top for a long time. The workforce was confused, disorganised, and demoralised. Under these circumstances a revolutionary must think very hard about what tactics

Outrageous

I HAPPENED the other day to re-read Norah Carlin's letter criticizing my review of a book by Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat* (*SWR* 71). Norah and I will be discussing our disagreement of substance, over the nature of bourgeois revolutions, at Marxism 85, so I don't want to say anything about that here. But Norah's remarks about Hill himself were outrageous, and I shouldn't have let them go unchallenged when they first appeared.

First, Norah says that Hill, while Master of Balliol College, Oxford, 'victimise[d] any of his students who happen[ed] to think that political activity is relevant and class struggle is a reality.' Norah should, like any good historian, have checked her facts before making so grave an accusation. I know of only two students who

should be employed.

The whole article was a catalogue of mistakes. Instead of identifying workers who he could trust and build some sort of base with, instead of trying to involve workers in some sort of collective struggle, instead of trying to win a minority of the workforce to socialist ideas, he immediately embarks on union building.

But even the manner in which this was attempted was disastrous. Rather than win the argument with the workforce and involve them in the struggle for a union, he does it by espionage type tactics, with dark glasses and hoods, and sneaking leaflets through toilet windows. The only thing missing was a cloak and dagger.

Why didn't he get comrades from the local SWP branch to give the leaflets out at the gate? In the end everything hinged on a union official recognising him and blowing his 'cover', which of course he did, and got him the sack.

Upon entering these crummy factories (of which there are going to be more and more), workers should weigh up the balance of forces and see what can realistically be achieved. What the movement is involved in is a war of attrition with the ruling class.

What we need is revolutionaries inside the workplaces patiently building, organising and politicising workers in preparation for the battles ahead. How can we build a party with deep roots in the class if socialists are getting victimised left, right and centre, whilst engaged in heroics? ■

Ford worker
Liverpool

were victimised while Hill was Master of Balliol. I was one of them. I don't think either of us would hold him responsible—I certainly wouldn't. Apart from anything else, he was on sabbatical leave when disciplinary proceedings were taken against us.

Secondly, Norah says the belief that Hill is 'one of Britain's leading Marxist historians is...a hindrance to the growth and spread of Marxism'. Now there is plenty of scope for argument about Hill's method, his (evolving) view of the English revolution, and his politics. But to suggest that books like *The World Turned Upside Down*, with its marvellous account of the radical fringe of the revolution of 1640, are an obstacle to Marxism is more than just sectarian. It's absurd. ■

Alex Callinicos
North London

The home fires burning



1919 WAS a year of massive working class unrest and great revolutionary expectations all over Western Europe. The ruling classes of all countries trembled in their shoes. But surely, Britain was not like that? True, a massive strike wave began in Britain in 1919, but where was the revolutionary violence that we read of in other countries? Contrary to popular belief, it was not absent in Britain in 1919.

As the armies who had experienced the 'glorious' war in all its bloody reality returned home, disturbances broke out at camps in Britain and France, culminating in troop demonstrations at Horse Guards Parade in London. The mood of hostility spread even to smaller industrialised towns such as Luton, where the climax of the events of 1919 is remembered to this day—the night they burned the Town Hall down.

Profiteering

The war had brought an increased level of engineering to Luton, and there had been a large munitions strike in 1917. Yet when the war ended, so did the munitions contracts, and the unemployed were left to reflect on the fact that some council dignitaries had done well out of the destruction. Many were hat manufacturers who had held unelected office since 1914. Resentment ran deep. 'He was at home here, living on good bacon. I was out there living on sixpence a day and a dry biscuit,' was a popular comment on an earlier mayor known for his food profiteering.

As in other towns, preparations were underway for a civic celebration, with a

march past of those Lutonians who had survived the bloodshed. A sizeable proportion had in fact died at Gallipoli. The animosity was fuelled by mutual hostility between the two ex-servicemen's organisations, the National Federation of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors, and the Comrades of the Great War Association. The latter was sponsored by admirals and generals.

Mayor Henry Impey—a local landlord—intended to hold a banquet for the dignitaries, and placed restrictions on the march. Adverts appeared inviting 'gentlemen' to apply for the fifteen shilling tickets, which amounted to the greater part of an ex-soldier's weekly pension. Both associations agreed to withdraw from the march in protest, although the Comrades suddenly changed their minds at the last minute—much to the disgust of the Federation.

On 19 July the march began its fateful journey. As it passed the Federation's headquarters a large banner outside read: 'Don't pity us, give us work!' To further arouse local feelings they had placed maimed men on either side of the road through which the march had to pass. As it did, many of the Federation angrily joined in at the rear.

Oblivious to what was happening, Mayor Impey, his wife, and the assembled councillors waited at the town hall where the Mayor was to make a speech. The parade was duly stopped, but his efforts were met with a hail of booing, at which the Red Cross band quickly struck up the national anthem. Impey again insisted on stopping the parade so that he could address the crowd, this time calling for a chair to stand on so that people could get a better view of him in his mayoral

robes. But he had made the mistake of addressing himself to a contingent of Wardown Park hospital nurses. The council had recently refused to allow the disused wartime hospital to be used for maternity patients. The irony struck a chord, and the commotion became so intense that Impey and his fellow councillors had to retreat inside the town hall, locking the door behind them.

Sensing that their moment had arrived, the crowd surged forward, broke down the doors, and observed the mayor in an ignominious flight to the safety of his office. Decorations were then torn down and chairs smashed and thrown into the street. A sailor climbed the flagpole and dispatched the fluttering flags and bunting to the cheering crowd below. As stones started to fly, the police arrived in force and managed to clear the building. The chief constable advised Impey not to show his face and persuaded a Labour magistrate to try and disperse the crowd. It had little effect. Impey and his wife were incarcerated for over seven hours before managing to escape to the police station!

By the evening, things began to move quickly. Shops were looted and bottles taken for ammunition. Another section of the crowd decided to head for Impey's house, whilst petrol arrived at the town hall. It was soon ablaze and by one in the morning, the town hall clock struck for the final time before crashing to the pavement. The police and the crowd engaged in hand-to-hand fighting, with the ex-soldiers on the side of the crowd.

Another fire was started at the food office, and the firemen were helpless. Their hose pipes were being cut to ribbons by the ex-soldiers' knives. One man was knocked through the window of a music shop, only to take full advantage by dragging out three pianos. The most popular song of the evening then became 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'.

Under control

Rioting was to last for a further four days. Troops were called in from a wide area to keep the town under control. As for Impey, he left the following day and was only to return for two funerals: a friend's, and his own. Spending his remaining days at Sutton-on-Sea, he even had his windows barred in case Lutonians came looking for him!

The remaining councillors later arranged another banquet, this time for the poor, the old, and the workhouse children. Cleverly, they gave them all union jacks to wave on their way to and from the Palace Theatre. The event was a success.

The riot ended but the memories remain. Like many better-known examples, the hostilities had reached their decisive moment without any unifying political direction.

In recent weeks, moves have been afoot to commemorate the incident by staging a dramatic re-enactment. Since Luton was also affected by the 1981 riots, it remains to be seen whether the present council will take the chance.

One doubts it. ■
Ged Peck