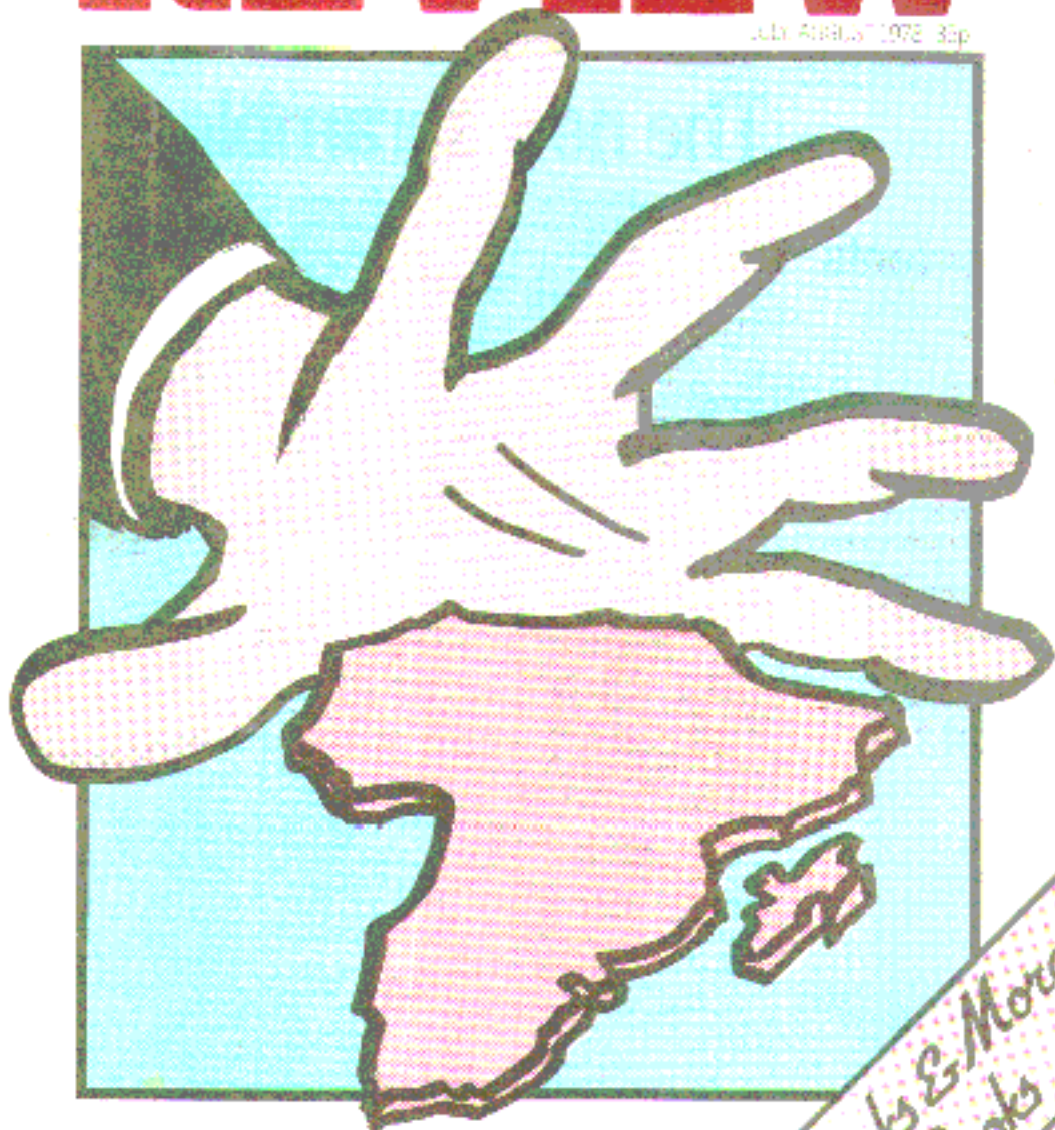


socialist

REVIEW

July/AUGUST 1978 35p



NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

*Books & More
Books*

From this issue you will be getting a bigger and (hopefully) better *Socialist Review*. We had found it very difficult to develop the sort of wide-ranging coverage we wanted in 32 pages. The result has been a rather cramped magazine. To overcome these problems we are switching to 40 pages.

Unfortunately an increase in the magazine has to mean a rise in its price. We hope that readers will find that they will be getting value for money.

The present issue is a double July/August number. Our next issue will appear in September.

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NEWS *analysis*

Africa

The new scramble

In the last decades of the nineteenth century Africa was torn off its historical course and dragged into the world capitalist system as rival European powers carved their colonial empires out of the continent. The ensuing 'Scramble for Africa' formed part of the build up to the first world war.

Today a new Scramble for Africa appears to be unfolding. The rival powers competing for domination of the continent are not, however, European—instead they are the two super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

Since the Angolan war in 1975-6 a number of African crises have led to growing military and political involvement by Russia and her allies, especially Cuba and East Germany. Each incident—Angola, the Ethiopia-Somalia war, the invasion of Zaire in May—has led to a hue and cry in Washington and other Western capitals concerning the Soviet threat in Africa. The Carter administration, after an effort to appear neutral in Ethiopia and Zaire, appears now to be moving towards a policy of confrontation.

In their attacks on the Russians and the Cubans, Carter, Callaghan, Schmidt, Giscard and Co make great play of the slogan 'Africa for the Africans' and claim that the recent crises are African problems which should be left to Africans to settle.

But in reality Africa's main problem is the continued economic and political domination of the continent by Western capitalism. Despite the transfer of political independence in the vast majority of African countries in the 1950s and 1960s Africa is tightly integrated into a world economy dominated by



US soldiers practise

the US, Western Europe and Japan.

As the accompanying graph shows, a number of African states—in particular, South Africa, Rhodesia, Zambia and Zaire, remain crucial sources of minerals vital to the Western economy and military machine. Central and southern Africa are still dominated by the vast complex of mines and mining companies built up during the colonial era. Even where the mines have formally been nationalised, as in Zambia, service and management contracts give Western mining companies a stranglehold over the country's economy.

Moreover, by far the biggest economic and military power in Africa is apartheid South Africa. Their industrial and military muscle gives South Africa's white rulers power which stretches far beyond their borders, of course, closely bound up in the apartheid economy are the massive investments of British, American and West European mul-

tinationalists.

The result is that, as the *Letter from Mozambique* in this issue shows, even where an African government comes to power which is genuinely committed to building socialism it runs up against the constraints



Russian soldiers exercise

imposed by the fact its writ runs only in one small component part of a world and regional economy dominated by Western capitalism.

Africa's current problems are even more closely linked to its economic subordination to the West. The present crisis in southern and central Africa arises from the convergence of two factors.

The first is the new situation created in the white-ruled south after the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship on 25 April 1974. The overthrow of the Caetano regime, itself a result of the colonial wars in Portugal's African empire, led to the liquidation of that empire.

The coming to power in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau of radical African nationalist movements shook the white power structure in the rest of southern Africa. The downfall of the settler regimes in Namibia and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) became only a matter of time. And in South Africa itself the victories of the Angolan and Mozambican freedom fighters

encouraged the black youth of Soweto and the other townships to brave the bullets and hippos (armoured personnel carriers) of the apartheid regime.

The crisis of the white regimes was accompanied and exacerbated by a second factor—the political and economic disintegration of their most important black-ruled neighbours, Zambia and Zaire. These two countries are almost completely dependent on one export commodity, copper. The onset of the world recession in 1973-74 led to a drastic fall in the price of copper, to the point where the mines in both countries are running at a loss.

Other factors—imported inflation largely produced the quadrupling of the oil price, the corruption of the black ruling class the closure of one of their main routes for the sea, the Benguela railway as a result of the Angolan war—served to drive Zambia and Zaire to the verge of bankruptcy and political collapse. The central banks of both countries have been taken over by IMF teams with instructions to implement austerity programmes.

It should be clear that the cause of this crisis lies not Africa, but in the general recession that the world economy has been going through since 1973. The West cannot even wash its hands of the 'local' problem of corruption—President Mobutu of Zaire, through whose hands one third of the country's income is alleged to pass, was put into power, and once in kept there, by the Americans.

The result has been drastically to reduce the stability of the region. At the height on the Angolan war in February 1976 the Kaunda regime in Zambia declared a state of emergency and forced through an austerity budget whose aim was to drive down the living standards of urban workers. And if it had been left to his starving people and unpaid, ragged soldiers to save Mobutu during the invasions of Shaba in March 1977 and May this year, the Con-

golese National Liberation Front (FNL) might be the government in Kinshasa today.

Broadly similar factors explain the crisis in the north-eastern Horn of Africa. There in early 1974 the combination of an intolerably reactionary, corrupt and repressive feudal regime, rural famine and inflation in the towns unleashed a mass movement of workers, soldiers, peasants and soldiers in Ethiopia.

The military regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam which came to power on the back of this movement has sought to balance between the aspirations of the masses (especially the better-off peasants) and the goal of preserving the integrity of the Ethiopian state, even at the price of suppressing the national movements in Eritrea, the Ogaden and other provinces. This contradictory position has driven the Derg (Junta) into alliance with Russia.

Again, the Ethiopian crisis is not a purely African problem. The old autocracy of Hailie Selassie was one of America's closest allies in Africa. And famine is no longer a 'natural' phenomenon in a world where a US Secretary of Agriculture could declare that food is a tool of American foreign policy and where North American grain is hoarded in vast vats or destroyed to keep the price up.

These different elements—the weakening of the white regimes in the south since 1974, the effect of world recession on African economies, the crisis of the corrupt and repressive black governments in 'independent' Africa—have combined to undermine the Western hold on the continent.

It is in this context that the Russian intervention in Africa has to be seen. It is a response to and an attempt to exploit a crisis which arose independently from Western capital's continued economic and political domination over Africa.

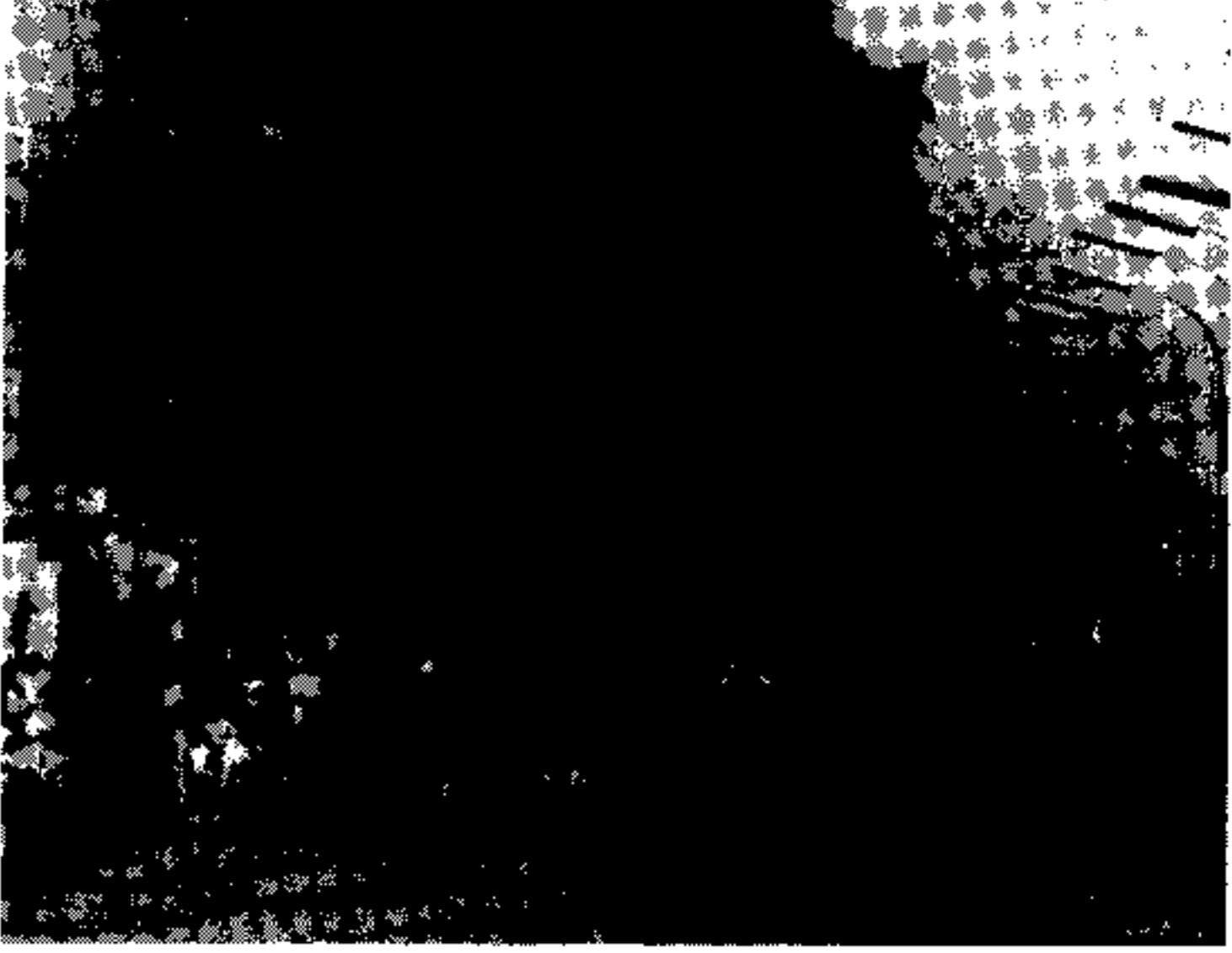
Thus, to take one example, the first large-scale intervention by the Russians and Cubans



Family preparations in white Zimbabwe



Mobutu



South Africa really will explode



Zambia's copperbelt rail link built by the Chinese to Tanzania

Raw Materials Stockpiled by US Government

US needs imported, %	Chromium 100	Manganese 100	Cobalt 100	Platinum- palladium 100	Copper 27
World producers, %	Russia 28	S. Africa 36	Zaire 67	Russia 47	US 26
	S. Africa 19	Russia 19	Zambia 9	S. Africa 46	Canada 14
	Albania 10	Brazil 10	Canada 8	Canada 6	Chile 12
	Philippines 9	Gabon 9	Morocco 6		Zambia 12
	Rhodesia 8	India 7			Zaire 8
		Australia 5			Peru 4

Source: study by Charles River Associates for US Commerce Department (aluminium bauxite and oil excluded)

was in support of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola in 1975-76, when a Western-backed alliance of South Africa, Zaire and two right-wing Angolan movements, Unita and FNLA, sought to destroy MPLA.

A recent book by the CIA agent responsible for Angola at the time produces evidence that the US intervention against MPLA considerably preceded the first consignment of Russian aid and Cuban advisers to MPLA. The book also argues that were it not for the American attempt to destroy MPLA, the Russians and Cubans would never have become involved in Angola, since without outside intervention MPLA would have easily overcome its Angolan rivals. In other words, American intervention to defend Western interests in Angola gave the Russians their opening in Africa.

Moreover, the crude thesis argued by 'People's' China and its Western followers that Soviet 'social imperialism' is the main threat to African independence does not stand up to serious examination. Russia's economic needs do not fit the traditional model of an imperialist power seeking raw materials and cheap labour in Africa. The USSR possesses vast natural resources which largely duplicate those to be found in Africa. It has cheap (and underemployed) labour in plentiful supply.

What the Russian economy requires is access to the Western capital and technology necessary to develop these resources and increase the productivity of labour, especially in the crisis-stricken agricultural sector. Hence the pursuit of detente with the West by the Soviet bureaucracy.

The motivation behind Brezhnev and Co's involvement in Africa is a simple political calculation. They hope to be able to influence the present crisis in Africa so that its outcome is the emergence of a string of (fairly) leftwing nationalist regimes aligned to Moscow. This would serve as some compensation for the major gains made by the US in the Arab world over the last few years as well as inhibiting the West's access to crucial raw material and investment outlets.

A MPLA style regime in South Africa would unquestionably be an improvement on the apartheid system. Where genuine national libera-

tion movements, whatever their links to Moscow, come into conflict with Western capital and its allies in Africa, then it is the duty of socialists in countries like Britain to support the former.

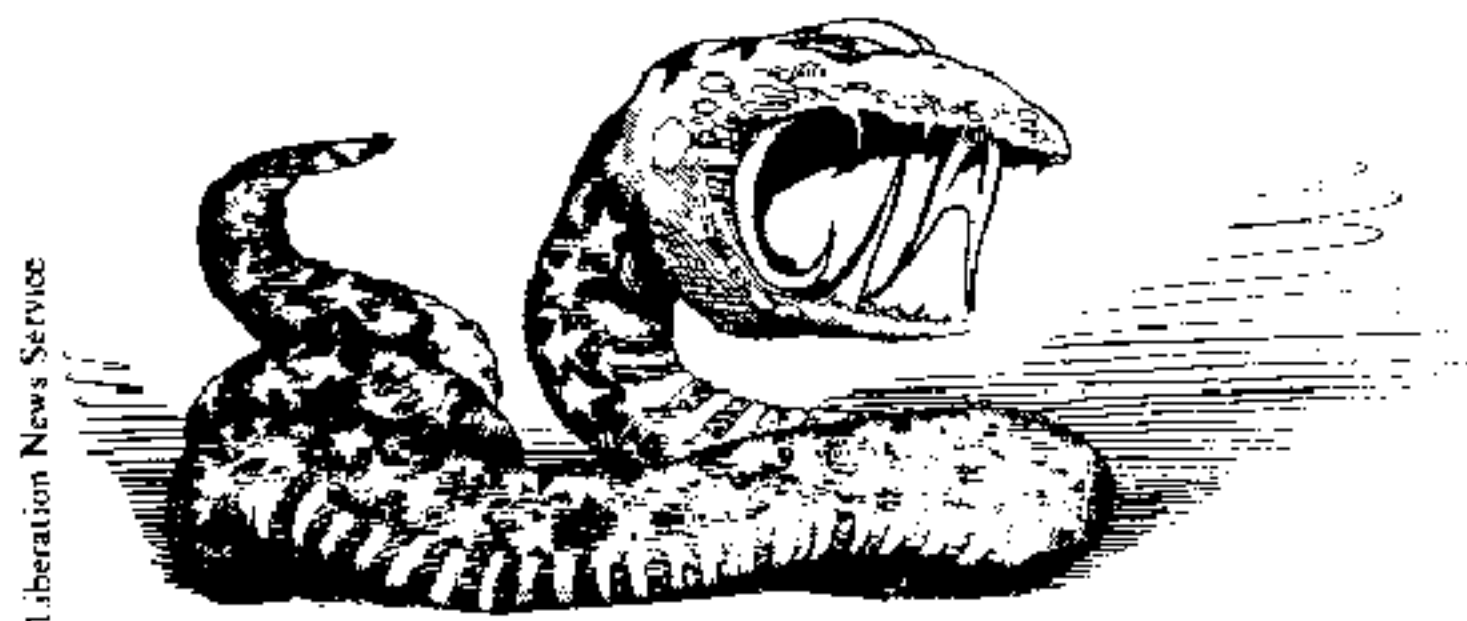
However, we should harbour no illusion about the nature of the regimes Brezhnev is backing. Since the abortive 'leftist' putsch in Luanda in May 1977 the Angolan government has moved against the bases of working-class organisation in the capital, dismantling the *poder pover* (people's power) network of street and workplace committees, and 'reorganising' the trade unions. The ruling *Derg* in Ethiopia has conducted a war of extermination against the Eritrean national movement and slaughtered trade unionists and revolutionaries in urban centres like Addis Ababa.

Moreover, the Soviet intervention in Africa is not without its contradictions. Cuban soldiers have been fighting Moscow's wars in Africa. This situation arose for various reasons—in particular the standing of the Castro regime in the Third World thanks to the 1958 revolution. The Cubans initially threw themselves into their African adventure with great enthusiasm.

However, there are signs that Castro is now having second thoughts. Russian and Cuban support enabled the *Derg* to repel the Somali invasion of south-eastern Ethiopia. Mengistu has now turned his attention on the Eritrean national liberation movement in the north of the country. But the prospect of collaboration in the attempt to crush the Eritreans is a considerable embarrassment to the Cubans. The Eritrean national movement was widespread support especially in the Arab world. Moreover, it is not so long ago that Castro was providing Eritrean freedom fighters with military support. The result is a growing rift between the Cuban regime and the *Derg*.

The Russians, however, continue to support Mengistu. Similarly, the report that there are now 11 Soviet generals in Angola, if true, suggests a growing commitment by the Eastern bloc to exploiting the crisis in southern and central Africa. Again, this comes at a time when Castro appears to be trying to take a lower profile.

Motivated no doubt by the desire to end the American economic blockade of Cuba,



which has driven the island into complete dependence on Moscow, Castro made a special effort to disassociate himself from the invasion of Shaba (interestingly, the foreign relations committee of the US Senate found the CIA's evidence backing Carter's claim that Cuba had been behind the invasion unconvincing).

The American response to the African crisis has become much more aggressive since the Shaba affair. In general, there have been two elements to US policy in Africa since Carter took office in January 1977

The first has been an ideological and political offensive whose objective has been to present the US as a force for African liberation. Carter and his ambassador to the UN, Andrew Young, have argued that the most effective way of eliminating apartheid in South Africa is through the influence of the American multinationals. Capitalism and racialism are fundamentally incompatible, they seem to argue. And indeed the Vorster regime in South Africa has come under far greater pressure from Carter and Young to make concessions to the black resistance in Namibia and South Africa itself than was true of past US administrations.

The motivation for this strategy seems in part to have been an attempt to restore America's image in Africa after the battering it suffered since the Vietnam war. At the same time, independent African states, and especially oil-rich Nigeria, have acquired a much greater economic significance for Western capital in the past few years. At the same time, potential investors have been scared away from South Africa by the combined economic and political crisis it has been experiencing since 1976.

It is therefore very important for the US to placate countries like Nigeria by taking a firmer stand against apartheid (although the Western bloc continues to refuse to countenance an economic boycott of South Africa).

The other aspect of American

policy in Africa is that of direct intervention—primarily through the CIA. This traditional weapon, used highly effectively in the Congo (now Zaire) in the early 1960s, has not been in prominent use since the Angolan debacle. Carter has preferred to use intermediaries—Moroccan troops during the first Shaba crisis, French and Belgian paratroops in the second one, Iranian and Saudi Arabian aid to Somalia during the war with Ethiopia.

However, there are signs that Carter is trying to persuade Congress to relax the restrictions on intervention in Angola imposed in 1975, using the Shaban crisis as a justification. It may be that elements within the administration who wish to see a much tougher line adopted towards Moscow are in the ascendant (the nature of the interests backing this line is indicated by Fred Hall in his article on the arms race.) Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, who recently paid highly publicised visit to the cold warriors in Peking, is said to be the chief hard-liner.

The African crisis will not abate. The Western efforts to end the guerilla wars in Zimbabwe and Namibia have failed. Russian and Cuban advisors are reported to be with the liberation forces in both these countries. Two years after the Soweto uprising, there is no sign that Vorster has successfully pacified South Africa's townships.

South Africa remains key of the African revolution. Its economic pre-eminence in Africa is matched by the existence of a large black urban working class forced into irreconcilable opposition to the ruling class by the apartheid system. A successful workers' revolution in South Africa would not only shatter Western capital's hold over the continent—it would provide the surest guarantee of genuine liberation for Africa's workers and peasants, independent of both Washington and Moscow.

Alex Callinicos

Spain

No short cut

The situation in Euskadi (the Basque country) continues to be at the centre of the political arena

Last October ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom) launched their latest campaign directed at the police, various industrial installations and leading people in the administration. There have been, in the course of this campaign, over 100 armed attacks, 25 deaths (mostly of Civil Guards but also of five ETA members) and around 50 wounded.

ETA's strategy is based on the assumption that nothing has changed since Franco's death: the regime remains fascist despite the moves towards parliamentary democracy. The military struggle will therefore continue until certain demands are met, including total amnesty; the legalisation of all political parties; a radical statute of autonomy for Euskadi; and the replacement of the existing police and military by security forces responsible to an autonomous Basque government.

ETA hope through their military campaign to provoke more police repression, winning them further support and forcing some of the main Basque parties into negotiations with them. They continue to receive considerable support (although much less than under Franco).

In part, this support is due to

the complete ineffectiveness of the Basque General Council set up by the central government a few months ago. The concessions promised to Euskadi are less than those Scotland enjoys already!

Moreover, the Spanish Armed Police and Civil Guard continue to play the brutal role allotted them by Franco. Physical attacks, often with the connivance of fascist groups, are still made (particularly in Pamplona). The chief targets of these attacks are the far left and radical nationalists.

Recently the fascist Fuerza Nueva staged a rally in San Sebastian, the strongest centre of Basque nationalism. A counter-picket was attacked by the fascists, some armed with guns. *El Pais* estimated that about sixty shots were fired at buildings and passers-by by roving carloads of fascists.

The police finally intervened with teargas and rubber bullets—to defend one of the cars from local people. Although some armed fascists were eventually arrested, many FN members were not detained because, according to the police, they had licences for their guns.

The biggest parties in Eu-

skadi, the PSOE (Spanish Workers Socialist Party) and the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party), tail-ended by the locally weak Communist Party, hope to reach a gradual development of Basque national rights by agreement with the anti-regionalist central government. Predictably, this has brought few results. Many people, therefore, especially in the two most 'Basque' provinces (Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya) look to the many radical alternatives.

The third political force after the PSOE and PNV are parties known as the *Abertzales*, the 'Basque patriots'. They fight for complete independence, not just autonomy, for the whole of Euskadi, including the Basque areas in France. Most also claim to be fighting for a socialist state.

Four of these parties are grouped together in the *Herri Batasuna* (Popular Unity) and refuse to work with 'non-Basque' organisations. Two, HASI (People's Revolutionary Socialist Party) and LAIA (Patriotic Workers' Revolutionary Party) are still illegal, consider themselves to be revolutionary socialists and support the present ETA campaign.

The most important *Abertzale* group, however, is the EIA (Party for the Basque Revolution). Formed from the bulk of the old ETA they accept that the political situation has changed since Franco's death. They therefore reject the armed struggle at present and aim for greater far left unity.

Unlike the other *Abertzales*, the EIA have significant support among working-class youth and work with left-wing organisations based throughout the Spanish state, not just in the Basque country. In last year's general elections they stood in

the *Euskadiko Eskerra* (Basque Left) with the revolutionary MC (Communist Movement) and independents, winning per cent of the Basque vote. They have a deputy and a senator in the central parliament.

The EIA's programme bears strong similarities to the positions of the far left, which is relatively strong in Euskadi. The EIA calls for a statute of genuine Basque autonomy, which it recognises will be won only through mass struggles whose social content will go farther than the national question.

Both the EIA and the far left, while recognising that the current ETA campaign has its source in the reactionary and repressive policies of the central government, condemn it for the opportunities it gives the state to attack the left as a whole. Moreover, ETA's tactics lead to incidents like that in which two ordinary workers were killed by a bomb set off in a nuclear power station.

Many on the far left believe that the creation of a genuinely autonomous Basque government would provide them with great opportunities. Some even argue that revolutionaries should participate in such a government to exploit these opportunities.

However, the Basque national struggle cannot serve as a short-cut to socialism. The economic importance of Euskadi, its integration in Spanish capitalism and the relative strength of the left make a peaceful, purely 'democratic' break with the rest of the state in Spain unlikely. The national self-determination of the Basque people will be won only through a struggle for workers' power. *Doug Andrews and Mary Reid.*



With apologies: this table was omitted last issue from Richard Hyman's article on the *British Labour Movement since 1968*. It should be read with the fourth paragraph of that article. However the table is of interest on its own.

	Trade Unions		TUC Affiliation		Recorded Stoppages		Registered Unemployment	Average Earnings	Retail Price Index
	Number	Members (000) Total Female	Unions	Members (000)	Number	Strike-Days (000)	July %	Annual % Increase	
1968	583	10191 2362	155	8875	2378	4690	2.2	9.0	5.9
1969	562	10470 2505	150	9402	3116	6846	2.2	8.4	4.8
1970	540	11178 2741	142	10002	3906	10980	2.4	13.6	7.9
1971	522	11126 2752	132	9895	2228	13551	3.3	8.9	9.1
1972	504	11351 2905	126	10001	2497	23909	3.6	15.6	7.7
1973	515	11447 3005	109	10022	2873	7197	2.4	12.9	10.6
1974	501	11755 3176	111	10364	2922	14750	2.5	29.2	19.1
1975	461	12017 3425	113	11036	2282	6012	4.2	19.3	25.6
1976	462	12376 3560	115	11516	2016	3284	6.1	11.7	15.1
1977		Not available			2627	9985	6.8	10.5	12.1

Shaking up the regime

For just under nine months now the regime in Iran has had to face the most widespread and determined campaign against it for fifteen years. In city after city, town after town and in demonstrations both large and small, tens of thousands of Iranians have found that after all these years the will to fight is still there. Yes it is true hundreds have died or been injured in the course of these nine months but so brutalising has been the Shah's rule been these last twenty five years that people seem almost inured to news of any fresh atrocities. The Shah seems to be losing his power to frighten people.

What is news is that Iran's rulers are for the first time in all these years unsure, probably divided amongst themselves, each blaming the other—officials are being sacked for being too lenient and for being too harsh with demonstrators. Some of the hand-picked courtiers of the parliament even went so far as to suggest in a resolution that killing demonstrators in their home town was not alright. This may not seem radical but in Iran anyone to the left of Thatcher faces the possibility of prison and the torture chamber.

The question that comes to mind is what has brought oil rich Iran with its heavily and expensively equipped army, its thousands of American 'experts' and its apparently, if his own claims are to be believed, allseeing Shah to such a position? Further what sort of movement is it that is growing up and finally is there the chance of real change rather than just a face lift for the dictatorship?

The wealth trap

When oil prices shot up in 1974 oil income for Iran quadrupled almost overnight. The pockets of the ruling class were bulging with unspent petrodollars. However 1974 was a bad time to be rich, they kept telling us, high rates of inflation could soon wipe out money unless it was made to work—that is employed in making more money. The problem for Iran's rich was that the sort of economic set up they

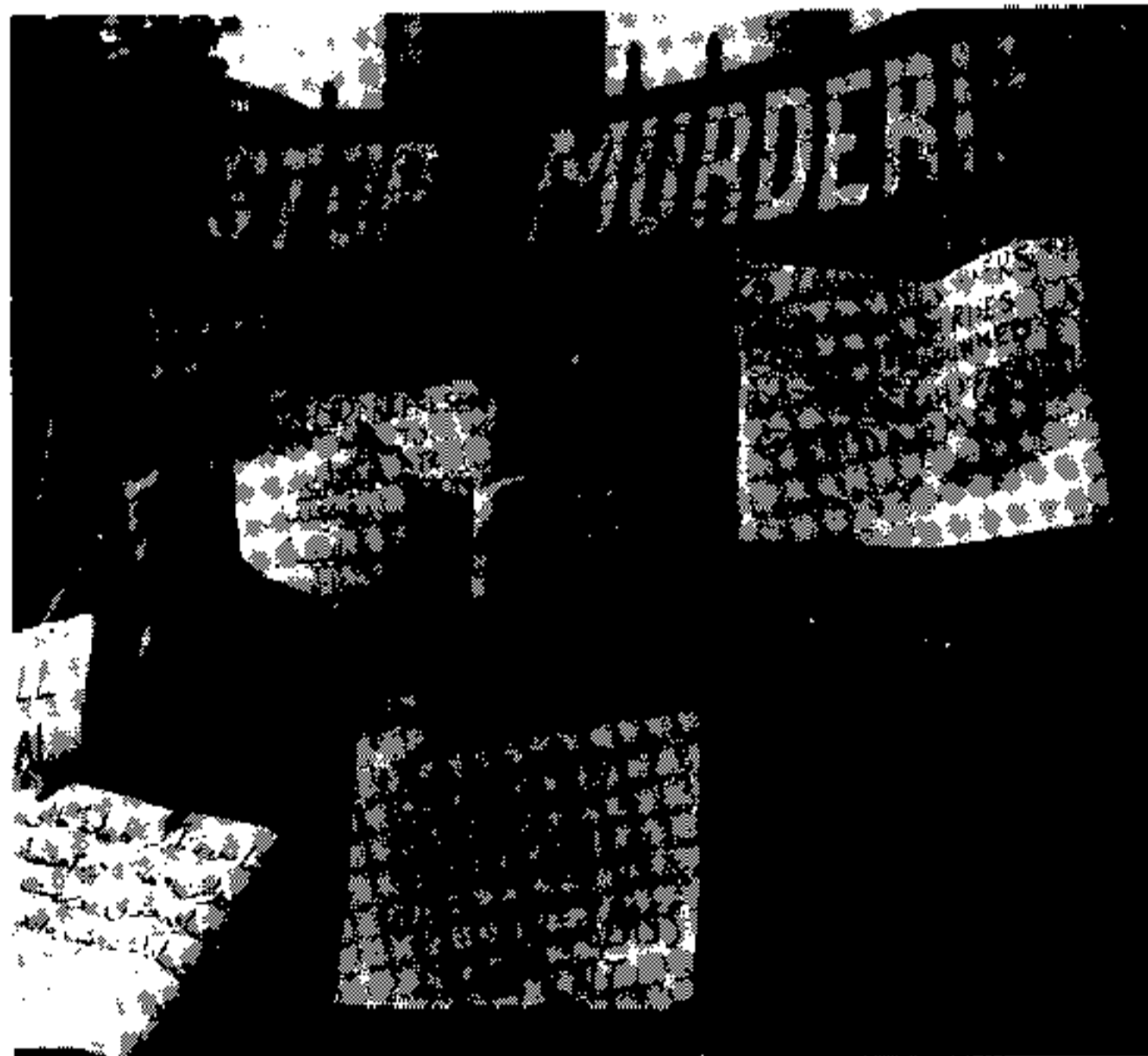
had promoted within the country gave them no avenue through which these huge sums could be channelled and yield a high return.

In Iran most serious investment has been by the state and needs subsidies to keep running at all so even though the government is willing to sell there are no takers. Private investment is business. Only the last category had any real potential but what's the good of expanding production when there isn't an export market or a domestic one?

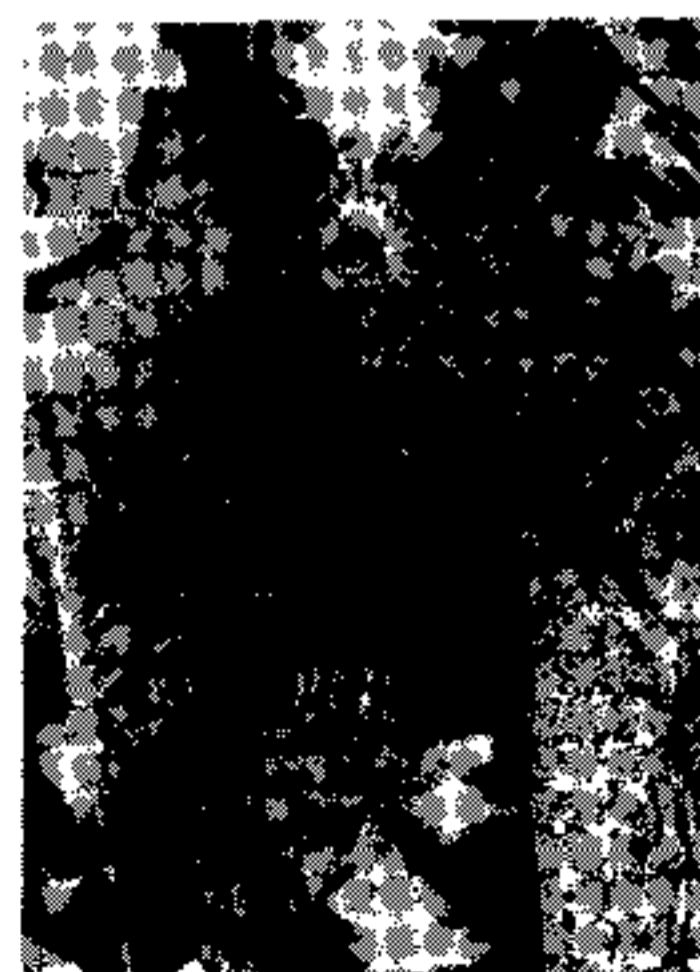
So the hot money did what is usually done—it went into property speculation (at home and abroad), hoarding of any commodity that you could get a monopoly on, fringe banking

etc.... The affect of this total waste of wealth was devastating—prices went almost out of control—inflation hit near 40% rents consumed on average ¼ of earnings, cheap foods went off the market, industrial production began to fall back against 'construction'—the speculators hobby. No serious investment in industry or agriculture could give the returns being got by the quick turnover, buy and sell, import-export merchants.

As a result many middle class people, in particular the small traders, lost out heavily to the big operators. The bazaar, once the centre of urban life, has been in decline for several years now—and with it would go all the petty-producers and the host of



Iranians in London demonstrate against the repressive regime. They dare not allow themselves to be identified.



The Shah

middlemen, associated with them—the last three years has seen that process accelerate considerably. This has provided the religious opposition with its main supporters.

What sort of Movement?

Everything is being done by the Shah's propagandists to paint the mass opposition as both Islamic and Marxist—that

is a way of trying to frighten the new and important professional groups away from such a movement by saying that it threatens everything they want—both their 'morals' and their 'corruptions'!

The truth is that at the moment the leading role in calling for protests against the regime, against police brutality is being taken by certain key religious figures. The reason for this is two-fold—firstly because of their positions they are relatively protected from arrest etc... and obviously the clergy have a sort of national network out of the hands of the secret police, secondly the weakness of the left makes the clergy appear great.

What is the source of this critical weakness in the Iranian left?—it is that for years they have carried out strategies that amount to votes of no confidence in the working class. No one has ever seriously argued that the workers of Iran should struggle for power, for their own dictatorship. Each round of workers struggles is applauded as 'more heroism'—little concern is expressed for the material forces at work.

Yet the concentration of the current struggles in the urban areas, in and around some of the major industrial developments means that such questions can no longer be left to fate. The petit bourgeois base of the religious and nationalist groups is quite clear what is not is whether the left are any better off. Unless there is started very soon a group who place organising in the revolutionary class, the working class as their absolute priority the effective leadership will remain in the hands of the religious and or the wishy washy CP—the Tudeh Party.

One good piece of news on this is that one of the two armed groups seems to be on the point of abandoning its guerilla strategy for reasons very similar to those above. No one can doubt the intentions of the comrades in the guerilla groups or their heroism—but it must now be obvious for all to see that in a period of mass upsurge they are marginalised both practically ie they cannot defend the movement and politically ie they cannot lead it either.

The longer the current turmoil continues the wider the rifts in Iranian society become—this will make organising easier for a period—lets hope its used effectively.—

Ahmad Darvish

Italy

Red in the face

The last few weeks have seen the climax to a long political battle which has been going on for over a year. It is an interesting story, not least for the light it sheds on the present role of the Communist Party (PCI) in Italian society.

In 1977, in the wake of the successful referendum on divorce, the tiny Radical Party (four members of Parliament) decided to launch a campaign for eight more referenda. The Radicals are a highly active democratic pressure group, not anti-capitalist, but determined fighters on civil liberties, democratic rights and the conservation of the environment. They are the Friends of the Earth, the NCCL, and the Young Liberals all rolled into one.

The referenda the Radicals proposed were wide-ranging and attacked some of the worst parts of Italian legislation - the penal code, which dated back to fascist times, the Concordat between church and state (Mussolini's masterpiece of 1929), the laws on public order, on mental homes, on the financing of political parties, and so on.

Throughout last summer the Radicals set up their stalls in all the piazzas of the main Italian cities, and urged people to sign in support of the referenda. They needed 700,000 signatures for the referenda to go ahead.

The only consistent help they received was from Lotta Continua, AO and PDUP, to their shame, decided at first not to mobilise their militants and only joined the Radicals' campaign in its last two weeks.

As for the Communists, they denounced the Radicals for trying to bypass parliament, in spite of the fact that in the last thirty years neither Communists nor Socialists have launched any major struggle in parliament for the repeal of the laws in question. Indeed Togliatti had agreed in 1947, as part of a package deal with the Christian Democrats, to allow the church-state Concordat to become part of the republican constitution.

The Radicals got their 700,000 signatures and thus put the major political parties in an

exquisitely embarrassing position. How on earth were they to stop the referenda from upsetting the parliamentary apple cart? At stake was the carefully worked out system of compromises between Communists, Christian Democrats and Socialists.

The Communists were furious with the Radicals for disturbing their plans to get into the government. *L'Unita*, their newspaper, denounced the referenda on the grounds that they could only lead to confusion. The Italian people, according to the Communists, was just not capable of voting on eight different questions at once. They would do much better to leave such things to the 'due processes of parliament'.

Then, to cries of relief all round, the solution was found. Bourgeois law came up with one of those sleights-of-hand which connoisseurs of such things have come to love and appreciate. In a ruling which called to mind the House of Lords suddenly letting the dockers out of prison when things were getting too hot, the Italian supreme court decided that all the most important referenda were 'unconstitutional' and would therefore not take place.

It was a cruel blow to the Radicals and revealed the weakness of their political position, based as it is on the refusal to admit the class nature of Italian society and its institutions.

None the less two referenda were left—on the public order law and on the financing of political parties by the state. The 'legge Reale' on public order dates from 1975. In it wider powers are given to the police to shoot on sight and then be protected by the law in the event of 'a mistake'.

More than 200 people have lost their lives in this way since the law came into force. The latest of them was a petty thief at Jesolo who was surprised by a hotel owner while attempting to steal car radios. The hotel owner shot a number of pistol rounds into the air to attract attention. The police, arriving on the scene, thought the thief was shooting at them and

therefore shot him in the neck as he ran away. He was unarmed.

The public order law also gives the police the right to detain for 48 hours anyone they think is about to commit a crime, and denies bail to those accused of political offences. In addition it contains a number of measures designed to curtail neo-fascist activity.

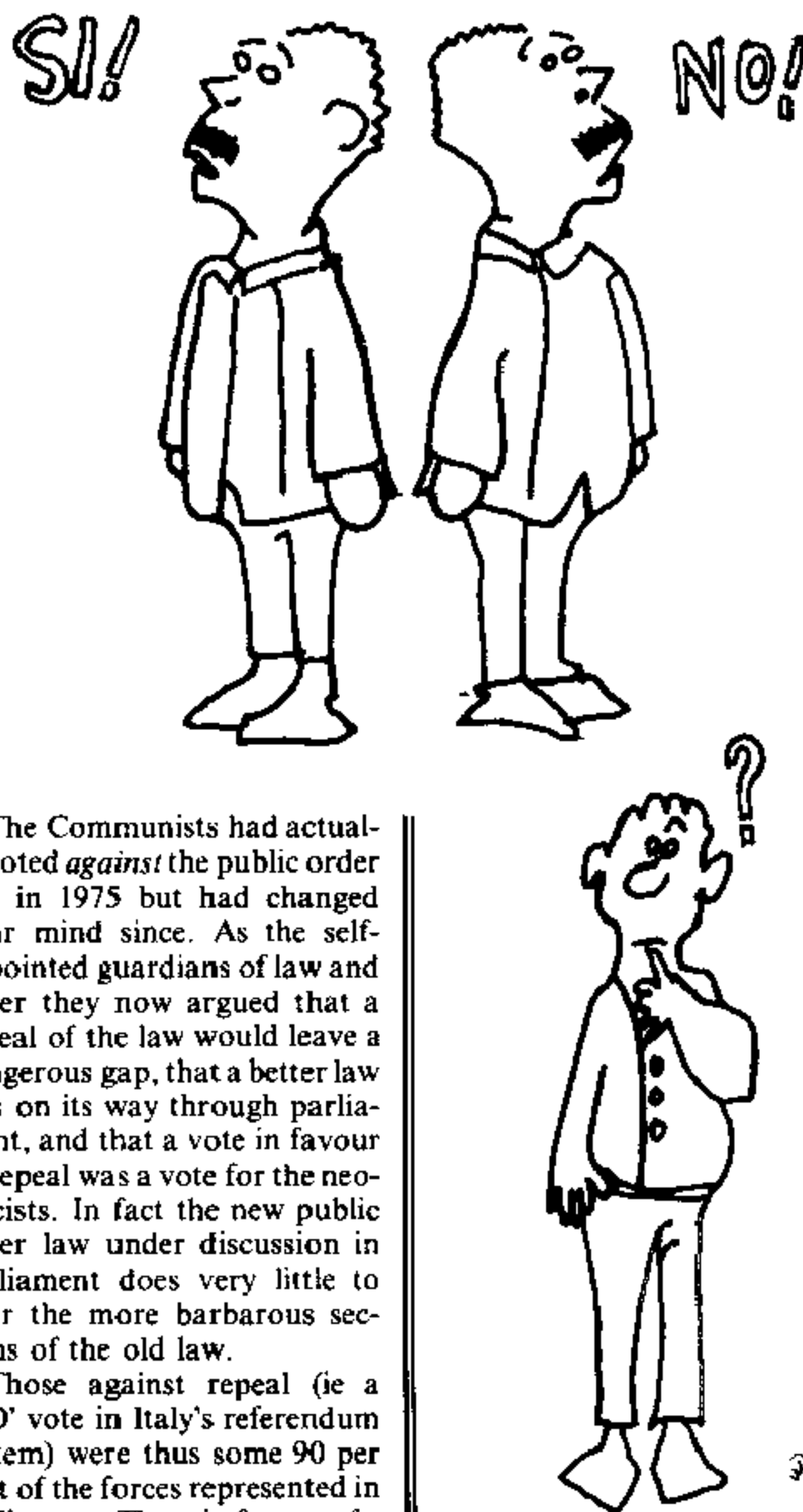
The law on the financing of political parties was introduced in 1974 at a time when the press was full of scandals concerning the way in which the Christian Democrats obtained funds. It was intended to clean up public life by assuring the political parties an annual income from the Treasury in direct relation to their strength in parliament.

The campaign on the referenda was short, sharp and heavily weighted one way. The Christian Democrats and all the minor bourgeois parties were obviously against the repeal of both laws. But so too were the Communists and Socialists, thought the Socialists allowed their members a free choice.

the revolutionary left, and the neo-fascists (for very specific reasons of their own).

True to their great commitment to democracy and fair play, the major political parties, including the Communists, proceeded to allot two-thirds of all television time to the 'NO' platform, ie themselves. The secretary of the Radical party began a hunger strike in protest, but to no avail.

Communist propaganda throughout the campaign was quite extraordinarily virulent. The PCI leaders showed a capacity for calumny and outright lying which they must have learned in their Stalinist youth. The Radicals became 'radical-fascists' because both Radicals and fascists, for very different reasons, had tried to obstruct in parliament the new public order law which the major parties wanted to push through to avoid the referendum. The PCI conveniently forgot to mention that when the Communists were in the opposition they had frequently



The Communists had actually voted *against* the public order law in 1975 but had changed their mind since. As the self-appointed guardians of law and order they now argued that a repeal of the law would leave a dangerous gap, that a better law was on its way through parliament, and that a vote in favour of repeal was a vote for the neo-fascists. In fact the new public order law under discussion in parliament does very little to alter the more barbarous sections of the old law.

Those against repeal (ie a 'NO' vote in Italy's referendum system) were thus some 90 per cent of the forces represented in parliament. Those in favour of a 'YES' vote were the Radicals,

found themselves voting, through no fault of their own, on the same side as the fascists.

The Radicals' obstructionism in parliament, a time-honoured tactic used by the PCI in the 1950s became, in the words of Berlinguer, 'an insidious attack on the democratic system'. *L'Unita* went as far as to describe the Radicals' actions as 'objectively subversive' and invited its readers to vote for 'democracy for the security of all citizens, against the sabotage of Parliament.'

The impression given in all the Communist press was that the Radicals were the fellow travellers of the fascists, and only one step away from being supporters of the Red Brigades. Poor Radicals! And all they had wanted to do was to fight for a little more democracy in Italy!

The Christian Democrats

and Communists were in for a rude shock when the results came out on 13 June. Although the NO votes won in both referenda, they were nowhere near the 90 per cent they should have been.

On the financing of the parties no less than 44 per cent of the electorate voted YES to the repeal of the law. This was clearly a massive protest vote against using public money to finance parties which in the last two years have done nothing towards solving the grave problems of the country and instead have frittered away their time in endless parliamentary minuets.

But the most significant vote, though numerically less striking, was that on the public order law. Over 23 per cent of the electorate voted YES to the repeal of the law. The YES vote

was particularly strong in the South. *L'Unita* tried to explain the vote away by saying that the fascists and the mafia of Sicily and Calabria were its main constituent element.

But the YES vote was uniform all over the South, not just in strong neo-fascist areas but in all the large cities as well. Even more important, in the working-class belts of the great industrial cities of the north, one in four electors voted YES to the repeal of the legge Reale. Even a Communist stronghold like Sesto San Giovanni in Milan had 22.7 per cent YES votes.

At a time when the law and order brigade is having a field day after the murder of Moro, and when all the major political parties said vote NO, this is a very extraordinary and hopeful result. *Paul Richards.*

T54/55s in service, particularly in the east European armies. This tank is a development of the famous T34 (which first saw action in 1941!) and is, by any reckoning, obsolete and useless against any first-class opponent.

But the core of the Warsaw Pact strength is provided by the T62. Several hundred of these were captured by the Israeli army from Egyptian and Syrian units in 1973 and specimens in more or less working order were handed over to various NATO powers for evaluation tests.

A detailed survey of the results (*Arms and Weapons* 41) shows that in every respect but one (frontal armour protection) it is markedly inferior to the NATO battle tank currently in service. In terms of first-class battle tanks, then, it is clear NATO has numerical superiority too.

Two obvious questions arise. Why have the rulers of the USSR maintained a vast mass of obsolescent (in some cases, obsolete) armour in service? And why at the very time when NATO-developed integrated fire control systems including laser rangefinders and advanced ballistic computers are making yesterday's tanks into tin coffins, do our 'defence' experts promote the myth of overall Russian superiority?

The answer to the first question may have something to do with the vested interests of the Soviet military establishment—more tanks and men mean more Marshals, more promotions, in the USSR as elsewhere irrespective of military effectiveness. Consider how the British Admirals clung to the battleship long after it was clearly obsolete.

But there is another and more importance factor. The T54/55s and T62s that rolled into Prague ten years ago are still more than adequate for that kind of work.

As to the Western 'experts', the explanation is that conventional arms are very big business indeed. The extremely lucrative British contracts to supply Iran with 1,800 Chieftains and Saudi Arabia with a complete air defence system are only the best known of a large class.

Third World sales are gigantic but, as the British and French arms industries battle for third place in the world league (after the USA and the USSR), the re-equipment of NATO is the most glittering prize of all.

Technological developments,

The Arms Race

The numbers game

The 'massive Soviet military build-up' in Europe has become a favourite theme of 'defence' experts in this country, and indeed in NATO countries generally.

The Warsaw Pact countries have, it is argued, an immense and fastgrowing superiority in conventional (ie, non-nuclear) forces over their NATO opponents. Sooner or later, the argument goes, this superiority will be used to force Washington to choose between accepting Soviet dominance in central and western Europe or resorting to an all-out nuclear exchange (ie, mutual annihilation).

Hence the 'necessity' to expand NATO conventional forces, to deploy more tactical nuclear weapons and, in the more extreme versions, to develop the neutron missile as a first-strike weapon to offset the overwhelming Russian tank superiority.

So effective has this propaganda been that the USSR negotiators at the long-running Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks have accepted, in principle, the aim of a common numerical ceiling (900,000 men apiece) for NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in central Europe.

At present, there is indeed a huge Warsaw Pact concentration of force in central and northern Europe. According to the *Military Balance 1977-78*

(International Institute for Strategic Studies) 45 Russian divisions plus 25 Eastern European divisions are deployed against 27 NATO divisions.

The tank strengths are given as 13,500 USSR plus 7,000 other Warsaw Pact against 7,000 NATO.

Of course, the IISS is a tainted source (indeed, all the sources are tainted) and the British *Defence White Paper (1977)* gives the substantially lower figure of 9,500 for 'Soviet tanks allotted to the Warsaw Pact'. The figures for all the weapon categories can be greatly expanded or contracted according to what is included in the definitions and what is not. All the same there can be no reasonable doubt that the Russian tank superiority in numbers is very great.

Similarly, with other conventional weapon categories there is, in terms of numbers alone, a varying but substantial Warsaw Pact superiority. Significantly, it is least with respect to first-class military aircraft (2,300 USSR, 1,700 other Warsaw Pact, 2,350 NATO according to the IISS).

The figures, however, are profoundly misleading. The picture of a mass of Russian armour poised ready to sweep across Germany is a phantasy and the 'experts' who conjure it up are well aware that it is a phantasy.

The fact is that NATO has

now a huge superiority in tactical nuclear weapons—7,000 deployed in advanced stores, enough to vapourise the entire Warsaw Pact concentration and a large part of Europe along with it!

Moreover, even if these are disregarded—and current NATO military doctrine, which places great emphasis on the use of tactical nuclear weapons, makes this an unrealistic assumption—the NATO forces have decisive qualitative superiority in most major weapons categories. There is no better illustration of this than in the very example most often cited by the NATO propagandists—armour.






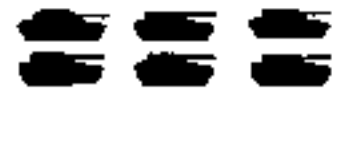



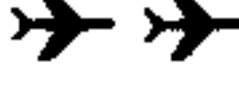
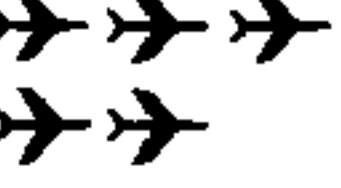
Of the 16,000 to 20,000 Warsaw Pact tanks deployed, between 1,500 to 2,000 are T64/72s. These tanks are broadly equivalent to the present generation of NATO battle tanks (M60, Leopard I, AMX30, Chieftain).

They are certainly inferior to the new NATO generation now appearing, particularly the German Leopard II, the world leader, of which 1,800 have just been ordered for the Bundeswehr. The Russian new generation T80 is not yet reaching the units.

Then what are the other 14,000 to 18,000 or so Warsaw Pact tanks? Apart from the PT76 light amphibious tank (in service since 1955), there are still considerable numbers of

From the 1978 Defence White Paper

The CURRENT BALANCE of FORCES in CENTRAL EUROPE

	NATO Countries*	Warsaw Pact Countries	NATO Countries - Warsaw Pact Countries
TOTAL SOLDIERS		 	1-1.2
SOLDIERS IN FIGHTING UNITS			1-1.2
MAIN BATTLE TANKS			1-2.7
ARTILLERY			1-2.5
FIXED-WING TACTICAL AIRCRAFT			1-2.4

*Including French forces in the Federal Republic of Germany

most notably the 'artillery revolution' of the last few years which has made most existing weapons obsolescent, and rapid developments in guided missiles, have provided the opportunity.

To exploit it fully the merchants of death need the

right political climate. 'Russian superiority' is an essential myth.

For if there is one group of people who have an even bigger vested interest than the Soviet Marshals in promoting this new arms race it is the bosses of the Western war industries and their media 'experts'. *Fred Hall*

Mozambique

Letter from Mozambique

This is in reply to Barry Mokgatle's article (Socialist Review No.2) which highlighted a lack of information about Mozambique. We hope to fill a part of that gap in this article.

Mozambique is a Popular Republic, a one-party state, governed by *Frelimo* (The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique). *Frelimo* came to power in 1975 on the back of the coup in Portugal. After 10 years of armed struggle, a mainly guerilla organisation was thrust into a position of state power. In many ways *Frelimo* was ill-

prepared for this new role. After waging a war for 10 years it more or less controlled the two northern most provinces of Niassa and Capo Delgado and had a large influence in a third, Tete. In these liberated areas *Frelimo* set up schools, hospitals and communal villages.

However, far from being used solely as training grounds (which they undoubtedly proved to be) they were seen as being necessary for the formation of the 'new man'—the new 'Mozambiquan personality'.



Reading a wall paper

In these liberated areas the people were learning to organise their lives collectively, and Samora Machel (President of both Mozambique and *Frelimo*) has been quoted as saying, 'The war of National Liberation can be said to have not been long enough. Every day our people were learning more.'

However *Frelimo* had little influence or experience in the factories in the Southern part of the country. It was here that workers in hotels, shops, hospitals etc., came under the influence of, and gained financially from the tourist industry from Rhodesia and South Africa.

Now, apart from the obvious political problems that this suggests, it has also caused

enthusiasm for going it alone, without the aid of those who did leave three years ago have returned, ironically; on 'Cooperante' contracts (foreign workers cooperating with the revolution) earning twice as much as they did before they left.

As a result of the technical vacuum, *Frelimo* militants found themselves at the helm of factories, hospitals, and banks. Perhaps more important were the agricultural estates which were inherited with inefficient or sabotaged machinery.

In any other circumstances this would have been bad enough, but added to that, the Portuguese system that was also inherited was hopelessly over-bureaucratised, and *Frelimo* does not yet have the skills or knowledge to reorganise.

Although all banks, hospitals, schools, land and property have been nationalised it is proving difficult to reorganise them on socialist lines, as it is a mammoth task simply to unravel the existing system.

Frelimo

Like many other National Independence Movements, *Frelimo* was not an avowedly marxist party during the armed struggle. It was not until the 3rd Congress in 1976 (6 months after Independence) that it changed orientation to become the 'Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party of Socialist Revolution'.

It claimed, 'our Party is a revolutionary party, whose objective is the destruction of the Capitalist System. *Frelimo* adopts Democratic Centralism as the fundamental principal of organisation.' (Documents of the 3rd. Congress, 1976)

But far from being an opportunist manoeuvre to gain support from the present so-called 'socialist' countries, the politics of *Frelimo* appear to have been forged in the struggle itself. Mozambique does not consider itself a socialist country. The line of *Frelimo* is that 'only after the establishment of Popular Democracy will it be possible for the Mozambiquan working-class, led by its vanguard party, to pass to the next step, that of the socialist revolution.' (*Frelimo* Statement, May 1978.)

It does use the term 'socialist' for the Soviet Union, China, Korea, Cuba, Vietnam etc. It must be borne in mind that here dependence on foreign aid and trade is vital. There is a shortage

of most basic necessities throughout the country and for reasons given above industry in Mozambique is not capable of supplying the people's needs.

In active recognition of the Zimbabweans' struggle, the borders between Mozambique and Rhodesia have been closed for some time. The Portuguese system depended heavily for its existence on Rhodesian industry and agriculture, which also explains the underdevelopment of the country's resources.

This action has added to the lack of basic commodities and lost a lot of trade, largely shipping. As a result Mozambique has been forced to look elsewhere for aid and trade. Given the seriousness of the situation, it is difficult to see what alternatives there are to the present policies.

When you are starving, you have to get food from somewhere. If you were bleeding to death you might not think twice about letting Brezhnev stitch you up—even if there was a possibility that he might stitch your arms behind your back in the process.

Regarding the Capitalist countries, Machel is always quite explicit, as he showed in his May Day speech: 'Capitalism is not our friend. We can cooperate but it is not our friend. We cooperate because we need it, and it needs us.' Apart from the rather doubtful last phrase, this illustrates the stark reality of the situation.

On the other hand Soviet aid does not come freely. And, it is anybody's guess just what demands the Russians put upon Mozambique's economy or political development. It has been suggested by people working at the docks that much of Mozambique's tea and rice (of good quality) finds its way to the Soviet Union, and Mozambique is then forced to import poorer qualities.

Though it is not known the prices etc., involved in the exchange we also know that the Russian Cooperantes here have American Dollars transferred to their banks in the Soviet Union, presumably as a way of building up stocks for the Government.

We do get the impression, though, that relationships are somewhat cool and guarded at this end. The newspapers talk, not of 'fraternal aid and assistance', but of 'protocol' between the two countries.

Queues are a way of life in Mozambique. Until recently meat and rice were only

available in Beira, (the second city) about once every six weeks if you were prepared to queue for up to two hours. However at present rice is freely available, due to large imports from China. The meat situation has improved, and now that the dry season is here there is often plenty of cheap fruit and vegetables.

Structure of the Party

After the third Congress, Party membership was kept fairly stable. The main reason was to avoid an influx of opportunists joining the now party of Government. One of the results has been that those opportunists already in the party have been able to carve

our niches for themselves. The existing bureaucracy has made that all the more easier.

The party was organised in the factories and localities by the 'Dynamising Groups'. These were largely appointed party members though serving a soviet type function. The past three months though has seen a massive 'Structure the Party' campaign. As part of this process, mass meetings are being held in factories and villages to elect workers as candidate members of the party.

Candidates are elected, or rejected according to their personal qualities, political capabilities and conscientiousness in the workplace. Poygamy (a deeply entrenched tradition), alcoholism, a tendency towards lateness and a general of conscientiousness are all considered tendencies which make one ineligible for Party Membership.

The candidates admitted, assisted by 'dynamising brigades' of experienced Party Members, form the party cell in the workplace and the localities. It is planned that the dynamising groups will disappear to be replaced by these cells and committees of the Party.

Two of the responsibilities of Party Members are to: (1) Respect women and contribute actively in their emancipation. (2) Promote Proletarian Internationalism.

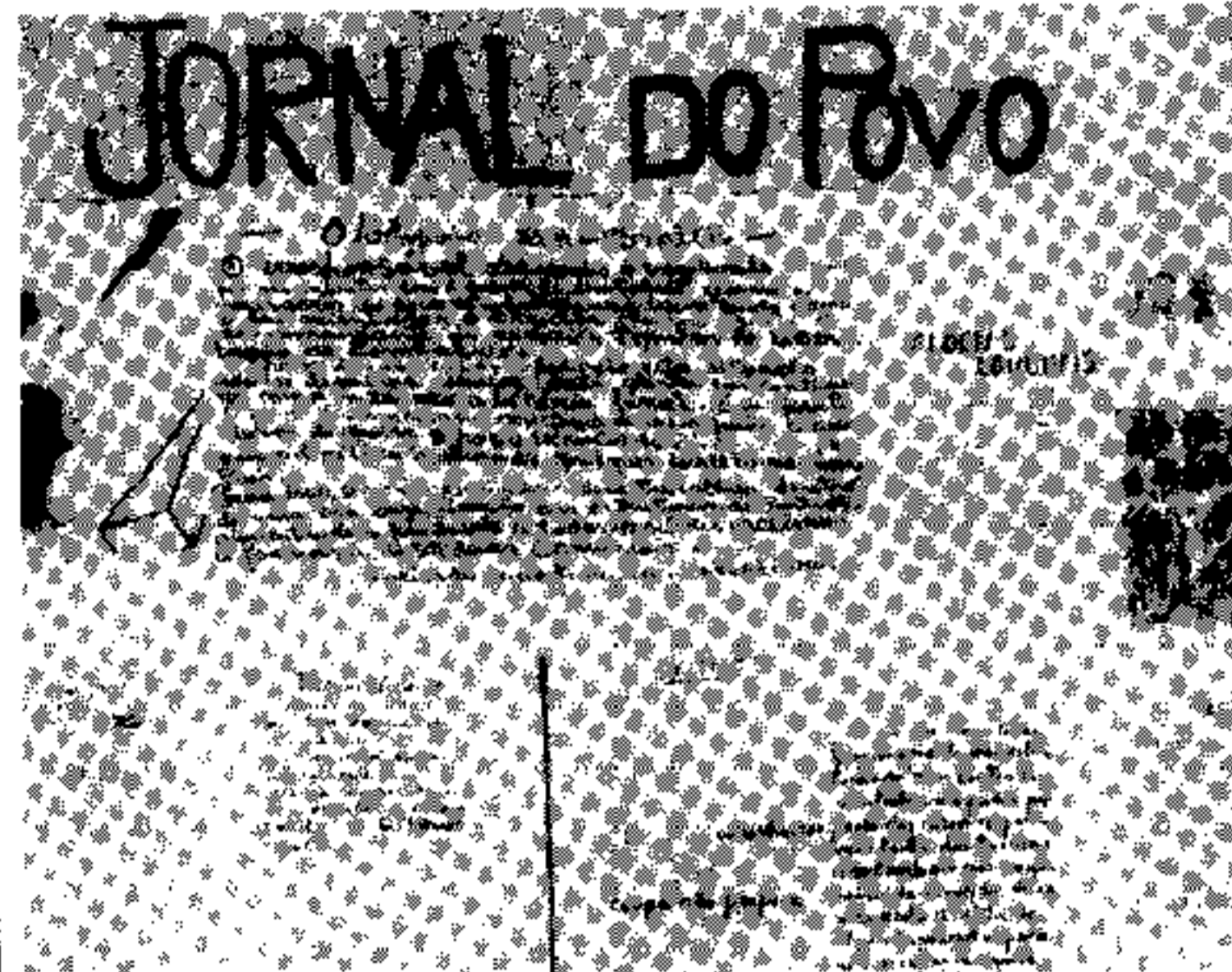
Frelimo is trying to build the Party, organise the people, form the 'new mentality' and create the conditions for the future socialist revolution. For as Samora Machel said, again in his May Day speech, 'the factories must be the producers of class consciousness of the working-class in Mozambique'.

But whether the Mozambique people will be allowed to construct the material and ideological bases for the socialist revolution depends not so much on Western Capitalism and its constraints as on Eastern influence.

All hope here is placed on the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Being more highly industrialised countries a liberated Zimbabwe and South Africa would reduce Mozambique's dependency on the Eastern Bloc.

For this reason, support for the liberation struggles is not only an act of proletarian internationalism but also an act of survival, and a lifeline for the future revolution in Mozambique.

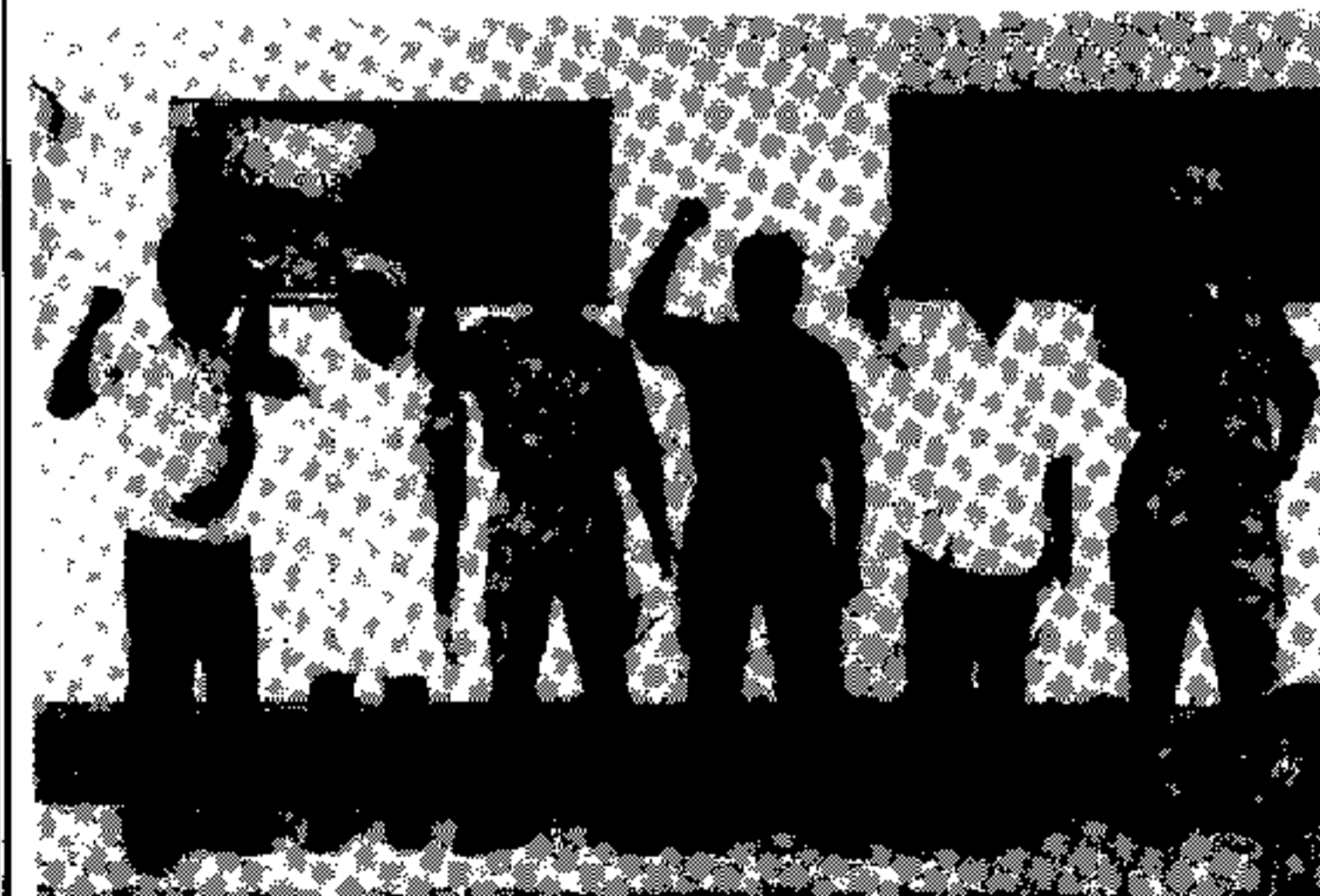
A LUTA CONTINUA!!



'People's Newspaper'—such as are found in every village, town & institution.



The local social administrator visiting a workshop.



Workers at an institution for handicapped war veterans, formerly a Portuguese army camp.

Russia

'fish rots from the head'

The men and women who were to form the Free Trade Union Association of the Soviet Working People met in Moscow at the end of 1977 in the queues of petitioners to the Central Committee of the CPSU.

Those who stand in these queues too long are hustled out by the police to be imprisoned, committed to mental hospitals, or simply kicked out of Moscow. On one occasion 'before the eyes of hundreds of citizens from various cities

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across the country, one man, driven by the despair of the plaintiffs, committed suicide.

These people are not what one normally thinks of as 'dissidents'. They are not intellectuals, not opponents of the Soviet government, not even 'political' any Western sense of the word.

They are much simpler men, and women, 'honest labourers of the socialist society, producers of national wealth', ranging from Klebanov the skilled mining foreman to Shkorbatov the nightwatchman.

They had been taught in school, in the Komsomol (Young Communist League), in the army that the Soviet system is the best in the world, and for the most part, they believed what they were told.

What set them apart from the great mass of Soviet workers was, to start with, that they were unlucky. They were all victims or witnesses of some particular injustice at work, eg, Anna Fufayeva, a vermin exterminator, was paid 'incorrectly for work done in harmful conditions' Valentina Isvekova found out that her boss was using his position to have sex with the secretaries.

Then, half brave, half naive, horrified at the gulf between Soviet theory and practice, they dared to complain. As a result, every single one of them was dismissed from their job and forced into (in their words) 'the great army of the Soviet unemployed'.

They petitioned for reinstatement. Their petitions were 'sent to the very organs against which we are lodging complaints'; and the exceptionally persistent who carried their grievances to Moscow were rewarded with searches, beatings, prison and psychiatric hospital. They express their envy of an 'anonymous dog living at an airport; it had tender human care—not insults and destitution'.

Their reaction to this is exactly that of the Russian peasant before the revolution: Our system is good, our rulers are good, but wicked officials are perverting things for their own personal ends—'people who have the trust of the PARTY and the PEOPLE are acting with arbitrariness'.

Just as the peasants ad-

ressed their complaints against the landowners to the Tsar (the little father) so the Soviet workers try, directly and by rousing world opinion, to appeal to Brezhnev. They demand audience with 'the leaders of the PARTY and GOVERNMENT who are barred from us by the barrier of bureaucracy'. They are not admirers of Western capitalism and apologise for the fact that they have been 'compelled to appeal to ... the bourgeois press'.

This respect for the Soviet system, their innocence and lack of any real political analysis lead them to try and link their problems with traditional Russian dissidents, the civil rights movement directed by members of the intelligentsia. 'The world must know at the time of the Belgrade conference of heads of state, the signatories of the Helsinki agreement must know exactly where... human rights are being trampled on'. They demand 'the resolution of our complaints in accordance with the law and Constitution of the Soviet Union'.

What distinguishes them from the civil rights movement, and what makes them so important is first of all—their complaint stems from the workplace. Their original criticisms are *economic*—against 'wasters of socialist property, poor work conditions, low pay, high rates of injury at work, speed-up and increased norms of output leading to wastage and poor quality production, the continuous rise in the price of basic necessities and food stuffs'.

Secondly—they are organised. One appeal begins: 'we are Soviet citizens of various towns of the USSR—united in bitterness'.

It is difficult to explain what an incredible advance this is. Jack Jones and other trade union leaders in Britain have refused to support these people on the grounds that they should fight through official union channels.

But as the workers' group says: 'in our country there is no organ which objectively defends the workers' interests'. Trade union officials are usually CP members who haven't quite made the grade. They are chosen by the manager and the district party committee and are

totally dependent on them

The officials are 'elected' by a conference of 'workers' delegates'. These workers' delegates are chosen by shop or section, not by a general meeting, ie the supervisor of the section nominates himself and the foreman and someone from the technical engineering staff. Only the technicians and professional engineers elect their own delegates.

The result is that 'in the end although workers outnumber professional staff by ten to one, nearly all those who attend the conference are technical engineering personnel, ie those for whom workers' interests are not important'. The few workers' delegates who do slip through the net are bought off by bribes 'and the buffets abound in normally scarce products and alcoholic drinks'.

The little complaining possible for a worker in the Soviet Union is *individual* complaining. The method is this—you write a declaration (called a ZAYAVLYENYE) stating your own personal grievance (yours only), you stand in a queue, and eventually present it to some faceless bureaucrat whose 'sole concern is how to get rid of the complainant'. Every despotism knows that the individual is easy to deal with.

And so, the exasperated petitioners in the Central Committee waiting room finally got together: 'We decided to organise our own genuinely independent trade union'... Considering 'that only through a union of our own basing itself on the public opinion of workers of all countries, can we force our government to respect the ordinary workers'.

The statute of the Free Trade Union Association of the Soviet Working People is dated 1 January, 1978. It laid down that members should be 'workers and employees whose rights and interests have been illegally flouted by the administration, Soviet party and judicial organs'; and it was organised 'on the basis of internal trade union democracy'. The union had 43 full members—about 200 people were involved in all.

This is a tiny beginning—many of those involved must be now on their way to the Gulag. But—it is the first sign of an independent workers' movement in Russia to reach the West since the 1920s and as they say 'today we are suffering—tomorrow any citizen of the USSR may become a member of our collective and think as we do'. *Olga Semyonova*

Look get it straight

Dear Socialist Review,
Atrocious articles on Carnival.
Mr Calico Nickers wants to harness and channel the energy of 'Youth' who have ten times more idea of what's going down than your pretty average Marxist Editor.

John Rose's trotskyst's youth leaders guide to kids is painful (but he'd do a great album requests show).

'Rastafarianism is totally pessimistic...' says the Chief Scout. On the contrary almost without exception the music names the oppressors and calls for unity and struggle.

If you don't understand how religious forms contain deeply political meanings you won't understand anything about black music... take a Phensic.

Worst of all is the Hoyland/Flood Page stuff on RAR. How dare you ask them? With all that stuff about RAR being 'Fun music with no political connections' and punk is dead (which they've been saying since before it started).

Look lets get it straight. Punk is one of the most important *working class* cultural things to ever happen. Is it too much to ask that the Left (two years too late, as usual) LISTEN to the stuff... and don't use the Dansette. Open your ears... and then your mind... and maybe your EYES... and Hair Dyes.

The dynamic Music for Pleasure Duo think 'The task is to cement this union' (Music and Politics) Grand. Haven't you ever heard of RAR (Oh Yes you once came along and told us Roots was a Bourgeois Concept).

The duo want it to die... to justify their own low-energy and inaction. But the kids won't let it. RAR's swansong is being played *now*, the new TRB/Clash is tuning in/out at your local Yuuff Club.

They say RAR is the fun-angle and MfS is the political hit. They don't understand working class kids NOW are

political and fun without having to make 5 minute speeches to prove it.

Mickey Mouse Disaster Time. It's the sort of stuff we'd expect to read in... shoddy-Marxism which SR should *read* like The Friends of Albanian Quarterly. Fact. The Leveller had a GREAT article which SR

1900

To judge by our mailbag, nothing in the first issues of *Socialist Review* has attracted more attention than Bertolucci's *1900*. May 1968 and socialist theatre pale by comparison. Paul Cunningham's review in issue no.2, in which he called it a 'great socialist film' has received a deluge of criticism: according to our correspondents *1900* is a 'failure', a 'hymn to Eurocommunism', 'boring, elitist'. For those who haven't seen the film, it deals with the class struggle in the Italian countryside between 1900 and 1945, centring on the relationship between the Communist agricultural labourer Olmo (Gerard Depardieu) and his padrone (boss), Alfredo (Robert de Niro).

Reformist & sexist

It is difficult to understand why Paul Cunningham believes Bertolucci's *1900* is a 'great socialist film'. The fact that the film was financed by a Hollywood company, 20th Century Fox, makes this extremely unlikely, but inherent within the film itself are several inherently reformist features.

The representation of sexual relationships in the film has been widely criticised -and quite correctly. The titillatory scene of Alfredo having sex with his wife-to-be in a barn and the failure to explore the homosexual element in the relationship between Alfredo and Olmo are just two examples.

Much more serious, however, is the way Bertolucci portrays women in periods of struggle, where he implies a naturalness about male superiority and patriarchy.

We see women in struggle twice—during the pre-fascist period in the early 1920s and then on liberation day in 1945. Despite all the evidence that in

readers should read.

Yours in dismay
Dave Widgery, Ruth Gregory,
Syd Shelton, Roger (Dub)
Huddle (*Dem heavier than before*)

P. S. Roger Huddle doesn't think the Leveller article is as good as what he has writ in this ish

such periods women and men put aside their traditional roles and fight as comrades we do not see such portrayal in *1900*.

In the eviction scene the women sit down unarmed in the path of the soldiers while the men stand behind with sticks (for the real fighting?). In 1945 the men seize the guns and the women are left with pitchforks.

Is Bertolucci trying to tell us that at such high points of struggle the women of Italy allowed the men to take all the initiatives and to engage in the armed conflict alone? Surely no such revolutionary period ever saw such respect for traditional sex-roles.

The relationship between the women and the men in 1945 is also symptomatic of the historical relationship between the Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian workers and peasants.

For just as the 'responsi le' men took away the forks from the 'hysterical' women when they were about to use them against the fascists, so too did Olmo and other PCI militants persuade the masses to give up their arms as they were on the point of setting up a red republic. The 'responsibility' of the male is paralleled with the 'responsibility' of the PCI.

But although the role of the PCI in 1945 is accurately depicted, Bertolucci is not always so historically correct. The Fascist period, when the PCI did struggle heroically against Mussolini is portrayed as a period of little struggle at all. The resistance of Olmo is an individual one, made possible because of his friendship

with Alfredo, the *padrone*.

The PCI is nowhere to be seen. Indeed, the only collective activity portrayed in this section is within the family. Bertolucci seems either to be unaware of or to ignore the oppressive structure of the patriarchal family.

Doubtless much of this can be attributed to Bertolucci's membership of the reformist Communist Party. It seems that the PCI no longer wishes even to be portrayed as a militant party engaged in a class war for fear of damaging its search for a historic compromise with the Christian Democrats.

In fact, historic compromise is the theme of the whole film. The friendship of Alfredo, the padrone, and Olmo, the peasant, is symbolic of the relationship the PCI desires with the Christian Democrats.

In this context then, fascism is never analysed. The two fascist characters, Attila and Regina, are simply monsters much of whose interest in fascism arises from their sexual inadequacies. Fascism is portrayed as largely something unpleasant and inexplicable which briefly came between the workers and the bourgeoisie.

There are many other films which tell us much more about fascism and patriarchy in Italy. An earlier, less pretentious film by Bertolucci, *The Spider's Strategem*, shows much more insight into fascist Italy. *Padre Padrone* examines the effect of the patriarchal structure on one Sicilian family.

I came out of *1900* thinking that perhaps the film was inevitably flawed by virtue of its immense scope. But *The Travelling Players*, a film about the Greek civil war, covers a long historical period without being as hypocritical, evasive and manipulative as *1900*.

Ultimately, the only reason for going to see *1900* is to gain insight into the reformist, and therefore sexist, policies of the PCI. The film is a hymn to Eurocommunism.

Bob Cant.

Two fingers & no teeth

Paul Cunningham is right to praise *1900*, but he has not indicated why it has such a powerful impact; nor why so many film critics rejected its style and simplifications.

To many, Bertolucci's deliberately violent social-political contrasted scenes (used more mildly in that other 'epic' of people in history,

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London E2

Angelopolous' *The Travelling Players*); the repetitive struggle between 'villain' padrone and 'hero' communist peasant; the raising of the emotional temperature by the device of pitching the spectator into the middle of one scene after another—these techniques produce the effect of melodrama, and are, therefore, for some, disturbing and appear mere indulgence.

Add to this a considerable appetite for depicting brutality—so that the mafia mock-up, *The Godfather*, looks like a bit of downtown hooliganism—and we have a huge, clumsy, untidy melodrama. This is quite alien to English film expectations. One has only to contrast this with what is probably still the best English film, Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, its muted tensions, its hidden depiction of exploitation, to mark the differences.

But the unsympathetic critic will have neglected both Bertolucci's technique and intentions. Melodrama and panoramic epic do not go easily together. But Bertolucci makes them work. He is able to do this because they both have their roots in his awareness of class struggle: peasant v. landowner.

However self-indulgent the film seems, a little reflection will remind one that there is not a single scene which does not contribute to the main movement of the story; the intention to shock is not there merely to excite an audience; and the scenes of apparently gratuitous brutality will drop into place of the centrality of Bertolucci's concept of class struggle is kept in mind.

Bertolucci, himself, has said that *1900* is about peasants. Here he has made them heroic not because they are superhuman, any more than the padrone or his jackal fascist manager are subhuman, but because the economic relationships between them force them to take on these characteristics. Working-class 'heroism' is seldom self-chosen. It is better called endurance.

This, which I think is the concentrate of what Bertolucci is getting at, is best seen at the end. At the end of the war the peasants have shot the fascist, they celebrate with a courtyard carnival: flags, songs, food and an old peasant confronts the padrone.

At first he is speechless with 70 years of accumulated servility and respect... then he holds

up a hand minus two fingers—lost in the gathering of the padrone's harvest. A woman also confronts him. She has no teeth: but he has, to eat and eat with, she shouts.

These two minutes are enormously moving, even after four hours of one of the most flamboyant films ever made. They are not minor incidents. They are what the film has been moving towards, from the first scene. And, they are more effective than the scene, shortly before, when the fascists massacre the peasants—a woman baring her breasts to the revolver—echo of the Paris barricades of 1848, 1871? or did Bertolucci know of such an incident?

For Bertolucci history is the endurance of one class against another. But there are no smooth endings. 'The padrone is alive' says the padrone at the end, as though throwing his remark into the future of 30 years of Italian and European history; and, in the final surrealist scenes, in which the lifelong friend-enemies, peasant boy, landowner son, are seen still quarreling and when a train decorated in communist bunting runs over the padrone boy/man stretched across the tracks, the padrone yet survives. There is never an easily resolvable end to the dialectic in history.

So, Bertolucci, using cinema as image-maker, as never before, and despite the worst piece of dubbing I have ever heard, succeeds splendidly, especially if you believe, as I do, that history is about two lost fingers and a mouthful of teeth.
Eric Tartakover

Tedious & expensive

I had the misfortune to see *1900, Part I* last year. I don't intend to see Part II. It's a boring, elitist, whining apology for the Italian Communist Party. I've no idea why Paul Cunningham (*Socialist Review*, May) thinks it's a 'great socialist epic'.

It's certainly an epic but there's nothing socialistic about this drawn-out, expensive film which shows leaders as brilliant exceptions (like Bertolucci) and workers/peasants/women as mindless. The first two are useful as stage armies and the last for degrading decoration. (The cinema audience thought it very funny when a peasant girl, desperate for money, gets 'the shakes' whilst trying to prostitute herself).



To illustrate the film's general tone, there's a scene where fascists burn out a local labour club, killing several old age pensioners. Olmo, the peasant communist and a young schoolteacher cart their bodies through deserted streets the next day, crying out 'wake up', 'wake up'. It's supposed to be symbolic. Fascism is round the corner and all the workers are asleep.

Only the enlightened Communists (like Bertolucci) have sussed out the situation. Actually the reverse was true. Whilst workers and peasants sought to retaliate against fascist terrorism, their socialist 'leaders' argued for passive, parliamentary response.

Like lots of Italian socialist films, *1900* concentrates on a chosen few commanding a faceless mass, or Jude the Obscure peasants (Padre, Padrone) rising from ignorance to erudition to the sound of Sergio Morricone type music.

1900 is inaccessible to workers in Italy as well as Britain because its tedious and expensive. At least Cabaret drew in the crowds Paul. Stick to Raymond Chandler—he's more subversive and ten times more honest.

Glynis Cousins

PS Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dynamite* is the best Italian political film and worth seeing!

Paul Cunningham sez

Contrary to what some readers may think, I'm not, in fact Bertolucci's PR man in Britain and some of the criticisms aimed at *1900*, are fair. Ian Birchall's point about the peasants being patronised is well-founded, for the earlier scenes of the film, at least. I can't agree with some of the other comments, however.

1900 does explain Italian fascism. In one scene the landowners meet in a church to discuss what can be done about the wave of strikes taking place and Atilla appeals for funds to start a crusade against the Reds.

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His personal ambition and hatred for the peasants quite in tune with his role as overseer, are used by the landowners to launch a campaign of violence against the unions. His perverse sexuality flows from his Fascist view of life: he sees life in terms of power and affection has no place in his relations. Atilla and Regina are sadists because they live out the power morality of capitalism.

Is it a sexist film? I don't think so. The peasant women are involved in all the battles of their class; they protect the men from the mounted Gendarmes, they attack the Fascists with pitch forks and they participate fully in the confrontation with the boss in 1945. I think Bob Cant is mistaken; if the film was sexist (which I assume to mean, denigrating to women,) none of these scenes would have been included.

Look at the contrast between the two marriages central to the film. Alfredo, the *Padrone* marries an independent, free-thinking woman and then expects her to have no other interest but him. As a boss, he sees her as just another item on his estate. He views women as commodities, and the film links this with his class background.

Olmo, on the other hand, marries a fellow socialist and both still keep their own separate lives. She teaches the peasants and runs political classes, while he continues to work on the farm and carry on his own political work. Bertolucci differentiates between the boss's marriage and the socialist's marriage, and it is quite obvious which is based on mutual affection and respect and which is based on oppression.

Finally, I think the film is socialist because it shows the existence of a class struggle, in which one class must eventually dominate. It attributes the poverty and brutality of the peasants lives to their exploitation by the landowners. *1900* is a film which affirms the right of workers to run their own lives, free from the bosses and not surprisingly, has been turned down by both British and American film distributors. It is well worth seeing, if the film companies give you the chance.

Paul Cunningham

But the beat goes on

**Class, Race & Worker
Insurgency: The League of
Revolutionary Black Workers**
James A Geschwender
Cambridge University Press
£3.50
A Bookmarx Choice

The world's press announced the arrival of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. But it was a factory bulletin that signalled the birth in 1968 of an even greater challenge to American capitalism: DRUM.

DRUM, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, was the name of a factory leaflet and group set up out of an unofficial strike at the Chrysler Dodge Main factory in Detroit in May 1968. The strike, against speed-ups, was initiated on May 2 by a group of Polish women. It was the first strike in 14 years. And it took place in a factory where several black workers already saw themselves as revolutionaries and Marxists.

Nine months earlier Detroit, a city of nearly 3/4 million people of whom 40 per cent were black, had erupted in what *Time* described as the 'bloodiest uprising in a half century and the costliest in terms of property damage in U. S. history'. It was not a race riot there was no fighting between blacks and whites except where the whites were the police or National Guard. For many young blacks the six-day insurrection was a symbol of pride and pointer to the future.

John Watson, a black student activist, had attended the weekly meetings of the Socialist Workers Party (US) in the early 1960's and had organised an all-black Marxist study group with Martin Glaberman. Glaberman was chairman of one of the political groups in Detroit organised by C. L. R. James. In October 1967 Watson was the editor of a new monthly paper, *Inner City Voice*, whose first editorial message was loud and clear:

'In the July
Rebellion
we ad
minister
ed a



Above: two black workers are cheered on after a victory against Chrysler's
Below: *Inner City Voice*, edited by Watson

beating to the behind of the white power structure, but apparently our message didn't get over... The Revolution must continue.'

Inner City Voice reflected many influences: Che Guevara and Malcolm X; Robert Williams and James Boggs; and it also reprinted speeches by CLR James.

The combination of Black Power and Trotskyist influences over a range of black militants was unique. And the setting—Detroit—the US city with the highest proportion of its population (40 per cent) directly employed in manufacturing industries, was tailor-made for a serious attempt to build revolutionary socialist organisation in the heartlands of US capitalism.

In the car factories of Detroit black made up between 30 per cent and 70 per cent of the labour force in every plant. On the worst shifts and in the worst jobs they made an even higher proportion. Eight out of ten blacks were in semi- and unskilled jobs as against only five out of ten white workers. Average pay for blacks throughout the Michigan motor industry was only 85 per cent of the average for white workers.

After the May 2 wildcat, nine militants from the factory got together with the editors of *Inner City Voice* and began to

INNER-CITY VOICE



produce a weekly factory newsletter called DRUM and decorated with drawings of drums. The first issue reviewed the strike. It explained why it had happened when the line was speeded up from 49 to 58 units an hour; it attacked the harshness of penalties given to black strikers (two were sacked); it accused Chrysler of racist hiring practices; and it included a memorial tribute to Malcolm X.

The second issue had a series of nine questions beginning 'Have you ever wondered why', and continuing: '(1) 95 per cent of all foremen in the plants are white; (2) 99 per cent of all the general foremen are white; (3) 100 per cent of all plant superintendents are white; (4) 90 per cent of all skilled

tradesmen are white; (5) 90 per cent of all apprentices are white; (6) That systematically all of the easier jobs are held by whites; (7) Whenever whites are on harder jobs they have helpers; (8) When black workers miss a day from work they are required to bring two doctors' excuses as to why they missed work; (9) That seniority is also a racist concept, since black workers were systematically denied employment for years at this plant'.

It also contained the DRUM programme justifying its separate existence outside the union (United Automobile Workers) structure.

Over the next six months DRUM initiated a successful boycott of two racist bars near the factory and a one-day protest strike against Chrysler's racism. The regular bulletins and organised groups also spread to other factories and early in 1969 they came together and formed the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

Virtually on its own among black revolutionary groups in the States, the League maintained a strong orientation towards workers at the point of production. It argued that real power and the best basis for organising blacks both lay in the factories.

The League ran candidates in local union elections, fought to get its members and supporters recognised as section (blue button) shop stewards, and argued for systematic organisation against the racist trade union bureaucracy. John Watson and other League leaders disagreed sharply with the Panther's orientation on the black lumpen proletariat and petty bourgeoisie—the permanent unemployment and shop-keepers of the black ghettos.

Yet two and a half years later the League split and effectively died. Why? Basically for two reasons (both missed out in this very interesting book). Firstly, because the building of revolutionary organisation in the factories in a non-revolutionary period is a long, hard task. Results are slow to come; patience, organisation, and determination are at a premium. Secondly, the League members' expectations were always being played up causing inevitable demoralisation and dissent when they couldn't be fulfilled.

Different experiences and styles, even different leaders might have been able to avoid this first problem. But they could do little about the second: the lack of revolutionary

Books

twelve packed
pages
of reviews

organisation and struggle amongst the white working class. Eventually the League split between those wishing to keep a 'working-class' orientation and those arguing a 'black nationalist' perspective.

Ultimately this argument arose out of the isolation of the advanced black workers in Detroit from the white majority of the class. The League's original perspective of a black-white class alliance was described by Watson:

'We feel that a revolutionary development takes place within the white proletariat, and as white workers begin to move to overthrow racism, capitalism, and imperialism, then principled alliances are possible . . . We have encouraged some of the smaller but more positive elements of the white left, some of whom are located in Detroit, to attempt to work with the white proletariat. So far, there have been only meager results'.

'Meager results' were not enough to sustain the class confidence of the revolutionary black workers around the League. Some were absorbed by the system; others tried to keep their confidence by returning to black nationalism; most just dropped out of political activity. If there was any single overriding factor which killed off the League it was the failure of the white Left in America to use the political upheaval of the 1960's to build towards the white working class.

Geschwender, the author of this important examination of the League, is a member of this white Left. So his lapse in analysis is predictable. His book would have been better with its original title (*But the Beat Goes On: An Analytic History of DRUM and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers*) and without its academic jargon; but it's still good. Much of it touches upon problems of union, workplace and black activity that are just as live for members of the SWP in Britain today as they were for members of the League in Detroit eight years ago.

The situation in Britain is very different. The situation in Britain is very different. There is virtually no black (West Indian) petty-bourgeoisie; the black lumpen-proletariat is minute compared to that in the US. Most blacks in Britain are not only black but are also black workers. (The clear divide in the US between a 'class' and a 'community' orientation and 'black power' is not (yet) in existence. The fact that West Indians constitute a

much lower proportion of the labour force in medium and large scale factories than in the US (the 20 per cent Afro-Caribbean workers at Ford, Dagenham, is an exception) also means that our problem in the factories is not how to build all black union movements, but how to build white and black rank and file groups.

Yet the League's short life is also a clear pointer to the possibility of creating a black political organisation which challenges oppression and exploitation. It has been done before and can be done again. In Britain, of course, on a smaller scale and in different circumstances. But it is possible to link the fight against racism to the fight against capitalism and to make that link understandable to black people

The early death of the League must, however, be seen as a powerful warning to the predominantly white SWP.

Even more true than in the States, the lesson is that whether black revolutionary organisation survives or not depends primarily on how white revolutionaries support it.

This support is in part determined by our attitude towards independent revolutionary black political organisation, black self-defence etc; but primarily it is given by the extent to which white revolutionaries combat racism in the white working class and make our contribution

by building a working class revolutionary party. Steve Jefferys



La Chambre Bleue, by Suzanne Valadon, who is usually referred to only as the mother of Utrillo

Hidden from Art History

Women Artists

Karen Peterson and J J Wilson
The Womens Press £3.95
A Bookmarx Club Choice

The authors of this book say that they do not set out to write as Art Historians but as feminists. In this detailed and widely researched book which begins at the 5th century and ends at the present day, they reach across continents from Europe to China, and bring to life the work of women artists that has been buried for decades and centuries under an ideology that has always oppressed

women, and consequent male chauvinism of the Art world.

This book is about women as they see themselves, their lives and their politics. Women who fought to assert their individuality and who tried to express their creativity other than in child bearing suffered harsh criticism, ridicule and often isolation. Many saw their defiance not just in pursuit of their art but as feminists.

In the wide range of artists that are covered in this book there are few that I have heard of. Even the artists that are known are often mentioned in

Art History in relation to men or as men see them. Suzanne Valadon (1867-1938) is mostly referred to as the mother of Utrillo, although her work (and I think this book illustrates) far superseded the work of her famous son.

Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) is usually included on the tail end of books or chapters on the Impressionists and then always referred to as the sister-in-law of Manet. Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945), who the book shows to be a woman who used her art to express her revolutionary politics, is often assessed by art

historians as a humanitarian or an artist with a social conscience in the most apolitical sense.



Kathe Kollwitz: anti-war poster 1924

Her drawings and prints, which were often made into posters, show the sufferings of the proletariat, but not just as a liberal onlooker. A member of the German Communist Party and friend of Rosa Luxemburg, she used her art as a means of protest and propaganda. When expelled from Germany by Hitler she refused to leave.

Alice Neel, who now at the age of seventy five is just being recognised, is often complimented by critics because 'she paints like a man'. Her reply to this is 'I always painted like a woman, but not like a woman is supposed to paint'. One of the few paintings of Berthe Morisot that is always overproduced in art books is called *The Cradle*, the male image of woman's role.

From the 5th century, where women artists were found to be in nunneries, often a place of refuge or dumping ground for political prisoners, battered wives, and women who wanted to escape from marriage, to the Renaissance where women artists were only seen as the daughters of famous fathers, through to the present day, this book explodes all the myths of women's inability to be original and creative in their own right.

Although some of the artists in this book created images of their role in society, as is only to be expected given the stifling oppression of their particular time in history, overall it shows the determination of women to create their own images.

In conclusion I would say that the front cover mirrors the contents. It is a painting by Suzanne Valadon of a woman lying in the classic pose of the nude depicted over centuries as the male image of woman. This lady however is wearing striped pyjama trousers, a vest, and has a fag in her mouth. It is the image of herself as she wants to be and she doesn't give a damn.
Ann Sullivan

Imprisoned in pages

Trotsky
Irving Howe
Fontana Modern Masters £1.25

Irving Howe begins his preface, 'This is a small book on a large subject'. Excellent! A much needed thing and exactly why many *Socialist Review* readers will feel eager to buy it.

He continues, 'I have written it for two reasons: first as an introduction to the life and thought of a major twentieth century figure, and second, as a political-intellectual criticism of his role in modern history and his commentaries upon it.'

Which, unfortunately, goes half-way to explaining why readers who do buy the book

are likely to be disappointed. In the very limited parts of the book where he does introduce Trotsky's life and thought, Howe is on the whole clear, honest and well informed.

But these parts are lost in the 'political-intellectual criticism', written (and well written) from the standpoint of a left-wing liberal. Not that the arguments of left-wing liberalism are unworthy of discussion. They have been and will continue to be discussed at length.

But in a 'short book' introducing the life and thought of Trotsky? The 'large subject' struggles to get out and (despite Howe's admiration) fails. *Pete Goodwin*

Refreshing the parts monopolies can't reach

Pulling a Fast One
Roger Protz
Pluto Press £1.20

East Sheen Tennis Club in 1936 was not a happy place, in retrospect. It was under the cover of this neat, unobtrusive Surrey backwater that a highly unpleasant potentially nauseant chemical was first experimentally unleashed on public guinea-pigs. And all in the interests of fostering monopoly capitalism and profits.

The spread of this insidious chemical, which offered both producers and retailers alike a convenient no-wastage, standardized synthetic replacement for the real thing, was slow at first. By 1959 in fact it still only constituted 1 per cent of total sales, and only 18 per cent by 1971. But by last year it had already gobbled up over 60 per cent of all sales.

That first blow by monopoly capitalism was struck—appropriately enough—by Grotneys (as Watneys is universally known among lovers of real ale). Since then good breweries making good beer have been swallowed nineteen to the dozen. Today the Big Six plus Guinness control 89 per cent of the industry.

Anyone familiar with the sensation of needles piercing the back of the throat, bubbles rising up the sinus, and that thin sickly-sweet film being drawn across the palate will have had the experience of keg 'beer'. As

Grotneys spent millions telling us, everywhere you go it's the same! And it certainly *does* reach parts of the body proper beers do not reach!

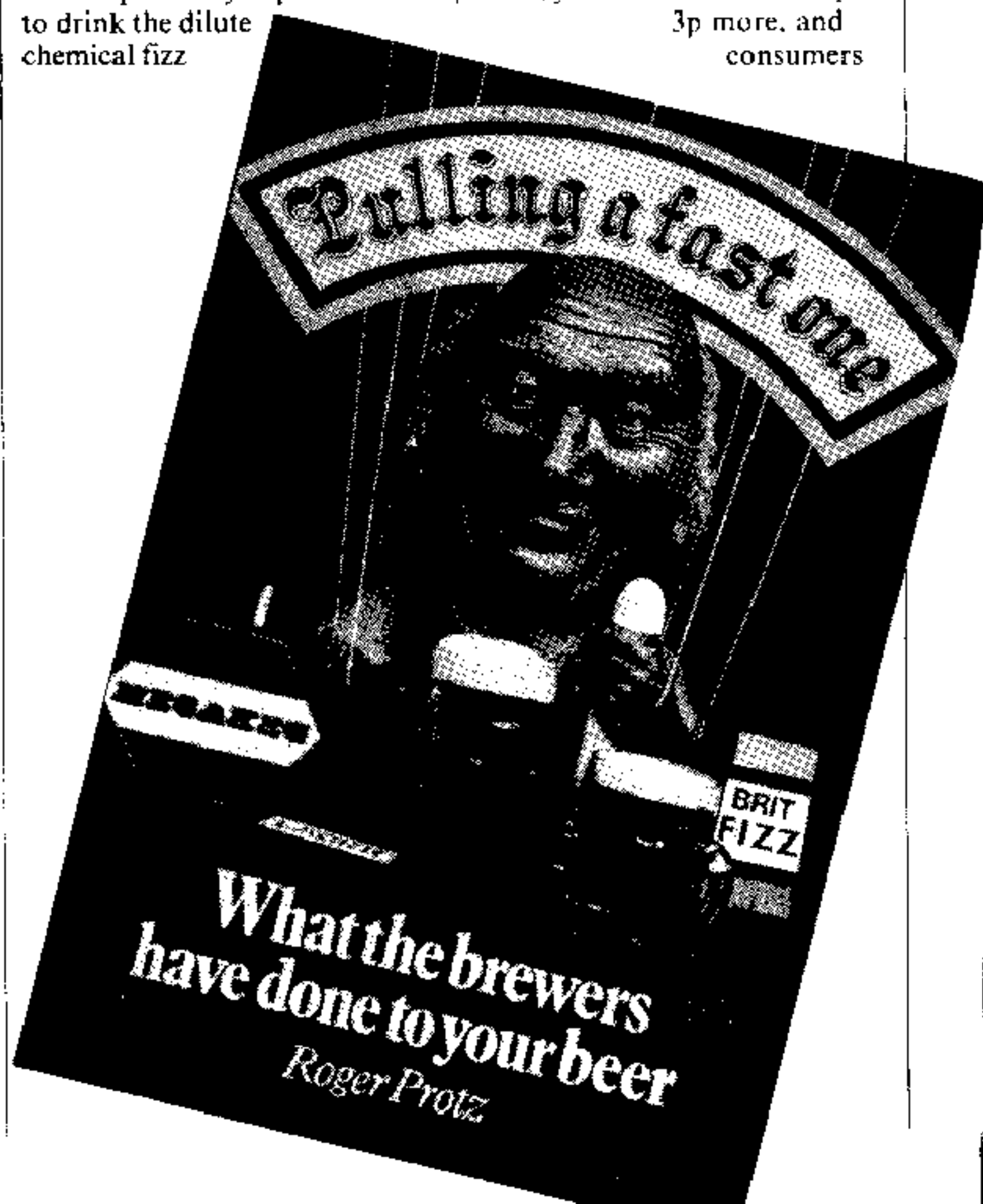
The myth that capitalism offers greater choice, that we the consumers decide what the market provides, meets its maker in the brewing industry. Last year it spent over £20 million primarily to persuade us to drink the dilute chemical fizz

known as keg. To help us make up our minds independently the alternative real ales have been systematically removed from pubs.

Then they tell us that keg beer sales have risen—so it proves we want it after all. Many younger beer drinkers have never even tasted real ale of course. The little, irrelevant fact that keg and lager profit margins are anything up to 50 per cent greater than on draught beer is just pure lucky coincidence.

The operations of the brewing industry are a kind of microcosm of monopoly capitalism as a whole. In 1977 the declared profits of the Big Six were over £300 million (and that was down on 1975-6!) The Price Commission complained in 1977 that despite these profits the breweries continually pushed up beer prices. The Big Six answered that between 1977 and 1980 they needed to invest £1000 million. But on those profits the breweries would have no problem in borrowing money to invest!

In fact it is precisely the lack of borrowing to invest that is keeping the recession going and unemployment so high. But monopoly capitalism prefers self-financing via price increases. And what is the £1000 million mostly going into? Lager (so-called) which the Price Commission discovered costs just over 1p a pint more to make and market than draught beer, yet costs wholesalers 2p or 3p more, and consumers



anything up to 6p more! So much for socially responsible monopolies.

Besides just controlling production the Big Six have also made strenuous efforts to control the pubs as well. 10 million of us each day keep 66,000 pubs in business. Over half of them are 'tied' by Bass Charrington, Allied Breweries, Watney Mann & Truman, Whitbread, Courage or Scottish & Newcastle.

And this is perhaps another pointer to the way monopoly capitalism wraps up the retail trade nowadays to guarantee the sale of brand products and put the squeeze on both suppliers and competitors.

These and many other details of this sorry saga are excellently related by Roger Protz in simple and clear language. If socialists ever need ammunition for the struggle against capitalism this little book is full of it. But it also has a message of hope. In 1972 a mixed crowd of boozers with their real love of real ale as the common bond started a fight back.

The Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) was formed. Within 4 years it had grown to 30,000 and established itself as the most effective consumer campaign yet seen in this country. If an army marches on its stomach, this one positively hopped along. By last year it had broken into something of a trot, as more and more real ale began reappearing in (mostly South Eastern) pubs. Roger Protz became editor of its publications.

Despite a nasty ideological dispute (over a pint of Trumans) CAMRA has survived still on its feet. It is a favourite, and possibly an easy, target of ridicule from some of the pure Left who see it as a bunch of middle-class beer bores. Maybe it is. But as a lover of good beer myself I am glad of its success.

The last chapter in Roger's book is perhaps the most questioning and will no doubt face the most criticism. Is it reformist to call for the break-up of the large monopoly breweries? Well, yes it is (and therefore it is hopelessly utopian). But to be fair Roger goes beyond this.

He makes the case for breweries to be run on municipal lines (such as the old Carlisle Brewery) or by co-operatives of workingmens (womens?) clubs. He could have gone further and related these ideas to the actual struggle for them. But that is something to argue about—over a pint of real ale. Roger, cheers. *John Ure*

"What I think Marx was trying to say . . ."

The Making of Marx's 'Capital'
Roman Rosdolsky
Pluto Press £18

Marx's 'Capital' and Capitalism Today Volume I
Anthony Cutler, Barry Hindess, Paul Hirst and Athar Hussain
RKP £3.25

Marx after Sraffa
Ian Steedman
NLB £7.25

Reading the proofs of Volume I of *Capital* Engels became worried that Marx was offering too many hostages to fortune—leaving apparent gaps in his argument on which 'the manufacturer and the vulgar economist' would eagerly seize as an excuse for rejecting the whole theory.

Marx replied: 'If I were to cut short all such doubts in advance I would spoil the whole method of dialectical exposition. On the contrary. This method has the advantage of constantly setting traps for those fellows which provoke them into untimely manifestation of their asininity'.

Unfortunately many of those who regard themselves as Marx's followers have fallen into the traps he set. Anthony Cutler and his collaborators



and Ian Steedman are only the most recent examples.

Both books are works of academic Marxists whose ideas have a current vogue among the intellectual right wing of the British Communist Party. Both claim to show, from a Marxist standpoint, that the labour theory of value, which was the foundation of Marx's economic theory, must be rejected.

Here the similarity between the two book ends. Steedman's book is an example of the sort of theorising that has been fashionable among left-wing academic economists for some years now. He reads Marx's *Capital* through the narrow grid

of modern mathematical economics. Anything in Marx that turns out not to fit is to be rejected.

The result is to turn *Capital* into a footnote to the works of David Ricardo. Hence the title—Piero Sraffa, the Cambridge economist who laid the basis for a marriage of Ricardo's ideas to modern mathematical techniques. The main casualty has been Marx's analysis of the laws of motion of capitalism.



Cutler and Co's book is a very different kettle of fish. Its theoretical framework is provided by the work of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, which has made a growing impact in left-wing intellectual circles of late. Much more ambitious than a mere discussion of Marx's economics, the book is a thoroughgoing attack on the theoretical foundations of classical Marxism.

In the course of the book such basic items of Marxist theory come under attack as not, only the labour theory of value, but also the idea that the economy exercises a determining role on social life and the treatment of politics as the representation of different class interests.

If all this is consigned to the rubbish dump, what is left of Marxism? One can understand the book's attraction for CP academics—since most of classical Marxism can be got rid of because it is 'economistic' they are now free to pursue their intellectual activities without the slightest twinge of guilty feeling that these have little or nothing to do with the class struggle.

The political conclusions of the book explicitly endorse gradualism of the sort espoused in the *British Road to Socialism*: 'socialist politics can no longer be conceived as necessarily oriented towards the one big push that finally knocks capitalism out of the way and

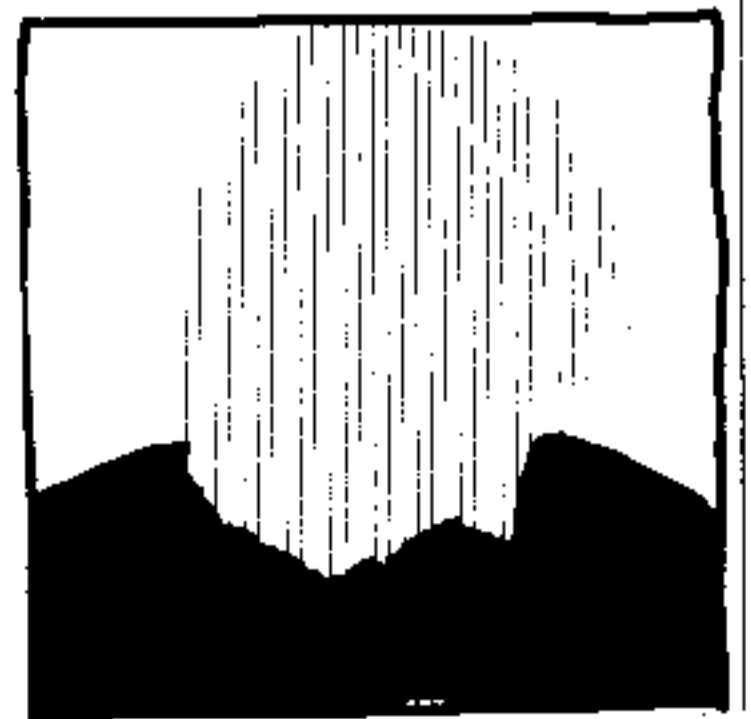
clear the ground for something else. This means that socialists should be concerned with expanding the areas of socialisation and democratisation in the social formation' etc., etc.,

Of course, one does not refute false theories simply by pointing out that they lead to lousy political positions. The arguments put forward by Cutler, Hindess, Hirst and Hussein are complex and highly sophisticated ones which merit serious discussion. I hope to be able to deal with them elsewhere at the length they deserve in the near future.

The fact remains, however, that their book, like Steedman's, involves a basic failure to understand the argument of Marx's *Capital*. The authors of both books would have benefitted from a study of Roman Rosdolsky commentary, which has become a modern Marxist classic since its publication in Germany in 1968.

The contrast between Rosdolsky on the one hand and Steedman, Cutler and Co on the other could not be more striking. Rosdolsky's story summarises the history of Marxism in the twentieth century. Born in 1898 in what is now part of the western Ukraine but was then in Galicia, Austrian-ruled Poland, Rosdolsky became a revolutionary during the first world war. After the Russian revolution he helped to found the Communist Party of the Western Ukraine, later merged with the Polish Communist Party.

A historian by profession, Rosdolsky moved to Vienna where he worked under the direction of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. However, at the end of the 1920s, he was expelled from the CP for opposing Stalin's growing domination over the international communist



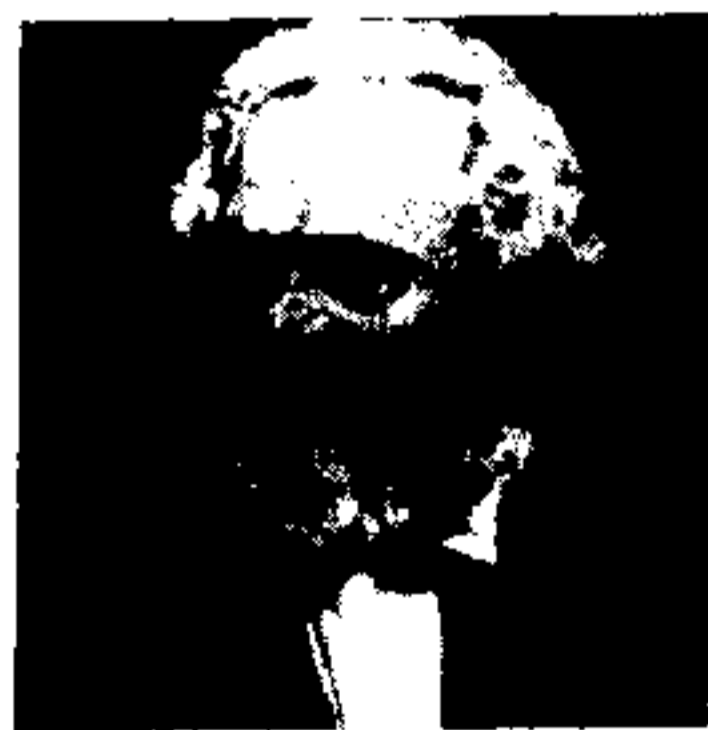
movement.

Rosdolsky, who had joined Trotsky's Left Opposition, fled to his home town of Lvov when the Dolfuss regime destroyed the Austrian workers' movement in 1934. After the Nazi conquest of Poland, he was arrested by the Gestapo and ended up in the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Ravensbruck and Orianenburg. Amazingly, he survived.

After the war Rosdolsky emigrated to the United States, settling in Detroit. It was in the US that he discovered one of the three or four copies then available in the West on the *Grundrisse*, the economic studies composed by Marx in 1857-8 which form the first rough draft of *Capital*.

Rosdolsky saw at once 'that this was a work which was of fundamental importance for Marxist theory'. He then set about writing *The Making of Marx's 'Capital'*, aware that 'the last generation of notable Marxist theoreticians for the most part fell victim to Hitler's and Stalin's terror' and 'in the hope that a new generation will follow for whom, once more, Marx's theory will be a living source both of knowledge and the political practice which this knowledge directs.'

It is a powerful image—this veteran revolutionary, a survivor of Auschwitz still denied an academic post in the America of 1950s because of his political sympathies, devoting a labour of love to the classical Marxism so despised by our latter-day Marxists, in Detroit, the heart of the greatest capitalist power in the world.



It was the same Detroit where, at much the same time, another old Trotskyist, CLR James, was holding Marxist study classes for black workers and students. The great black uprising in Detroit in 1967, the year of Rosdolsky's death, was an announcement of the fact that world capitalism was once again entering an era of crisis in which revolutionary theory could break out of the isolation to which it had been condemned and become, in Marx's words,

'a material force'.

It is impossible in the space of a short review to summarise even the main themes of Rosdolsky's rich and complex work. However, his book, with *Studies on Marx's Theory of Value* by I I Rubin, a Russian Marxist economist who perished during Stalin's purges, provide the basis for a clear understanding of Marx's *Capital*.

For example, Rosdolsky dissolves the famous 'contradiction' between Volumes I and III of *Capital*. It has worried many people including some Marxists, that in Volume I Marx assumes that commodities exchange at their values, which embody the amount of labour-time involved in their production, while in Volume III he shows that commodities exchange, not at their values, but at their prices of production.

Rosdolsky shows that the two volumes involve very different levels of analysis. In Volume I of *Capital* Marx is concerned with 'capital in general'—'an abstraction which grasps the specific characteristics which distinguish capital from all other forms of wealth—or modes in which (social) production develops' (*Grundrisse* p.449).

In other words, Volume I is devoted to showing what is distinctive to capitalism as a mode of production—the extraction of surplus value from workers who have nothing to sell but their labour-power. The assumption that commodities are exchanged at their values is essential to this analysis of capitalist production.

However, in Volume III Marx deals not with the general laws of capitalist production, but with the way in which these laws are enforced upon individual capitals. He calls this the sphere of competition—of 'many capitals' as opposed to 'capital in general'. Individual capitalists do not freely choose to extend the working day or introduce labour-saving machinery—they are forced to do so because otherwise they will be driven out of business by their competitors.

One effect of competition between 'many capitals' is that a general rate of profit is formed so that equal amounts of capital will receive the same amount of profit wherever they are employed. As a result commodities sell, not at their values, but at their prices of production, in which the existence of this general rate of profit is taken into account.

There is, therefore, no contradiction between Volumes I and III of *Capital*. They simply represent different levels of abstraction—those of 'capital in general' and 'many capitals' respectively. Failure to understand this point is common to most critics of Marx, including Cutler and Co and Steedman.

The distinction between 'capital in general' and 'many capitals' highlighted by Rosdolsky is essential to an understanding of modern capitalism. For it is more and more competition on a world scale that is enforcing the laws of capitalist production upon individual nations. Today the 'many capitals' are increasingly individual nation states and the competition is not merely commercial but military.

It is interesting to learn from the translators introduction to the French edition of his book, that towards the end of his life Rosdolsky rejected the orthodox Trotskyist idea that Russia is a 'degenerated workers state', arguing that the working class in the Soviet Union are exploited.

There are some criticisms

that one can make of Rosdolsky. He tends to quote from the *Grundrisse* at excessive length, making an already difficult book heavier going than it need be. More seriously, he seems to be a trifle too sympathetic to the idea, advanced by Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Henryk Grossman, of an inevitable economic breakdown of capitalism. Moreover, he points out at a number of points the undoubted influence that Hegel's *Logic* had on *Capital* without discussing the precise nature or significance of this influence.

But all these criticisms are mere quibbles compared to one chief complaint, and that must be aimed not at Rosdolsky, but at Pluto Press. Eighteen pounds, even when cut by a third on special offers, is a horrific price to charge for a book as important as Rosdolsky's. It places it out of the range of all but university lecturers and the like. Marxist theory, however, is too important to be left to the 'theoreticians'. Let's hope a paperback edition appears soon. *Alex Callinicos*.

Holding the reins

Stomping the Blues

Albert Murray.

Quartet (paperback) £2.50

Notes and Tones

Arthur Taylor.

Available from the author by mail order: 21, Quai des Ardennes, 4020 Liege, Belgium £10

The stranglehold that white business interests and notions of culture exert over innovations in Africa-American music has meant that only a small proportion of what is produced is actually allowed to reach the general public.

So, too, with the literature written by blacks about their music. The varied fortunes of these two books illustrate the point. Murray is a noted Harlem journalist and author who grew up during the period when the big bands led by people like Ellington, Basie and Luaceford dominated the music and inspired many white players who went on to greater fame and fortune. To gain the establishment's acceptance, Murray produced theories rather than history, musical or political analysis. The result is infuriating.

To Murray, the blues, (and by that he means 'jazz' as well) is 'good time music, played to exorcise despair'. The theory is not new, and by concentrating most of his energy on developing it, he refuses to acknowledge the possibility that the music has had any significance in terms of resistance. However, when Lightnin' Hopkins, the Texas guitarist, sings lines such as 'I would get my shotgun and I wouldn't be a slave no more' or 'The next time the Bossman hit me, I'm gonna give him a big surprise,' I would suggest there is more to the process than catharsis alone.

Murray drags in Baudelaire, Malraux, Uncle Tom Cobley and all, and wins white approval with his fancy prose and pontificating. His American publishers rewarded him by dressing up his often dubious theories with fascinating archive illustrations and lavish production.

Arthur Taylor on the other hand, is not a wheeler-dealer with the gift of the literary gab. He is 'just a drummer', albeit an exceptional one, who reasoned that he could make a better job than journalists did of interviewing his peers.

White critics and commentators have, after all, dominated the documentation of black music, often acting in collaboration with entrepreneurs as its self-appointed guardians. Who better equipped than a man who worked with giants such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Bud Powell to help reverse the balance? Not surprisingly, the material Taylor gathered was pretty radical in its implications. For six years he tried to find a publisher. In the end, he had to print the book himself, the factor accounting for its costliness.

The question of control dominates these conversations. Equal space is devoted to discussion of the way whites control—or try to control—the direction of the music, and the need for blacks to have charge of their own product. Kenny Clarke, the founder of modern jazz drumming, is, like Taylor, an American domiciled in Europe.

He makes the interesting observation that blacks actually controlled their music more in the 1920s and 1930s than they do today. Ornette Coleman describes the process whereby blacks are often permitted to know about their music only through whites: "They have to control what you do first, then they give it to you like Welfare." It is fascinating reading.

Of the 27 interviewees—four are women—drummer Max Roach and singer/pianist Nina Simone are the most self-consciously aware of the political nature of their stand. Others like the trumpeter Kenny Dorham deny such tendency or involvement, then go on to make shattering statements concerning the process the music has undergone in order to stay one stop ahead: "Our African roots



Ornette Coleman

underlay the historical evolution of our music, but the rest developed from our trials and tribulations on the plantation. And we're still on that plantation!"

Most of these interviews took place almost ten years ago but there is no better way than 'musician to musician' conversations to discover how such artists feel. If some of the opinions expressed are a little dated, it is necessary to understand how the analysis of the role politics play in music has developed in the black musicians community.

Walking in the gutter

Keep the Home Fires Burning
Cate Haste
Allen Lane £7.50.

This is a book about propaganda in England during the First World War. It shows very clearly how the government for the first time intervened to 'create and direct public opinion'. They made a weapon which they pretended not to possess but were to use time and again. The pressure of public opinion.

This book describes how the government established a Ministry to deal with and vet the news. Much was censored or played down; not in the cause of accuracy. There was no censorship of highly coloured atrocity stories, that, despite large rewards, could never be substantiated. They were allowed through to increase the padding around the cardboard figure of the 'Hun'.

It was a war in pursuit of imperial trade: so to ensure that the working class accepted war conditions—enlistment, discipline, deprivation, restriction, and conscription—it had to become a just war. The 'Hun' became the incarnation of beastliness, raping and destroying wherever he went (for there were, in this comic-strip world, apparently very few German women; God, women and children being mainly on the allied side). The war was being fought against the whole German race who were different from others, no longer people. As this book shows, few soldiers could recognise this caricature of the enemy who, left lying dead in the trenches, looked very much like them, but did help to create support at home for a war which needed justification.

One nasty by-product of the racialism of war boosting was the campaign against aliens that is, foreigners who could not

Previously the 'Keep politics out of it' line was the norm—indeed political analysis was regarded as a white idea. However, in the years following the emergence of Malcolm X, young players informed by socialist ideals as well as the notion of cultural nationalism have exerted considerable influence on older generations. Now there remain few African-American musicians untouched by what they have to say.

Despite the gap between what is said here and what these players could safely be assumed to be saying today, all express

change their name to Windsor. The swindler Horatio Bottomley and the newspaper baron Lord Northcliffe were most involved in it. The campaign they led was for deportations; as a result German waiters lost jobs and Jewish businessmen were forced to close down.

The government was able to 'yield to public opinion' and use aliens as a scapegoat in one easy movement—they interned them in concentration camps where conditions were worse than in German prisoner of war camps. These jingos also incited crowds to attack 'alien' shops as many did when the Lusitania was sunk in 1916.

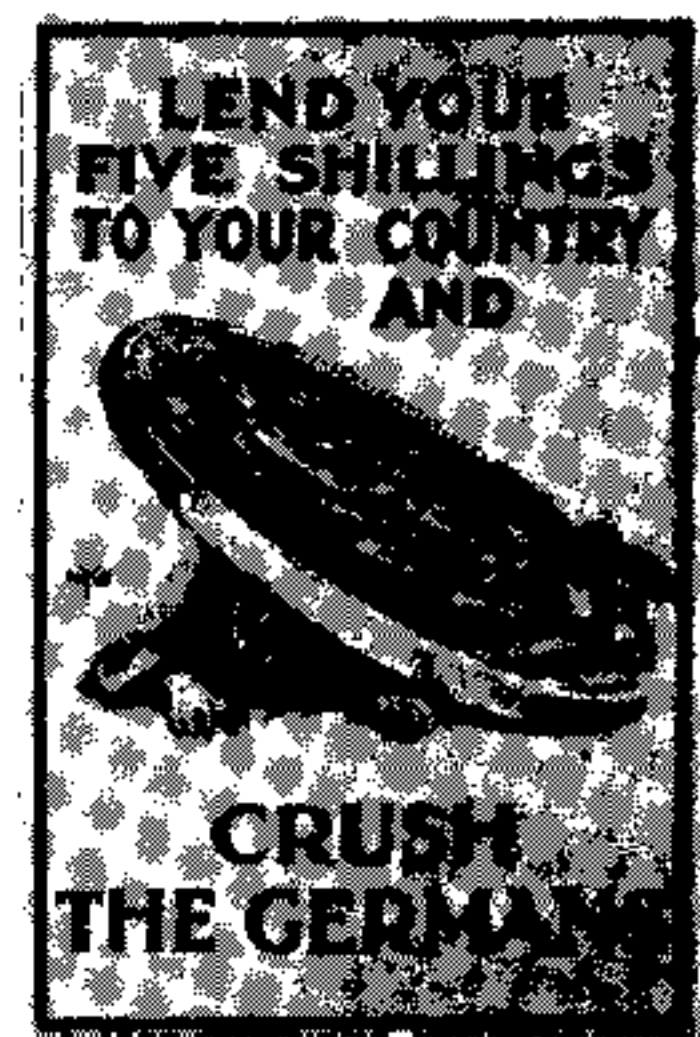
It's a familiar picture, made all the more powerful by the visual material the author's included. The war artists that worked on posters and newspapers were far more effective than many who wrote long articles on the 'spy menace'. Pick up a copy of any war comic and you will see the same images still in use.

However, what is lacking in the book is any sustained analysis of, for example, the effect of the press campaigns, then and later, and also, the balance of forces they represented. The book is too bland, too much like a series of notecards to make the pictures very clear.

There's one big omission—no mention of Ireland, of great interest to the people she talks about.

It is a book worth getting for the library, mainly for the pictures. Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Home Front* gives a much better picture of what the home front really felt like but it's sadly out of print and only in a few libraries. Pankhurst drew conclusions that are much more relevant to us than this contemporary account although she wrote 50 years

their awareness of a continuing African tradition in their work. They say they have no wish to deny access to their music to people from other cultural backgrounds, providing the source of their inspiration is acknowledged. And above all, while discussing the way that the superficial direction of the music is still dictated by outsiders, they make it very clear that blacks, as always, hold the reins. Val Wilmer



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THESE WOMEN ARE DOING THEIR BIT



ago. However, Cate Haste provides valuable insights on the role of the press and 'public opinion'. Deborah Thom

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Dialogue of change

Femininity as Alienation
Women and the Family in
Marxism and Psycho-analysis
Ann Foreman
Pluto Press £2.40

This book attempts to cover an immense terrain in only 160 pages. It discusses ideas about women's emancipation from Wollstonecraft, Mill, Engels, Bebel, Kollontai to De Beauvoir. It provides an historical survey of the position of women in the family from the beginnings of the industrial revolution to the present day.

The relationship between liberalism, Marxism, Freudianism and Existentialism is examined. Finally, she discusses the women's movement in its bourgeois and working class forms; the influence of women writers on the self-realisation of women; the contribution of the women's movement to the theory and practice of the Left in Britain — all of these topics and others in a clear unjargonised style and that's quite an achievement in synthesis particularly in these days of High Theory in the Marxist Academy.

Inevitably there's a lot to disagree with but I do not want to give the impression that I think there is a correct 'line' on feminism from which Ann Foreman has deviated. In an area where we are still struggling with complicated problems, it seems more useful to open up a dialogue than try to disprove points.

She begins her argument with a discussion of why radical thought in the 19th century did not concern itself with women's emancipation and she claims that this was a result of the separation of the public sphere where the state could legitimately interfere, from the private sphere of the family which was considered man's personal responsibility.

But the problem goes much deeper than Ann Foreman here implies. In fact, man's private sphere was subject to an enormous structure of legal, political, social and ideological restrictions whose main effect was to keep women totally confined to the family and under the complete domination of men. Radical thinkers, with few exceptions, could extend their ideas of freedom to slaves or the working class, but to have included women was literally unthinkable.

It took a hundred years of effort by women in education, in reform of the marriage laws, in opening up the professions, in organising for the suffrage, in demanding work outside the home, in breaking down notions of gentility and biological inferiority — before ideas of equality came to be seen as applying to them. And in this sense, 'bourgeois feminism' was much more important than Freud's discoveries, which Ann Foreman claims broke up this rigid separation of the personal and the public.

The importance of Freud, according to Ann Foreman, is that his discovery of the unconscious and his insistence on the centrality of sexuality in all spheres of life, threw doubt on the rationalist, evolutionary, progressive belief in man's continuing enlightenment thus allowing ideas of repression, of gender acquisition and of individual motivation to be openly discussed. Her synthesis of Marx and Freud leads her to the following position.

'In summary, the patterning of the intimate relations of men and women is a vital element in completing the marxist theory of the development of human consciousness. The changes in their form determine whether human beings experience themselves spontaneously as in primitive society; or whether a level of reality is excluded from conscious thought as in capitalist society; or whether men and women are able to experience themselves consciously through all their relations as in a future communist society'.

This seems to me to be a form of evolutionary utopianism as well as avoiding the real problems about Freud and Marx which recent feminist critiques have raised. Quite apart from the difficulties I have in imagining a future society in which all human beings would behave consciously and rationally, I do think Ann Foreman has ignored how the transition from one kind of society to another is accomplished.

I do not think it is possible to avoid taking seriously the work that has been done on language, its relation to psychological structures and the acquisition of masculinity and femininity. This work is being produced by feminists in many areas and is mainly influenced by Althusser and Lacan. Although I am not

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yet convinced of its usefulness, I don't think it can be left out as this book tries to do.

I suppose by implication I am saying that I would have liked a lot more historical analysis and less history of ideas. I don't think you get rid of the ideas which Juliet Mitchell's book dealt with by a swift paragraph condemning her for biologism.

She wrote the book in a particular context of the late 1960s antagonism to Freud as it was being used particularly in America and what she tried to do was to question the voluntarism of the women's movement at that time and ask more awkward questions about how we enter the world as sexed human beings, how we understand that and how we could change it — and that it not as easily dealt with as Ann Foreman claims.

Nor do I find the formula 'Capitalism is reification, femininity is alienation, therefore both must be abolished under communism' very helpful. Is femininity any more alienating than masculinity under patriarchal capitalist systems? Can we demand 'polymorphous sexuality' without asking questions about the socialisation of children in our future society as well as talking about a new concept of ethics between people in their intimate relations?

Ann Foreman is rightly uncompromising in her criticism of the organised Left for failing to take seriously the proposition that at least half the working class is and always has been female. No-one can read Marx's political writings, or indeed any subsequent Marxist thinker with a few notable exceptions, without being aware of how implicitly male the audience is.

This includes contemporary marxist works — Perry Anderson, in his *Considerations of Western Marxism*, published by New Left Books in 1976, contains no reference at all to the women's movement although students and blacks and Northern Ireland all get attention; or see, since I am writing this for *Socialist Review*, Tony Cliff's articles and books. Could this have something to do with the Leninist tradition? or further back?

As Ann Foreman says: 'By failing to consider personal interaction a political question, the forms of organisation and discussion that the left groups adopted both internally and in the campaigns that they initiated prevented the full

participation of women. The aggressive and often destructive approach of men to political debate reflects their traditional ability to distance themselves from their political practice... Unlike women their involvement in politics has not required them to question their very individuality'.

And she goes on to argue that women should set up caucuses in all areas of political life so that 'perhaps gradually small workshop discussions, a feature of the women's movement which allows the individual to contribute and recognises the validity of his or her personal experience could replace more formal types of debate'. But the women's movement and the socialist feminists within it are challenging the Left in a much more fundamental way than Ann Foreman is here suggesting.

It is not just about the style of socialist politics and its alienating effects on women (and not just women either) but it is also about the different traditions of socialism. Some parts of the tradition going right back to the early 19th century did take women and sexual politics seriously; they were often short lived but cropped up again and again despite the fact that they were often branded as Utopian and therefore as ineffective for winning state power.

Feminist historians are beginning to look again at these groups and are trying to analyse why working class women seem to have drawn back from full participation in working class organisation at certain periods, as well as asking what difference does it make to Marx's analysis of capitalism if the sexual division of labour is seen as

fundamental as class struggle.

We need to know a lot more about the Social Democratic tradition before 1914 and its relationship to bourgeois feminism and we need to take a long look at Leninist theories of the Party and the State and the consequences for political organisation on the Left.

In particular I would like to know why the Left failed to respond to the women's movement in the early 1970s attacking us as bourgeois feminists even though many male political activists knew many of us well and knew that we had spent many years alongside them in political groups. But obviously things today are beginning to change. *Jean McCrindle.*

But who is to control it?

Who owns Scotland
John McEwen
ESURB £1.50.

The bulk of *Who Owns Scotland* by 90-year-old former forestry worker John McEwen is a county-by-county breakdown of the highly concentrated nature of landownership in Scotland, with the predominance of a small number of vast estates owned by a few immensely rich people — with names like Vestey, Cowdray and Wills. The largest holdings — 277,000 acres (Duke of Buccleuch), 158,000 acres (Countess of

Sutherland — whose ancestors' sport was substituting sheep for people in the Highlands) seem relics of a bygone class structure.

McEwen's main indictment is of the waste of resources caused by inefficient farming and forestry, and above all by the vast tracts of land kept idle for the hunting pursuits of the richer sections of the English and Scottish bourgeoisie. But McEwen sees land ownership as a separate problem from capitalist ownership in general, and looks, somewhat ludicrously to a Labour

Government for a radical solution. While the SNP calls for a break up of the large estates and for the land to be used by small and middling farmers, John McEwen wants a Royal Commission, a register of land use, and eventually, nationalisation to improve efficiency (but nothing about who is to control the land).

Despite these conclusions, the book is useful to socialists as a work of reference on the inequality and waste perpetuated by the present form of landownership in Scotland. *Howard Wolman*

more books on page 28!

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Heroes Coming home

For an industry that has created so many of the standard images of war and made vast profits from these images, Hollywood has been extremely reluctant to make films about Vietnam. Early in the days of American involvement there was a John Wayne vehicle *The Green Beret*, which took a predictably imperialist line. Wayne was the 'sheriff' facing up to the savagery of the outlaws/Red Indians of Vietnam.

But as the war continued Hollywood seemed to pretend that it did not exist. As the NLF moved on to the offensive and the influx of GIs increased the war began to have a profound effect on American society, and the mass movement against the war was born. But apart from Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*, which looked at Chicago during the Democratic convention of 1968, and the award winning documentary 'Hearts and Minds' Vietnam disappeared off the screens. Could it be that the world's biggest movie industry had nothing to say about one of the most significant anti-imperialist struggles of the century?

Twenty years after Joe McCarthy's with hunt, Hollywood was paralysed into a passive neutrality.

But now that the war is over, Johnson is dead, Nixon is disgraced and Carter is rumoured not even to know where Vietnam is, the time is ripe for reappraisals. A number of films currently on release make references to Vietnam in such a way that suggest that it is becoming obligatory or even chic to do so. Two films which are largely concerned with the impact of Vietnam have been released in London recently and both can soon expect national distribution.

Heroes is very much a formula movie. While there is nothing inherently wrong with formula movies they do need something special to make them distinguishable from all the other formula movies. And Vietnam is used as a gimmick in this case. Otherwise, it follows the set pattern of taking a male star—Richard Winkler, better known as the Fonz—who is searching for some Utopian solution by travelling West to California.

His search is fruitless but he finds himself through the love of a good woman. One of her lines runs—'Please don't be crazy, Jack . . . you don't need anybody but you . . . and you



Vietnam veterans (above) as Hollywood images and (below) in reality as anti-war demonstrators

have me'. The aftermath of Vietnam will be contained and resolved within a new nuclear family unit. The references to the war are almost totally superficial and the contradictions between his involvement in the war as a soldier and her involvement in the peace movement are never explored at all. You'd probably learn as much about Vietnam from reading the *Dandy* as you would be seeing *Heroes*.

Coming home is something else. It too is a formula movie but of a more subtle sort. It has three big stars, Jane Fonda, Jon Voight and Bruce Dern, two of whom are likely to find themselves through true love. Contemporaneous music by Dylan and the Stones is used as a background, but it does concern itself with the impact of the war on the lives of these individuals. Through their experience, we can perceive the beginnings of the change of consciousness that shook USA in the late 1960's.

Sally (Jane Fonda) is married to Bob (Bruce Dern), an unquestioningly patriotic Marine captain who goes off to Vietnam. In his absence, she becomes a voluntary Hospital worker and meets Luke (Jon Voight), an old school mate who has been made paraplegic by the war. Sally and Luke fall in love of course. Bob is soured by the war, especially when he is invalidated out after shooting himself in the foot. His sense of rejection and bitterness increases when he discovers that his wife and her lover have been under FBI surveillance. Sometimes Hollywood is so obsessed by its won stereotyping process that it makes its good characters totally good and the bad characters totally bad.

But despite these elements of corny sentimentality, the film

does show these individuals in the process of being changed by the war in such a way that we can relate to them. Luke's anger develops from being a frightening, uncontrollable force into an articulate statement of the folly of the American involvement in Vietnam. He chains himself to the gates of a military base in protest against the war and addresses meetings of school students as a counter to the official propaganda about the Marines.

Sally is transformed from an eager-to-please conventional army wife to an independent woman, angry at both what she finds in the veterans' hospital and at the indifference of the other army wives to the veterans' problems.

The film is in the best liberal tradition of Hollywood and, as such takes a position only on the individual characters and no more. Within that context, it is excellent. The fact that Bob, Sally and Luke are such ordinary, everyday Americans gives the portrayal of the upheaval of their lives a particular value. For it was from people like Luke and Sally that the anti-war movement grew. See it. *Bob Cant.*



Photo: LNS Women's Graphics Collective

Looking for Mr Goodbar

Diane Keaton is crippled, physically, by a spine disease, mentally by the conflict between the face of puritanism, represented by her highly Catholic father (it's a life of contradiction) and the sexual freedom of her sister. Hollywood is telling us that liberation leads to decadence, repression leads to rebellion, leaving not much room for an answer.

Ms Keaton represents the conflict. She is at once a teacher of the deaf and a sexually free woman who descends into the world of late night bars. We have our black man. Surprise surprise, he's bald and a pusher. He speaks only to utter 'man' and 'babe'.

Diane's sister, well she beds the rich. Two things about this. How does a Catholic from (to pick a cliché) the wrong side of the fence marry a right sider? Needless to say the crossing of the fence is never shown.

Why do so many 'meaningful' films spend so much time in bed? It sells, sex that is. The film is practically made in bedrooms, very commercial. The sex involves no love, just wars sex wars the conflicts of society come out in bed, no where else. Sexist stuff: when a woman says 'no' she means 'yes'. She enjoys semi-rape. She has no control.

When a liberal Hollywood film attacks liberals, it does it in the most liberal ways. The welfare man is shown stopping the welfare for the poor black mother of a child Diane teaches. Diane gets cute, and angry. What do you know, not only is welfare restored but the child who's learning had been held up by lack of a hearing aid, gets one on welfare. Didn't know it was so easy. The welfare man falls in love with the heroine (it is the movies!). The film has a way out cocaine. One of the 'lovers' persuades our heroine to sniff, 'sniff this, it'll make your country great'—that if your brain survives to enjoy it. Rather temporary.

How does it end? Interesting this, the ultimate cop out. Diane is killed by a gay with guilt feelings, he didn't make it with her, couldn't take his gayness.

Yes a puritan film, looking at puritanism and its effects is rather like the police investigating allegations of police brutality. It comes to no conclusion, except the old Hollywood moral: 'If you live by the gun you will die by the gun'. *Adam Kidron*

David Edgar's thesis — that the dominant forms in which drama conveying the dominant ideology, is cast, propels socialist writers along the path of seeking forms, which clearly differentiate themselves from the dominant ones — is a useful introduction to a much-needed debate being opened up, regarding the style and aesthetic that socialist writers adopt.

For too long, style has been thought of as a matter of a writer's personal idiosyncrasy: a mannerism or quirk peculiar to the individual in question. Edward Bond had his clipped speech, Harold Pinter his pauses, Peter Weiss his spare poetic couplets, and so on. And for each new vogue writer, discovered by the bourgeois fame-machine, there would be a host of imitators. Style was perceived as being subject to fashion, and the marketability of a play dependent on meeting what was fashionable.

To kick off the debate, I would like to offer a few self-critical comments on some plays I have written. Believing the personal to be political, I don't see this as an introverted activity: I hope that a description of the pressures to break with a realistic mode, felt by one individual engaged in writing plays, might spark a discussion with others engaged in the same process, from which some useful general conclusions might emerge.

What seems to be wrong with writing in a realist mode?

(1) The conditions of performance act against it:-

It feels a very flabby, un-economic use of stage time, to have to spend time 'establishing a character', then developing it, then 'rounding it off satisfactorily'.

Most socialist theatre groups play in venues, where to go on for more than an hour risks boredom and walkout. For a public meeting, 20 minutes is a limit, for street theatre ten. Working class audiences aren't in the habit of sitting through five acts, with two intervals. Brevity requires cutting out the flab.

Most of my plays have an Odyssey-type structure, in which one or two central characters, who may acquire and lose companions, interact with a succession of incidents, on their path through life. The incidents are peopled by a large number of incidental characters who only appear one. Working

DOWN WITH ILLUSION!

BRUCE BIRCHALL



with small casts, usually this means, some performers appear in five or six small 'hat-change' parts, while one or two performers have 'through-characters', and no other parts.

The fact of the small cast, the fact of a performer being seen in five or six parts, with little time or facilities to change costume, pushes the writing in the direction of a stylised non-illusionist mode.

As compared to the bourgeois theatre building where actors slip in and out of the stage door, in a dark back alley, unnoticed by the audience who are segregated from them, by the pomp and glare of the brightly lit foyer-entrances, what usually happens in a working-class venue, is that the whole of the theatre group are seen carrying in their props and set, and are often given a hand by members of the audience.

This means the audience see members of the theatre group 'out of character': as themselves, and doing work.

This has immediate implications for the possibility of illusionist kinds of theatre having any chance of working, in a working-class venue. It is very difficult to 'suspend your disbelief' and imagine the actor really IS the part he or she is portraying, when you have seen them sweating upstairs with the PA system ten minutes before, or they've just asked you where the bog is — in a rather different voice and accent from the one they are now using in the performance.

Having some notion of the actor as a real person necessarily mediates the way an audience sees the character portrayed. It pushes the writing in the direction of the Brechtian idea of admitting that a part is being portrayed, and that the actor is a separate person with their own view of the behaviour of the character being demonstrated. The illusionist theatre can only thrive, where the actor is anonymous, or so famous that only an image of the real person is known to an audience. If you can get close enough to know they sweat, or have bad teeth, the illusion is much harder to sustain.

(2) It wastes time getting to the point:-

An example of the clumsy and artificial flab of realist theatre, is in the way information an audience needs to know is conveyed: it has to be woven

in to a 'credible' conversation. But in a stylised theatre: one

(from 'Heroes Fit For Homes, a play or pensioners')

DOWN WITH ILLUSION!



1st official: (oozing enthusiasm)

Hello. I am a junior official from the DHSS, and I am here to try and help people.

2nd official: (oozing disapproval)

I am a senior official from the DHSS and I am here to safeguard the public purse from scroungers and parasites.

1st official:

There's an awful lot of people who don't realise they're entitled to get benefits from us, and I'm going to tell them how to get them!

2nd official:

There's an awful lot of people who get benefits they don't deserve and I'm going to stop them! and the best way to stop them is: not to let them know what they're entitled to in the first place!

Enter a claimant

*1st official:*hello! you've come for supplementary benefit?

*2nd official:*well you're on the wrong floor

*1st official:*sit down, make yourself comfortable

*2nd official:*you're going to be here at least two hours...

The characters introduce themselves and their motivations. Their contrasting attitudes are emphasised by the similar phrasing of their equally-weighted speeches. They don't have names, we aren't interested in details of their home life. Yet there is a clear humorous relationship set up at once: the senior official is going to have to restrain the generosity of the junior one, to the claimants, and hide information away, that the junior will want to display, and hush her up from saying too much.

Yet basically they aren't characters, they are ideologies, the junior official is the helping hand of the Welfare State, the safety net beloved of Beveridge. The senior official is state attitudes to the unemployed, as conveyed through the media. They are respectively how the DHSS is supposed to work, and how it does actually work in practice.

The claimant experiences the contradictions between the officials; between what your rights to benefit are, and what you are told they are.

I arrived at these characters, by clarifying the political points to be made: about the Social Security system, deciding that the most obviously recognisable aspect to an audience is that DHSS offices are usually unhelpful and unfriendly places, and conceived of the hopefully amusing idea of a scene where you were plied with tea and sympathy in a DHSS office, by incredibly helpful staff: it would be amusing because everyone in the audience would recognise that life is exactly the opposite, it never would happen like that.

Then the idea of a double-act of how it isn't, and how it is, both going on at once, occurred to me, and the characters that would be useful to the point that was to be made, were able to be found. A realist play would start with characters, and work out what they would do, afterwards, once established.



Bauhaus symbolist theatre of Oskar Schlemmer

(3) The demands of credibility, 'It wouldn't happen like that', prove to be anti-imaginative.

In trying to write a realist scene, I find myself constantly nervously checking up whether X 'really would speak like that'. I feel bound by the presence of demands of verisimilitude — surface truth, rather than the truth of the relationships which are being dramatised.

Writing socialist plays, one is almost always going to have a character who has political consciousness and insight, communicating this insight to others, to help make sense of their experience. Dramatising such scenes convincingly, is often difficult.

A realist play will have its conscious character try and slip into the conversation a line like:

'I was reading a book the other day, by a man called Marx, and what he said was....' and a three-page political lecture will be punctuated by the occasional 'oh, really?' and 'I don't quite see how...' from the passive less-conscious characters, who simply exist to cue a further burst of insight/message.

What is going on here, is that the political point which is to be made, is simply being made. Much as it was made in the early stages of discussing what the play should say. It hasn't progressed any further. Being freed from the requirement to sound sincere and authentic, allows the writer to use her or his imagination to find a better way of making the same point, more convincingly.

One of the problems of trying to build pays up from improvisations, is that actors sometimes want the eventual script to sound like their early improvisations. Improvisations are naturalistic, and 90 per cent of it padding, not useful to the final script. Writing could perhaps be defined as the art of pruning, throwing away, selecting the essential from the dross.

In rejecting realism, what forms

do you reach out for, and why?

This question should be asked of several writers. Three forms I use quite often, are declamatory verse, counterpoint and what I have called magnified realism. I shall describe them first, and then try and analyse what I find apt, and useful, about them.

(a) Declamatory verse:-

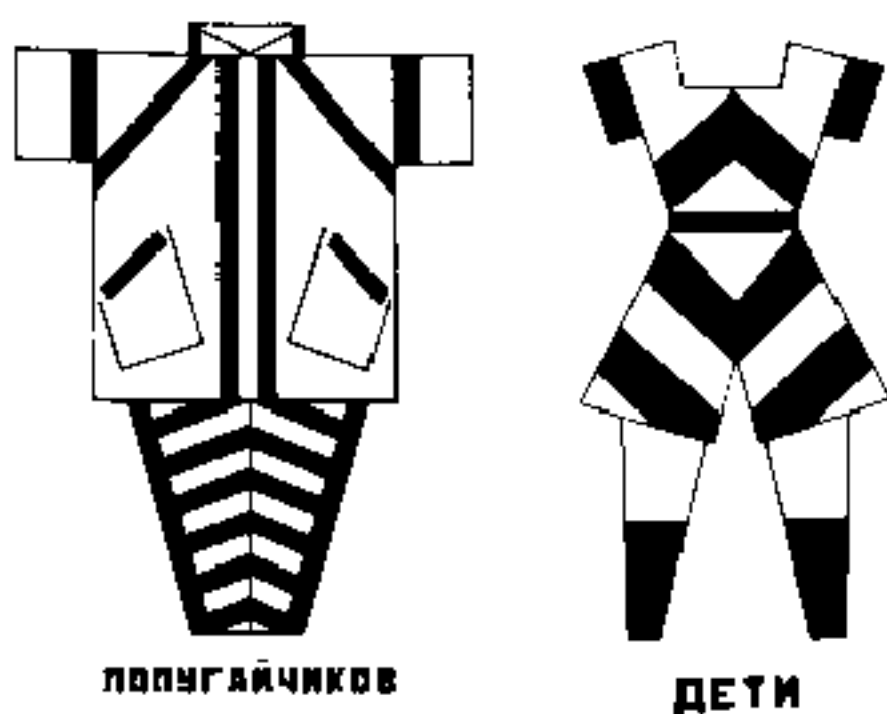
Verse plays have virtually disappeared, since the 1930s, so I only tend to use snatches of verse, at most twenty lines at a time. It seems to offer the opportunity for a character to crystallise their basic outlook. Sometimes, it is sung: e.g. in 'Work Kills', a musical about health & safety at work, a judge about to hear a claim for compensation for an industrial injury, strides on, and declaims:-

'Judge: now I'm a high court judge don't you know you will be beaten? for I learnt which side I'm on the playing fields of Eton!...

Sometimes I use it to highlight my criticisms of a characters aspirations:- e.g. in 'Geordie and the Dragon', a pantomime, I had the youthful protagonist (hung up on small-boy hero myths) declare:

'Geordie: 'I'll sail across the seven seas and hunt the dragon where'er I please I'll slay the beast with my sword and get the Duke of Edinburgh's award'

The inflated style being used to deflate the character...



Constructionist costumes

(b) Magnified realism:-

One of my major objections to realism, is the way it narrows down meaning to the highly specific. Because locale and setting have to be made specific, the audience tends not to make any connection between the situation dramatised, and other similar situations, where similar relationships exist.

I would like to encourage such freedom of association amongst an audience, and I feel I have to make my meaning less specific to encourage it.

E.g. in *Panda Mo Ni Um Moves On*, a children's play about a socialist Paddington Bear, a Panda called Mo Ni Um, come to Britain on her holidays... The Panda, a truant schoolgirl, and a youth drifting from one job to another, all get put away, in an institution known as the Silly House, whose warden is an apparently kindly man called Mr. Sensible.

I don't specify that this is a Community Home, or a Lunatic Asylum. I don't want kids to go away thinking 'that was a play about a Lunatic Asylum'. By being neither, but being a Silly House, it can be both, and stand for all institutions where people are locked up for being different, by a society that defines them as deviant.

The mechanism whereby you get put away one is called 'silly' three times, and then they lock you up — is pure fantasy. But it is more powerfully suggestive, particularly when the characters start to internalise their label, and believe they really are silly, and ask Mr. Sensible whether they will ever be sensible again... than an equivalent highly specific realist play would be, consumed in details about particular sections of particular Mental Health Acts.

My interest was in linking how outsiders, itinerants, rebels, people who ask questions, and people whose lifestyle differs from the majority get treated by the 'normals' and persons in authority. My interest was in the link between similar processes, not in the detail of one particular process.

And so, I had to devise a form that helped dramatise what I was interested in. And I dubbed it 'Magnified Realism'. I gather, though I've not seen the film, that there is a place known as The House That Drives You Mad, which stands for all bureaucratic institutions run on paperwork, in the latest Asterix film. An image from the same stock.

(c) Counterpoint:-

Perhaps its clearest why this technique is useful. It enables contradictions to be stated in simple graphic terms, by selecting opposites for how they mutually contrast: e.g. in a World War I sequence from *Heroes Fit For Homes*: women are singing softly (to the tune of 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone?') whilst Lloyd George is on a soapbox, encouraging the soldiers at the front, who mime war actions front stage:-

'Women (singing): What happened to those promises?
long since broken

Lloyd George: a land flowing with milk and honey

Women: (resuming song): remember all those promises
long time ago?

Lloyd George: homes fit for heroes
to return to ...'

Each holds their pose, while the other speaks or sings — the effect of breaking the normally continuous song into single lines, like this, is to make you listen to what the words, to a familiar tune, are saying.

The song is used to undermine the politicians's hollowness, in a way that a long speech in a realist play could never do: the actor would have to make Lloyd George give himself away, whereas, using counterpoint, the total statement coming from the stage, clarifies our attitude to each of the parts. Realism would give us the parts in linear order, not in simultaneous contrast, and make the connections more laboured, via a slower exposition.

Down with illusionism!



The storming of the Winter Palace' re-enacted in 1920 with 6,000 participants, watched by over 100,000.

Craven and/or sinister

Soviet Writers' Congress 1934
Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek,
Nikolai Bukharin, Andrey
Zhdanov and others
Lawrence and Wishart
£2.75

This volume of speeches delivered at the Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934 is simultaneously a useful and a deeply disgraceful book.

Useful because it was at that Congress that Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, unveiled the theory of socialist realism that has clogged Soviet literature ever since. His crucial address to the delegates is here in full. So too is 'Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR', an intriguing paper by Bukharin which ranges from an analysis of the language of poetry through a powerful assessment of Mayakovsky and others to end with a moving call for a communism that 'aims at an infinitely diversified development of human wants' including, among other things, a 'new erotics'.

So, for these documents, much thanks. But the book is nonetheless a disgrace. Why? Because it is a facsimile reprint of a 1935 edition of the main Congress speeches with no added notes, commentary or introduction of any kind. The only new material is an ambiguous piece of blurb on the back cover that tells us that the Congress marked 'the culmination of one of the richest periods of Soviet literary production' and 'summed up

and closed this first momentous epoch'.

Culmination and close it certainly was. The Congress was held in August 1934, the month in which Stalin seems to have decided on the murder of Kirov, First Secretary of the Leningrad Party. That murder was carried out four months later and before the end of the year the arrests and executions had begun. Stalin's massive purge was underway.

There were five main speakers at the 1934 Writers' Congress and their words make up this volume: Zhdanov, Gorky, Radek, Bukharin and Stetsky. Gorky was the first to go, poisoned in June 1936 almost certainly on Stalin's orders. Radek was next, arrested in September 1936, sentenced to an Arctic labour camp in 1937 and murdered there two years later. Bukharin followed, arrested in February 1937, tried and shot in March 1938. Stetsky too was arrested in 1937 and later shot.

Only the appalling Zhdanov survived, succeeding Kirov as Secretary of the Leningrad Party and purging it comprehensively. Later, as member of the Politbureau with special responsibility for propaganda, he was to be Stalin's cultural hitman from 1938 till his own death in 1948.

All of this information is fairly easy to come by but none of it is here in this edition. It should be. To slide quietly over awkward truths, to palm off a document such as this without any attempt to acquaint readers

with its context is to perform a huge disservice to the socialist movement.

I do not intend this to be read as a piece of routine sectarianism, bashing Lawrence and Wishart because of their links with the Communist Party. Every socialist is indebted to Lawrence and Wishart for the stream of valuable texts they have brought us over the years.

But what on earth are they doing when they reprint entirely without comment of any kind a lurid threat such as this one from Zhdanov: 'Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, the Party is organizing the masses for the final liquidation of capitalist elements . . . a threat that within a couple of years was to cost the lives of the bulk of the old Bolsheviks sitting listening to him? In what spirit is this sort of barbarism being offered to readers in 1978? Surely it would only be of value in the shape of an edition that made a rigorous attempt to come to terms with these proceedings, to salvage from them what is worthwhile and to signpost what is lethal.'

What, for example, are we to make of the contribution of Bukharin, a man still not fully rehabilitated in the Soviet Union? His speech reads like an honest, if flawed and tentative attempt by someone already on the way out to think about a cultural policy that on the one hand doesn't reduce poetry to rhymed versions of Central Committee minutes but is on the other hand centrally aware of the coming to power of the other Nazis in 1933 and the implications of that for the world and its writers. There's still food for thought here, but it's likely that the modern reader will miss it, stopped in his/her tracks several dozen pages earlier by Radek's bovine chauvinism or by this sort of numbing rubbish from Zhdanov: 'At the Seventeenth Congress of our Party, Comrade Stalin gave a masterful, unsurpassed analysis of our victories and the factors conditioning them . . .'

To reprint chunks of mouldy Stalinism of that type with only the ambiguous recommendations of the blurb as comment is either a major miscalculation or gloomy evidence of that cultural thuggery that the socialist movement (not to mention the world) can do without. The decision to publish this book in this form is either craven or sinister. Probably it's both.
Paul O'Flinn

To be handled with care!

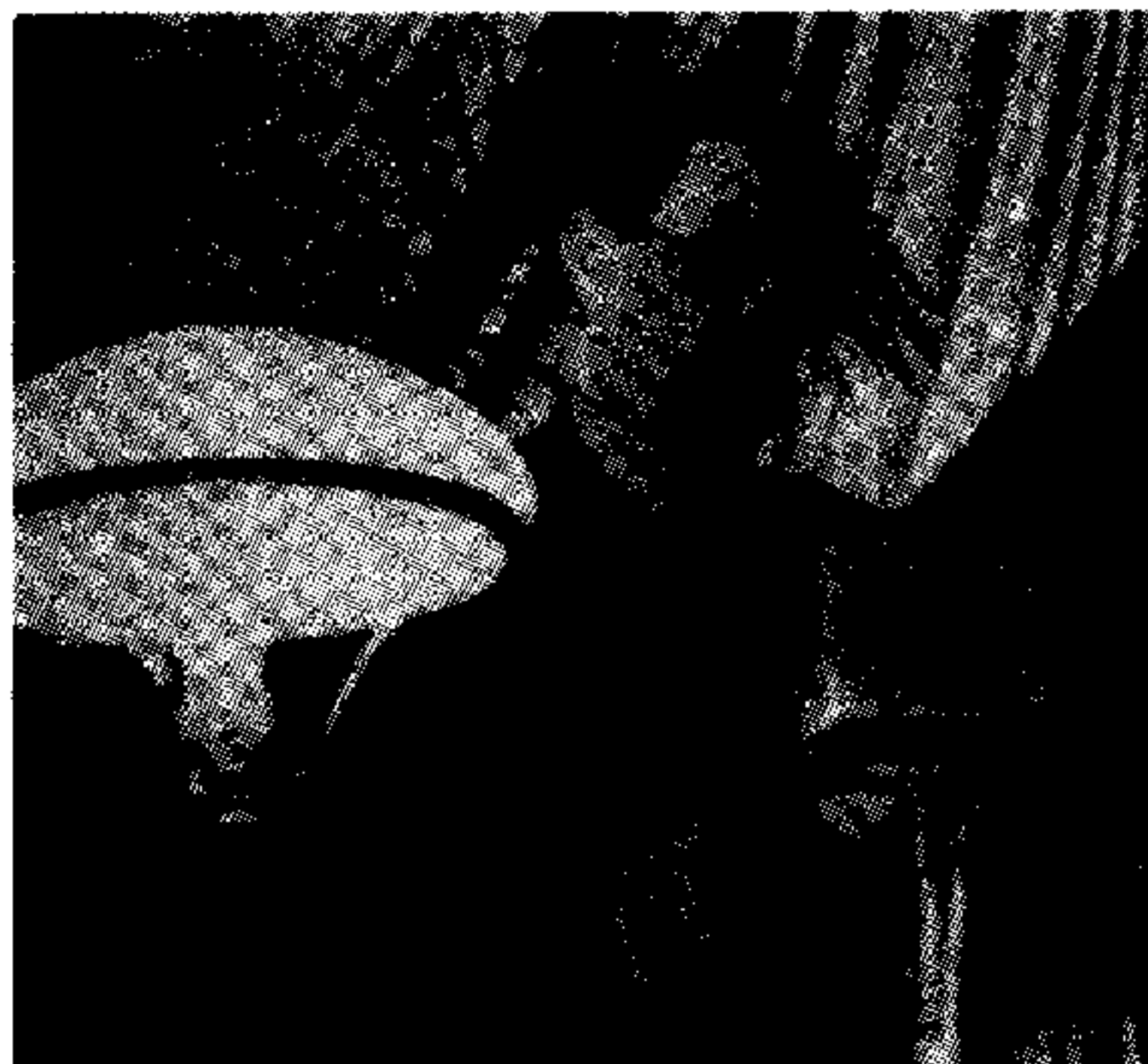
The Wealth of Some Nations
Malcolm Caldwell
Zed Press
Hardback £5.00 Paperback
£3.00

The blurb on the cover asks some vital questions which certainly require answers. 'Why are two third of the world (sic) impoverished?'. 'Have we exhausted the soil's capacity to feed our present world population? . . . Should we knowingly destroy our natural energy resources coal and oil?'

Caldwell is known to be a Marxist, but he wants to answer all his questions in an entirely new way. In doing so he makes some appalling statements which ultimately betray his brand of 'Marxism'. He starts with an interesting analysis of food and energy production and heavily criticises Western countries for the abuse of non renewable energy sources for anything other than food production. Although it is true that pure energy, as in nuclear power, can't be used directly to aid food production, his suggestion ultimately forsee a worker controlled Rank Hovis McDougall producing plastic bread. Unfortunately, an efficient use of resources under capitalism means a profitable one and the technology of production is inextricably linked with this. Neither does his analysis take any account of the ownership of production.

He then describes with some accuracy what a nasty thing imperialism is—it means that the poor of the world cannot even achieve the hell we have in the 'overdeveloped' West. No mention of the working class, its strengths or weaknesses, merely the subservience of the whole society to imperialism.

In the section on the 'overdeveloped' countries, the working class come in for more attention but chiefly to be accused of decadence and overconsumption (eg the use of the Pill and cannabis). More seriously he draws on some very reactionary theories on the productive and unproductive sectors. In the UK much publicity was given by the *Sunday Times* to the findings of two economists who claimed



Gorky addressing the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress.

that the problem with the UK economy was an excess of 'unproductive' workers. This conveniently appeared at the time of preparation for perhaps the greatest onslaught by the government on public sector services and jobs.

But Caldwell echoes it totally when on page 130 he states 'There seems very little room for doubt that the working classes of the overdeveloped countries would be better off if the tertiary sector were really drastically pruned (given that this was done by a radical socialist government, not by a conservative liberal or social democratic one)' What an afterthought!!! And no suggestion of where this government will emerge from.

He continues by invoking the pseudo Marxist theory of unequal exchange which alleges that the *working class* in the imperialist countries have benefitted materially from the exploitation of workers and resources in the poor countries. Thus according to Caldwell it seems that the working class in the West is greedy and partly to blame for its own condition so it can rot in hell.

But not for long! Finally his determination to suggest solutions to ruling class problems wins out. It seems that the UK's main problem, perhaps after it has acquired by some unspecified means a 'radical socialist government' is to achieve self sufficiency in food supplies. For example, the UK, with 1.5 per cent of world population consumes 10 per cent of world fishmeal another damning indictment of the greed of British workers. One policy objective suggested is withdrawal from the EEC! But the only forces operating in the direction of this self sufficiency seem to be the middle class hippies with their brown rice communes in Wales.

But it would be wrong to dismiss Caldwell as naive. His analysis is strongly motivated by his adulation of the societies that are already on the way to self sufficient and rationally organised nirvana - China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea and the prize, references to which pepper the book - Cambodia (or Kampuchea as it is now called by its best friends).

Despite some interesting information in the first chapters, the book is totally lacking in any analysis of the working class or its role in changing society. As one of the first books in its field, it should be handled with extreme care!
Sybil Cook



A bitterness beyond description

The General Strike
20 Drawings by Andrew Turner
Introduction by Ray Watkinson
Journeyman Press, £2.50

Andrew Turner is quite obviously a very talented artist and this book is a valuable contribution to working class art. Being the son of a miner who experienced the lockout of 1926, I'm sure Andrew Turner must have been brought up with stories of the lockout told in bitterness which no historian could ever describe. This I believe has given an edge to his work which many contemporaries would find hard to create - for example, the way he has used the Lodge banners, the banner being of great significance to miners and looked after with great care.

The book tells the story in drawings of how the working class were betrayed by their

leaders, he has captured the fear on the faces of the Trades Union leaders, fear not of the ruling class but of the working class. Fear which led to the General Strike being called off and the miners being left to fight on alone, which led to a humiliating defeat for them.

There are a couple of points in the introduction which I disagree with; one in particular where Ray Watkinson uses a quote from Robin Page Arnot in which he states emphatically that the 1926 strike was no defeat and that terrible as was the immediate outcome for thousands of workers, the experience of the general strike did much to consolidate our trades union movement, and that the General Strike saved the British labour movement. Well, while not wanting to cross swords with such an eminent historian as Robin Page Arnot, I feel I must disagree.

Being the son and grandson of a miner and also one myself I have been brought up with stories of the 1926 lockout and the subsequent defeat. Stories of men going back to work cap in hand with all the indignities that followed. Militants rooted out and told no work was available for them. Working for less wages than they were originally offered. The growth of Spencerism (company unions) in Nottinghamshire - something which the Nottingham coalfield has even now not recovered from.

The attack of the 1930s on unemployment, which I'm sure could only have been carried out on an already beaten working class, I feel, answers any doubts about this.

Ignoring the long introduction the book is worth buying for any General Strike addicts like myself. *Ray Pratt*

Towards a new realism

Aesthetics and Politics
Bloch, Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno
New Left Books £6.50

The present debate on how art should serve or promote socialism are still being plagued by the old quarrel between the realists and modernists. Realists legislate that art should document, thus resemble reality. The modernists promote the strategy that art, being not simply an effect of the real, but a constituent part of reality, is therefore a materialist practice, disrupting, analysing, interrogating reality.

The modernists lambast the realists for their lack of independence, their slavish devotion to bourgeois forms,

their confusion of reality and art, and therefore their accent on imitation and finally for being revolutionary in intent but reformist in practice. The realists curl their lips and send the modernists back to the ghetto art galleries and sneer at their elitism.

This book, a collection of Marxist essays on aesthetics and politics does if nothing else clarify the genesis of these arguments, as the writers fight round after round in what is a merciless battle for the 'correct' strategy.

The Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs, defending realism against what he sees as the decadence of modernism, slaps the 'experimenters' for their wilful fragmentation of

reality which reflects both their blindness to the already existing fragmentation of capitalism and their lack of respect for traditions - which result in their inevitable disinheritance and exile to outer space.

Bertolt Brecht sends Lukacs back where he came from, accusing him of formalism for using the outmoded model of the 19th century realist novel for his precepts and for his refusal to change the nature of realism as capitalism changes.

Theodor Adorno, one of the leading lights of the Frankfurt school of Marxist theorists, accuses Brecht of not meeting his theoretical quests because of the bad and naive politics of his plays, and of fulfilling in his final works the role of a

handyman to Stalinist politics. Adorno finally accuses committed art a la Brecht of being the living proof of the spirit of catastrophe that it spent its time warning against.

Reading these essays the would-be practitioner will bump into clues and false trails trying to solve the ever present accusations being hurled at art in the name of socialism or at socialism in the name of art. For each prescription lends wind to the opposition sails, each accuser can be confronted with his victims' cry. In this double edged reading of these essays lies the real clue as to what should be the difference between our debates and the ebb and rush of the argument in the 1930s. The writers of these essays were working when their political quests were being circumscribed by two Leviathans of Reason—Stalinism and Fascism.

Lukacs' defence of realism was not only a means of confronting what he considered to be the irrationality of fascism, but of representing class consciousness in the rationality of the Party. It is no accident that the question continually raised in works of Ken Loach and Tony Garnett is the absence of an orthodox Trotskyist Party, and that the politics of, for example, *The*



Georg Lukacs



Bertolt Brecht

Days of Hope are those of betrayal. Adorno took refuge from the Leviathans by disrobing art of any political intent and taking comfort in an all-encompassing pessimism.

We are the inheritors of that holocaust and what we have as a result is, in the main, a society corroded by that well known social-democratic chemical, common-sense. A culture where all late-night calls to freedom are lampooned as stalinist

pumpkins, where the growing desires of change are either stilled by fear or marketed as illusory spectacles whose sole design is to contain the dream within a dream. To repeat then the arguments of the 1930s continuously sows the discord that these positions were meant to alleviate. No position on its own is safe when tested by the complex realities of our political culture.

Realism cannot cope with the 'paralysis of the will' if it does not criticise its strategies for inducing it; its hermetically closed creations—its secret and polite ways of introducing a tip-toe marxism in a reality that cannot in all honesty contain it—It depends on truth breaking through prejudice when it is these very prejudices that have created the reality in the first place. And finally, it

relies on drowning the viewer in sympathy or anger, harnessing the viewer's heartbeat to its own rhythm, allowing no distance and therefore no memory.

Modernism, on the other hand, for all its powers in challenging our perceptions can quickly turn into a cultural commodity in the absence of an audience that could turn these perceptions in revolutionary politics. It also can give way to a pessimism that reduces reality to a mere series of signs, granular semaphors tilting against only one windmill, its own.

Tossing and turning between these contradictions we learn that our practice lies at the point where these two positions conflict. To cope with the corporate culture of multinational hands in mass

media's pockets, where positions are rigorously assigned to the worker both as producer and viewer, a new realism is called for which will confront the paralysis through its content and form.

Revolutionaries too often reduce art to tinsel in their otherwise dry politics on the last column of the last page of their paper. Yet art and its conflicts are central to our aspirations. They represent the future. The continuous battles raise the question of what socialism is about. If artists protect themselves from politics by waving their finger at Stalinism, revolutionaries should not supply them with ammunition. We can do no better than read this book which supplies an accurate ordinance survey of where the mines were planted.
Marc Karlin

Giving an acceptable face

The Italian Road to Socialism
An interview by Eric Hobsbawm with Giorgio Napolitano of the Italian Communist Party.
The Journeyman Press £1.95

This interview of one of the leaders of the PCI presents an articulate account of the formation of the Italian CP's historic compromise with its ruling class. With no small amount of suave political rhetoric, Napolitano peddles the now familiar argument that revolutionaries in the West need to rethink some of their most hallowed (Leninist) assumptions and develop a new strategy to cope with an undeniably new political, social and economic reality. (But let's not forget it's still capitalism, comrade).

To begin with, says Napolitano, the complexity of Western society, particularly class structure, makes a crude workers versus bosses scenario out of the question. The working class which Napolitano rightly claims to have been historically in the vanguard of the struggle for democratic rights in Italy (but where has this not been the case?), must have allies in its search for a socialist solution.

The PCI's analysis of the crisis leads (or enables) them to argue therefore that the working class must 'give' a substantial amount in order to win these allies. 'We must intervene in the crisis of capitalism in such a way as to affirm the leading role of the working class, so as to weld

around it a bloc of social forces. . . We must also fight corporatism, the narrow minded group outlook, which always tends to grow inside the working class. . . If the working class movement confines itself to a mere denunciation of the contradictions of the capitalist system and of the responsibilities of the old ruling classes and carries out actions purely in defense of the interests of the workers, then it locks itself into a rather restricted and unmanoeuvrable position' (pp. 46-47).

This means Napolitano says, discovering a quote from Gramsci to make it sound more palatable, 'the workers not hesitating to make sacrifices of an economic-corporative character'. Quickly guarding his 'left flank' Napolitano pointedly adds that this is not on 'if the government hypocritically proposes sacrifices and equalisation only within the working class and does not touch the positions of privilege'. On further investigation this privileged element turns out to be remarkably small in present day Italy: basically just a tiny and totally parasitic and speculative section of an otherwise healthy and constructive capitalist class. In fact the rest of the capitalists are portrayed in very favourable terms in this book, from small businessmen all the way to managers and patriotic industrialists.

Given this analysis, it is not surprising that the PCI will

have nothing to do with a revolutionary strategy. It has opted instead for an openly (since 1963) gradualist approach. This does not according to Napolitano make them indistinguishable from traditional social democrats. They are saved from this fate he says, warmly referring us to the late leader of the Party, Palmiro Togliatti, by their 'vision (sic) of advancing towards socialism'. To which one might respond that if good faith were all that were needed we would have reached socialism decades ago.

According to Napolitano 'we have never defined ourselves in any scholastic way as a 'Marxist' party'. These days there is no sense in describing it on this account as a Marxist party in any way, and certainly not as a revolutionary one.

There is no space here to go into the way the PCI, on Napolitano's candid admission, utilised the post-1956 crisis of the Stalinist movement to come out *openly* with its reformist line, which in any case it had been practising for years, nor to take up the repetition of the old Stalinist distortion and dismissal of the theory of the permanent revolution (see p.61). Of course like all well-trained Stalinists they start from the hoary old reformist prejudice that they can build socialism in one country. These interviews serve as a good (and easily readable) illustration of what crass reformism, 50 odd years of 'Stalinism with a human face' ends up in.
Philip Spencer

The not-so-good old days

**The Classic Slum — Salford
Life in the First Quarter of the
Century**

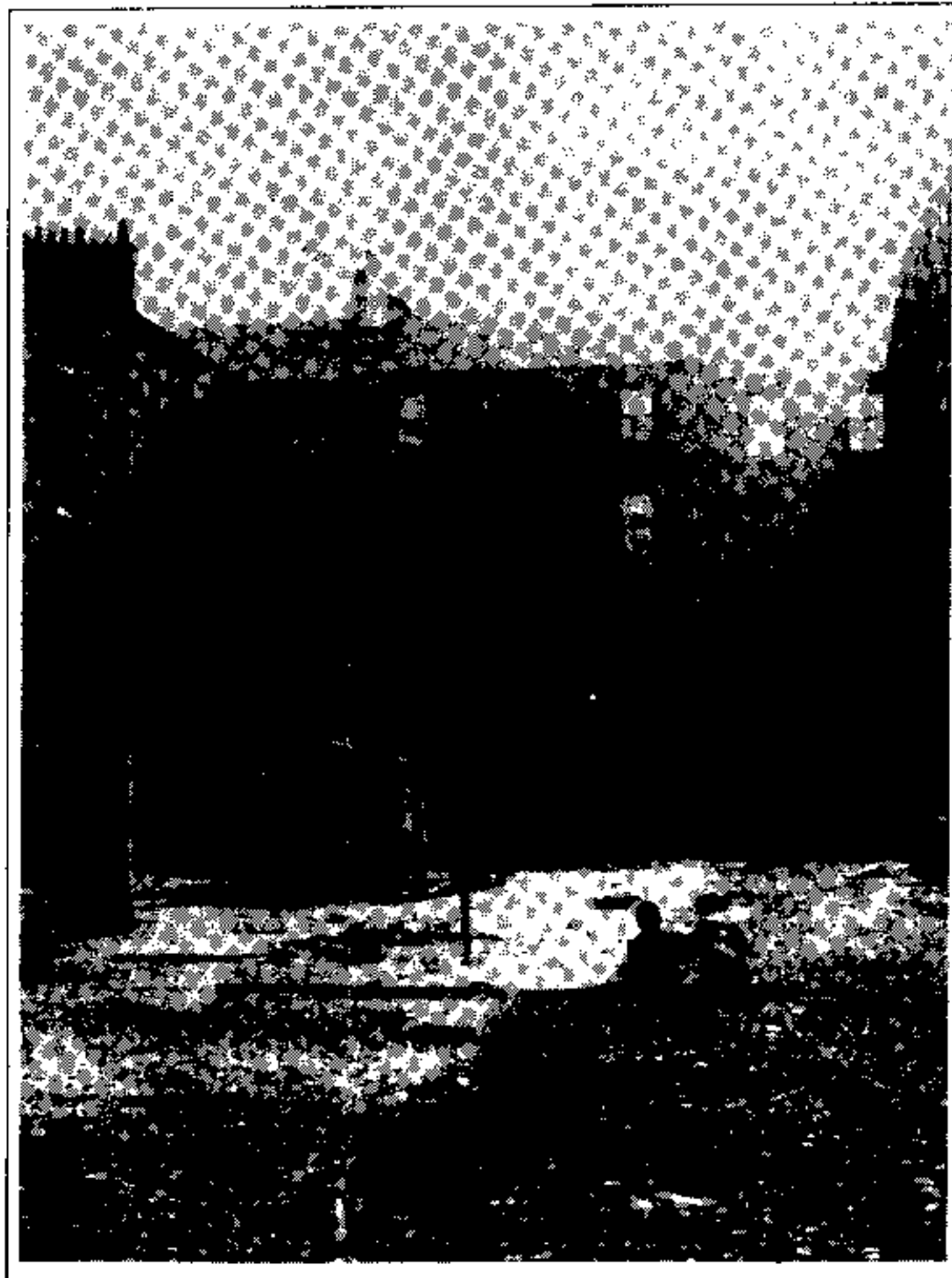
Robert Roberts
Penguin 50p

A Ragged Schooling
Robert Roberts
Fontana £1.25

The Classic Slum is an account of poverty in Salford in the early years of this century. Through his combination of personal reminiscences and social history Robert Roberts gives us a very real and readable picture indeed. He was brought up in a corner shop in a Salford slum and as he says, the shop provided an excellent position to study the local people. 'There across the counter slid the comedy, tragedy, hopes, fears and fancies of a whole community.' In chapters covering class structure, food and drink, possessions and culture he analyses the society of the slum.

Roberts doesn't look back and see life then in a rosy glow, no 'Good old days' here. Although he does talk of the loss of a sense of community he points out that all too often this community was a gossip suburb. 'The tragedy was that in the most opulent country in the world, so many possessed so little.'

I left the book with a deep sense of anger at the lives wasted, twisted rotting in a hell



on earth — 'victims of the industrial Moloch hardly catching a glimpse of what the good life could have been.'

A Ragged Schooling is more autobiographical — very moving and very humorous. Roberts describes his mother's

shop and her customers, his own schooling and his friends, and his first job, all with incredible memory.

A final note: the photographs in both books are perfect — bringing the period and the people to life. *James Brown*

The making of the Welsh working class

The Merthyr Rising
Gwyn A. Williams
Croom Helm, £7.95

June 1831 saw in 'armed insurrection' in the township of Merthyr Tydfil, fountain head of the industrial revolution in Wales. In early June a rising of workers sparked off a mass redistribution of property, destroyed the debtors' court, the Court of Requests, forced a strike in the ironworks and called for a general revolt in the name of 'reform'. A detachment of soldiers was marched into the town and confronted a mass of workers.

In the ensuing engagement some two dozen men and

women were killed, seventy wounded — a Welsh 'Peterloo' — but the Military abandoned the town. For four days the rebels held Merthyr, and thousands rallied in the common cause, a 'communal insurrection'. The rising was only to be crushed by troop reinforcements rushed from various parts of the kingdom to restore 'order' (the traditional 'order').

Two 'leaders' were picked out for exemplary punishment. One was transported to Australia; the other, Dic Penderyn, died on the gallows, 'martyred'. His death only fed the fuel of working class energy, and long

gruelling struggle followed between the new, secretive union lodges which sprang up within two weeks of the Rising and the employers. It too was eventually defeated. But the struggles of 1831 left their permanent mark.

In 1839, Lord Melbourne, Home Secretary at the time of the rising, wrote to his successor that Merthyr was 'the worst and most formidable district in the kingdom. The affair we had there in 1831 was the most like a fight of anything that took place.' The Rising of 1831 was, as Gwyn Williams puts it, the 'point of emergence' for the Welsh working class:

for the first time, as a self-conscious class, it moved into independent political action.

Whatever the defeats, containments, partial absorptions that followed, that gain was never lost.

Gwyn Williams' study of *The Merthyr Rising*, dedicated to his son, 'so that he remembers where he comes from', is homage, celebration and analysis of that crucial conjuncture. The book is a masterly combination of deep research and political commitment, personal exploration (as a born member of that Merthyr working class) and Marxist philosophical outlook (and there are strong signs here of his earlier studies of the Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci).

The result is both gripping as a historical narrative and illuminating as an account of the complex of factors which obscure class conflicts until the curtains are torn away, revealing the stark reality of class exploitation.

Merthyr Tydfil in 1831 was classically a 'frontier town', the largest town in Wales, with a teeming population of immigrants, often bilingual, growing at a precipitous pace, on the verge of an ecological disaster, as much a 'shock city' as that Manchester which Engels was to describe ten years later. It was a 'frontier town' in its lack of essential services, its absence of orthodox social control, its unplanned upsurge in shanty towns.

It was also a 'frontier town' in that its population was largely rural in origin, so that a traditional rural solidarity confronted an unstable industrial society. The workforce was fluid and seasonal: many workers regularly trekked home to West Wales for the harvests. The immigrant community was vigorous, young, unorganisable in a simple sense. Class lines were often obscured: class identity was incoherent.

This apparent 'mass' of workers faced the 'shopocracy', the town middle class, with a strong Unitarian, radical-democratic tradition, which at first was the ideology also of the manual workers. But beyond these were the four iron masters, ultimately determinant in their influence: unlike many employers, moreover, they were resident.

The workforce in Merthyr, as 1831 opened, lacked a coherent focus for their class identity,

Books

had no clear independent ideology and were largely structured in their loyalties and outlooks (and this was even true to some extent in the political crisis) by which boss they worked for.

So what, in a few heated months, turned this workforce into the vanguard of the Welsh working class? Gwyn Williams' subtle analysis shows the complex interaction of the national political crisis with an accumulation of intense local factors, an 'unprecedented impact of national forces on a local situation which was already tense'. The tensions were economic, ideological and political.

A national economic crisis deepened from 1829 - to reach its nadir after the crisis. But this caused a crisis of credit in Merthyr which starting with the workers had a cumulative effect on the shopkeepers; goods were seized in repayment of debt - by the hated Court of Requests. At the same time the town was drenched in radical propaganda, from the traditional radical-democratic ideologies of the area to the labour theory of value.

And all this was in the context of a national political crisis over Reform of Parliament accentuated by the death of the King and the need for new elections. 'Reform' was the initial battle cry: the first efforts at independent working class action were led by a white banner carrying a crown, a 'God Save William IV' and 'Reform in Parliament'.

It only needed a local spark for the situation to explode - and the spark was lit by one of the local iron owners, William Crawshay.

In the June insurrection that followed there was a rapid move from traditional to new modes of political action that indicated that a new era was opening. The first moves of the Rising, the restoration of goods, seized for debts, to their original owners, was, 'one of the most "classic" of natural justice actions in the tradition of "primitive" rebellion'. The marchers were led by a Red Flag, with a loaf on the point. And as always, written into the actions were a mixture of motives.

On the one hand, near millenarian expectations of profound and rapid change (the Rising was in a sense a call to general revolution). On the other, intense local grievances were focussed on the restoration of a 'natural order' at the expense of the shopocracy. But in their effort

to grasp control over their own lives, the workers of Merthyr snapped the chains of 'order' and in doing so faced the real powers: the iron masters, and the military. In the resulting confrontation the Merthyr working class forged its identity.

Dic Penderyn, the judicially killed 'hero' of the Rising was almost certainly innocent of the charge he was executed for. But his very 'martyrdom' became a symbol of the new class consciousness that emerged in the events that led to it. He lived in people's memories, Williams convincingly suggests, because he was not 'the leader', because he was a face in the crowd not the face of the crowd. The class consciousness was not forged by one man, by a single conscious leader, but by individuals transforming their outlooks, changing their consciousness, in the course of collective struggle.

The local struggles and eventually the national struggles, culminating in the political campaigns of Chartism, were defeated, and by the 1840's the militancy was dispersed and fragmented. Struggles continued, but throughout most of the nineteenth century they were 'subaltern' struggles within the existing order.

But what was crucially different after 1831 was a new sense of consciousness, of a movement, however uneven and fragmentary. It was this sense which fed into the Labour Movement in the present century, in all its weaknesses and strengths. Thus we can only end a review of this book in Gwyn Williams' own concluding words:

'In Merthyr Tydfi in 1831, the prehistory of the Welsh working class comes to an end. Its history begins.' *Jeffrey Weeks*

And...

The new selection from the Bookmarx Club maintains their high standard of quality and variety. Two of the club choices are reviewed in this issue. Their lead title is the new workers' handbook from Pluto, Jeremy McMullen's *Rights at Work* (440 pages, £2.25) to be published in September. Club members will get their copies before publication. There will be large trade union sales for this book and a trade union discount for bulk copies will be

Pessimism in old age

Business Civilisation in Decline
Robert L. Heilbroner
Penguin 80p

When an American professor of economics announces that capitalism is doomed, then it's worth looking twice. But this is what Heilbroner tells us in the preface to this short book:

'The civilisation of business - the civilisation to which we give the name capitalism - is slated to disappear, probably not within our lifetimes but in all likelihood within that of our grandchildren and great grandchildren'.

The bite is in the tail. Heilbroner's perspective of capitalist breakdown applies - not to the next couple of decades - but to 'the long run', the next century or so.

That's not to say that Heilbroner has nothing to say about present trends. On the contrary, he is sensible about a variety of the changes capitalism has undergone since the war - the tendency towards 'planned capitalism' in which state and private capital merge, the role of the multinational companies, the fashionable myth of 'post-industrial' society.

But when Heilbroner comes to consider the 'long run', he reverts to one of the traditional themes of classical political economy. Capitalism will collapse, not because of its internal contradictions, as Marx argued, but because economic growth will outrun the natural resources on which it is based. 'Business civilisation' will be strangled by a massive energy crisis.

This is a variation on an old song. Ricardo, Malthus and the other classical economists of the early nineteenth century believed in a 'stationary state' which capitalism would arrive at when population growth outstripped (as they believed it inevitably would) the growth in food output.

Both Heilbroner and the classical economists expel history from economic thought. What one leading Marxist economist, Henryk Grossman, wrote of Ricardo applies to Heilbroner:

'The eventual deceleration and cessation of capital accumulation which Ricardo forecast for the distant future must be characterised as mere pseudo-dynamics, as the dynamic factor is not inherent in the economic process itself, but is rather a natural force which influences the economic process from the outside'.

The result is that Heilbroner expects that history will stop with the end of capitalism. Society will revert to the religious mysticism and economic decline which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire. Because the breakdown of capitalism is caused, on this perspective, by natural, not social, forces, the possibility of communism - of a higher form of society based on the abolition of classes and of capitalist anarchy - is ruled out in advance. The choice is between capitalism or barbarism.

Even so, the book is not without a certain interest. Heilbroner's pessimism is a marked change from the dewy-eyed confidence in the system which filled bourgeois economists during the boom of the 1950s and 1960s. In its senility bourgeois economics has reverted to the ahistorical pessimism of its youth.

Alex Callinicos

available. If you would like to distribute copies of a leaflet about the book in your workplace they are available (free) direct from Pluto at Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1.

Lawrence and Wishart have just published the new volume of Gramsci's *Selected Political Writings 1921-1926*.

Unfortunately it is in hardback only at £10.00. New Beacon Books have published *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement* by Arthur Lewis (£1.80) which focusses on the general strikes and workers insurrections

which blazed across the Caribbean between 1935 and 1938.

History Workshop Journal No 5 is now available (£3.45) with article on Imperialism and Motherhood, Labour and Fascism, the English Civil War, and Art and the French Revolution.

New from NLB in paperback is Mandel's *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism* at £2.95. New from Virago is Jill Liddington and Jill Norris's *One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement's Suffrage Movement*, (£3.50).
Alastair Hatchett.

EVEN THE TRUTH



IS RELATIVE

This article challenges one of the most deeply embedded myths in our culture—the idealist notion that science and technology are neutral. This has been so widely assimilated that even socialists leave it untouched. Such pious deference cannot continue.

Here the possible alternative views of science and technology will be set out and the reasons and functions the adoption of this myth served. Then in outline some illustrations of ideology in science will be discussed and finally the antidemocratic nature of nuclear technology will be explained.

The result of the belief in the neutrality, in essence, of science and technology is in epitome a model of use/abuse. Science and technology are value-free and as such rest below society as a firm substructure on which society can construct itself for good or ill. Thus science and technology can create no problems that cannot be narrowed down to problems of control. Under socialism riot-control technologies, heart transplant surgery and recombinant DNA research all have good things to offer society.

Alternative viewpoints

This view has not always been accepted. There are four ways in which science and technology can be viewed in relation to society. The correlation between the two can be taken as bad, good, neutral or mixed. All these various alternatives have at different times and in different cultures been accepted, sometimes by whole societies, at other times by classes or groups within societies.

The machine-breakers or Luddites in Yorkshire and Lancashire in the early decades of the nineteenth century shared with the world of medieval Islam a belief that *bid'a* (innovation) was detrimental to mankind. While in antithesis the rising bourgeoisie of late Victorian capitalism held that science and technology were God's beneficent gift to the English middle-class. In parallel to this their self-professed future expropriators directly equated socialism and science. In fact this belief was one of the few things which could bracket together such diverse socialists as Ramsey MacDonald and Lenin.

The last position took root in a virulent form in the 1930's of Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. In the former with Stalin and 'Socialism in One Country' attempts were made by a number of scientists, most notably T.D. Lysenko, with their leader's support, to promote a socialist physics and a socialist biology. At the same time a similar manifestation was to be found with emergent Nazism in Germany with talk of 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' (i.e. Jewish) science.

Why the myth arose

It arose from a number of converging sets of circumstances after World War Two. Within the scientific community the explosions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki provoked a crisis of conscience about the fruits of their work. This was most easily salved by externalizing the problem they faced, which was one of responsibility. A belief in the neutrality of science enabled such an exclusion to occur. For then the

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physics and technology were split asunder from the uses to which they were put. Scientists could continue to do their physics while the rest of mankind grappled with the issues of conscience it threw up.

The related event within the wider community was the emergence after the war of large-scale state-funded science. The war itself had seen a massive mobilization of science and scientists behind the two protagonists. The very emergence of the atom bomb from this frenzy of activity and in particular the Manhattan Project ensured that Governments began to think science and technology might in peacetime be able to continue to be a handmaiden to the state.

But if the state was neutral in itself so must its handmaiden. Thus a belief in the neutrality of science and technology served functions both internal and external to the scientific community. Both those giving and receiving funds had good reasons for wanting to believe themselves and wanting others to believe that science and technology were value-free.

Is the myth false?

The practice of science and technology is no more divorced from society than journalism. Philip Agee is deported for endangering the security of the state by his writing while Thomas Mancuso loses his job after suggesting that exposure to low-level radiation is much more dangerous than currently believed (*Nature* vol. 272, p 197).

Science and technology can never be neutral because their nature and directions are always framed — like other aspects of our culture — by the social and scientific context of the age. Today these two 'products' are generated within late capitalism and the style and packaging of these products reflect this environment. The major concern of the system as a unity is its own survival and extension. This aim inexorably shapes science and technology. Of course I am not suggesting that those in positions of power assemble in solemn secret conclave to decide what science and technology will be produced. It merely emerges from the logic of their shared way of viewing the world.

Science and technology are both heavily

state-financed and there is always more of both of these waiting to be done than resources available. That which is undertaken can only be done at the expense of alternatives. Those who arbitrate between these possibilities do so on the basis of their own ideological presuppositions. To expect otherwise would be naive. Whereas few on the left will argue with the contention that the overwhelming majority of those in power are opposed to radical, let alone revolutionary change, they seem to balk at the idea that such beliefs may impact upon science and technology. Yet they themselves loudly complain of this very bias with respect to all other aspects of our culture.

While the making of choices remains inevitable these will be partisan and the output arising from such a system is unlikely to be neutral. This is not to say that the work of contemporary scientists and technologists always neatly meshes with the requirements of contemporary capitalism. Developments within science and technology emerge from an adversary process in which hypotheses compete for intellectual dominance.

New scientific laws are not brought to society like the tablets from mountains. They emerge from a field of competing alternatives all of which reflect to a greater or lesser extent aspects of the multidimensional world of nature. The determination of which is to be the victor is not a simple one. It is not determined purely on grounds of truth-content or to suit the implicit wishes of the ruling class, rather it comes from a continuous and multiple series of interactions between science, scientists and society. In these interactions which help to decide the outcome factors like personal interests and prejudices, misunderstanding and incomplete knowledge all play their part.

How does this operate?

A hypothetical situation may best illustrate the problem. A Chinese palaeontologist and member of the Communist Party would find it difficult to imagine — as a member of Chinese society with all its current beliefs — that some races are inherently inferior to others. Similarly, because of its implications, such a conditioning could well react on to his/her

science when faced with interpreting a series of ambiguous humanoid remains suggestive of parallel evolution of similar but distinct races. For him such an alternative would be difficult to choose. Even if this palaeontologist did manage to think and publish such a theory, its successful reception in China would appear unlikely.

One does not have to resort to such hypothetical situations however to look for examples of ideology in science. One of the best examples to look at is the scientific theory which supported notions of feminine inferiority in the nineteenth century. Up to this time the belief in feminine inferiority was justified because of the moral defects associated with womankind. But in the years after 1865 this was supplemented and then replaced by an alternative justification based on the 'objective' criteria of science.

Women became — or at least middle and upper-class women — weak and defective by nature. The medical theory on which this was based was the physiological law of the 'conservation of energy'. According to this law each human body contained a fixed quantity of energy which could be drawn upon by one organ or another, or used for one function or another. This meant that it was only possible to develop one organ or ability at the expense of others. In particular the sexual organs competed with other organs for this limited energy. This theory, coupled with the belief that reproductivity was central to a women's biological life and that if sexual organs were starved of energy the resulting children were weak, sickly and unstable, was used to support current social policies, i.e. the exclusion of women from higher education was justified by the need to save the race from degeneration.

This theory did not create these inequalities, but it gave to their retention a scientific plausibility which helped to stem attempts at education emancipation for women. It may be tempting for some to argue that this was either 'bad science' and/or that this use of science no longer occurs. All that can be said in reply is look about you.

The ongoing Race-IQ debate has a similar element within it, while the associated work of Burt, recently cast into doubt by the *Sunday Times*, certainly influenced British educational policy and practices. The important point here being not so much that he 'massaged' his data but that his dubious work was so readily accepted and used as a theoretical basis for modelling our school system. But this is not totally surprising when one notices how closely his work was to thinking outside of science.

Nuclear power

Nuclear power is one answer to the perceived problem of an imminent world energy shortage couched in a technology

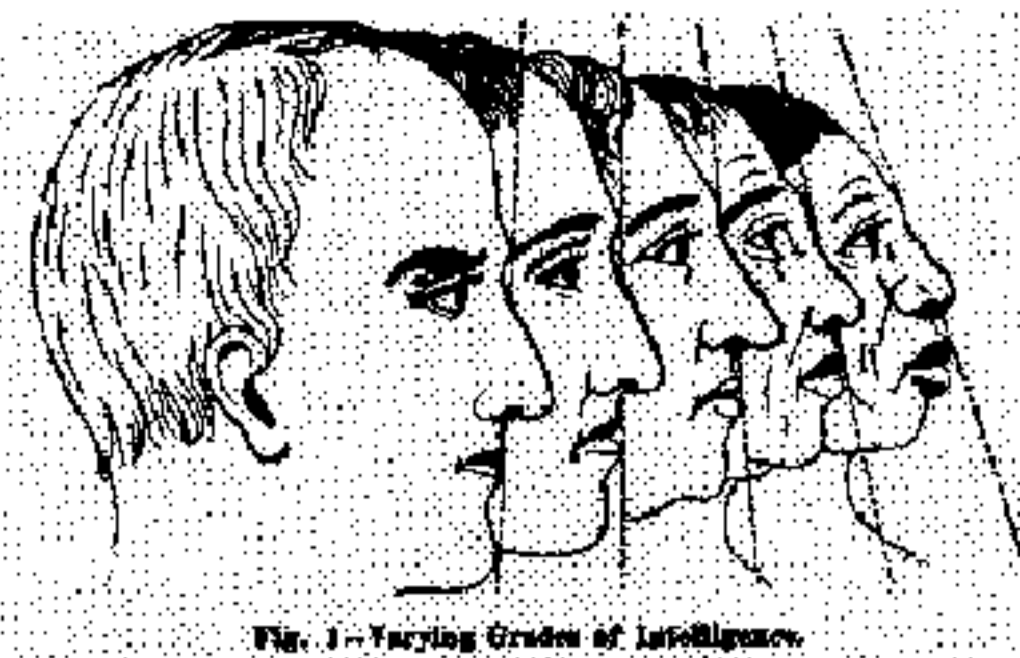


Fig. 1—Varying Grades of Intelligence.

1891 scientific illustration of ethnic differences

amenable to monopoly capitalism. Other alternative answers exist such as solar, wind and wave power, but little interest has been shown in them. Why? Despite the fact that nuclear power stations have high maintenance costs, short lifetimes and a high risk of causing major pollution, and that the fuel they use is limited in they do have the inestimable advantage of fitting readily into the institutional machinery developing within late Capitalism.

This is not true of the alternatives. Nuclear technology is a capital-intensive, large-scale, highly centralised technology and relates to an energy policy which attempts to maximise individual dependence on the system. This technology thrusts society inevitably further along the path towards

Further reading

The Hazards of Nuclear Power,

Alan Roberts and Zhores Medvedev
Spokesman, Nottingham, 1977.

Complaints and Disorders: the Sexual Politics of Sickness,

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English
Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, London, 1976.



late, or at best, State Capitalism. In this nuclear technology is not unique and the attitude adopted towards it would be unenthusiastic resignation.

However the new generations of nuclear power stations and their proposed exponential expansion in numbers lead towards the strong state. This arises from the peculiar threat nuclear technology brings to the whole of mankind. If a large scale release of radiation to the surrounding environment occurs either slowly or catastrophically, either accidentally or deliberately, then all are agreed mankind faces death and destruction on an unknown and long-term scale. The push towards the strong state comes from the political and social measures that the logic of capitalism dictates to cope with this contingency.

This threat is not one that is welcomed by those in positions of power and in our society, but it is one that the irrationality of capitalism is prepared to countenance rather than to promote the alternatives for the emerging strong state holds no fears for them.

The United States Atomic Energy Commission has already proposed that a special federal police force be established to safeguard the security of plutonium plants and shipments. At the same time it has complained of court rulings protecting the individual privacy of citizens and urged the introduction of new legislation which would facilitate security checks on workers in nuclear industries.

In Britain, if the Birmingham pub bombings can get the prevention of Terrorism Act through Parliament in twenty-four hours, what would be the result of a plutonium hijacking? Even if the strong state philosophy can initially be resisted by our liberal democratic traditions the pressure will rise with each year.

As new nuclear waste sites and abandoned nuclear power stations with their rusting barbed wire and bored security guards begin to dot the English countryside like an outbreak of measles on the face of the land, and as societal dependence on nuclear power grows the options facing the state will narrow mercilessly.

In conclusion

Finally let it be stated that the point of view expressed here is not one of scientific or technological determinism. It is rather to present a real problem to socialists. Are we not to oppose a development that will make the achieving of socialism that much more difficult than it is today and one which will leave any sort of society with an invisible but nonetheless terrifying hazard for tens of thousands of years into the future. The direction society is going in can be changed, the point I am making is that such a change is both necessary and possible. *Glyn Ford*

WHAT SORT OF PARTY

The last few years have seen a number of socialists question the relevance of the Leninist tradition of a centralised revolutionary party based in the workplaces —see, for example, the interview with Sheila Rowbotham in our last issue. In the following debate

Richard Kuper, a member of the steering committee of the International Socialists Alliance, and Chris Harman, a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, discuss the case for and against Leninism.

Richard Kuper Organisation and participation

In 1968 the International Socialism group transformed itself, after a five-month long debate and two conferences, from a federalist into a democratic centralist organisation. As the 1920 Theses on the Role of the Communist Party in the Proletarian Revolution had described it, 'The chief principle of democratic centralism is the election of the higher party cells by the lower, the unconditional and indispensable binding authority of all of the instructions of the higher bodies for the lower and the existence of a strong party centre whose authority is generally recognised as binding for all leading party comrades in the period from one party conference to another.'

IS thus joined all those groups, both Communist and Trotskyist who, whatever their other differences, shared one belief in common —that a democratic centralist form of organisation was essential for the construction of a revolutionary party and that without such a party no socialist revolution was possible.

The Case for Democratic Centralism

The arguments for a democratic centralist party structure are powerful ones. At the most general level they reduce to the following considerations:

- capital is centralised, on a world scale, so we too must be centralised in order to combat it;
- no ruling class in history has voluntarily abdicated power, so even if the revolution is non-violent we must envisage a violent and bloody counter-revolution and prepare accordingly;
- levels of consciousness in the proletariat are uneven and
- the most advanced, conscious and far-seeing sections of the class must be grouped together and their experience generalised.

The party is not to be confused with the class: in all but revolutionary situations and the immediate prelude the party will be a small fraction of the class. While this realisation helps protect the party from dissolving into the class, representing the immediate interests of this or that section rather than the long-term historical interest of the working class as a whole in overthrowing capitalism, it also opens the party to the dangers of 'substitutionism' and sectarianism—mistaking its own interests and goals for those of the class. The party has to tread a tight-rope between opportunism/liquidationism on the one hand and ultra-left sectarianism on the other. The democratic centralist form of organisation as pioneered by the Bolshevik party seemed to present the most favourable organisational form given the tasks and dangers it faced.

Basing itself on the Russian experience and that of the immediate post-war period, the Second Congress of the Communist International enshrined democratic centralism as the form of organisation applicable to the proletarian vanguard throughout the world. But the experience which followed was not encouraging. The construction of 'parties of a new type', the process of

Bolshevisation of the new communist parties which took place internationally in the early 1920s, did so when the revolutionary wave was ebbing throughout Europe. In these circumstances the democratic centralist model provided an organisational structure which concentrated authoritarian control in monolithic form never before experienced in the workers' movement and, needless to say, savagely detrimental to the interests of proletarian revolution.

In response of the only consistent revolutionary current—the International Left Opposition and subsequently the Fourth International—was not to question the form of organisation but only the political line. Indeed Trotsky never seems to have recovered from his late conversion to recognising the need for the Bolshevik Party; his response afterwards was an over-estimation of what the party could accomplish on its own, a counterpart to his interpretation of the crisis as a crisis of leadership. And the sensitivity in Trotsky's own analysis, the pinning of it to a forecast of events which failed to materialise, was rarely followed among his followers who in one way or another have fetishised the Leninist (i.e. democratic centralist) form of organisation.

The construction of 'democratic centralist' organisation was nowhere able to spearhead the conquest of power even before Stalinism had triumphed. The Russian revolution remained isolated; the form of organisation it had given rise to was nowhere else successful.

For this reason if for no other it would be necessary to look afresh at the concept of democratic centralism. The task is doubly important today. Ten years after the events of 1968 placed the creation of revolutionary parties of the working class firmly on the agenda, progress has been extremely limited. Perhaps the forms of organisation adopted have played their part in undermining the credibility of the revolutionary project as a whole.

Efficiency versus Democracy?

Underlying general justifications for the democratic centralist form is an assumption that the two aspects (democracy; centralism) are more or less separable. Lip-service is paid to their 'indissoluble, dialectical unity' but the image which prevails is that of the Bolshevik Party in conditions of illegality in Tsarist Russia where all democratic aspects were more or less rendered inoperable. There is somehow a view that the party must above all else be efficient and that democracy is an optional extra; desirable but not necessary.

But the separation of efficiency and democracy means the reduction of criteria for success to purely managerial ones—to what degree has the plan been fulfilled by the loyal (and pliant) membership. Max Weber, perhaps the greatest of bourgeois social scientists this century, saw bureaucracy in a parallel way, as the technically most efficient way of organising capitalist production and administration. Capitalist managers, however, have long since abandoned the strictly hierarchical approach. Schemes for incorporation through creating the illusion of popular participa-

tion abound in factories, on housing estates, in colleges, in local authorities generally.

So even in purely technical terms efficiency is not maximised by opting for discipline at the expense of democracy. Yet, on the revolutionary left, there is a widespread readiness to play down democratic processes in the interests of 'getting something done'. But the party isn't concerned in any simple sense with getting something done.

It is ludicrous to believe that we can reduce the goal of the party to a simple formulation about a decisive act—the conquest of state power. A crucial and decisive aspect of the party's work is to help prepare the class for self-rule. Otherwise the anarcho-sindicalist fear that all the revolution will be is the party taking power will prove justified, if such a party could ever get it together to organise what would be a coup and not a revolution.

Most of the activity of party members for most of their political lives will not be concerned with the military preparations for a seizure of power (In Russia, incidentally, the Red Guards were built up essentially in the brief period between July and October.) They will be concerned with working among their colleagues in struggles against all forms of oppression and exploitation, fostering and encouraging the self-confidence, self-reliance and self-activity of those among whom they work. Sustaining such work is quite simply incompatible with the conception of unbridled discipline, of jumping to at a word, of lurching from rank-and-file work, to mass campaigning, now on unemployment, now on anti-fascist activity, now on the ideological front . . . no matter how important all of these interventions may be. Otherwise, instead of having members in all these movements, arguing for coherent direction and politics which can root these concerns and campaigns in a broader working class politics, the emphasis shifts to pulling individuals out of such movements into the revolutionary organisation. The building of the party becomes experienced as a raid on the class—and the number of comrades who go through the organisations of the revolutionary left exceeds many times the number who remain in it.

On the contrary, the essence of building the party is serious and sustained activity, taking responsibility for ones interventions (or lack of them), and publicly accounting for them—especially for the mistakes. That is to say, the complexity of party activity is not reducible to the simple question of numbers, or funds raised, or votes collected; it is, in essence, a question of rooting in the class and in the struggles of all oppressed sectors.

The Dangers of Democratic Centralism

Many would agree with the substance of the preceding analysis but feel in reality that the mistakes made in the past can be reduced to the errors of this or that individual or group rather than to a theoretical problem with the conception of democratic centralism. On this question two points must be made, one sociological, one political.

Democratic centralism may appear to be politically neutral, usable both by revolutionaries (who will respect the democratic component) and by Stalinists (who won't). In reality it isn't, for it provides an organisation structure uniquely vulnerable to a certain kind of degeneration and one extraordinarily difficult to regenerate.

The formal reasons for this are simple: the structure provides for a massive concentration of authority for the very best of reasons. Any existing leadership vested with this authority and worth its salt not only believes itself better able to lead than the average party member, but, to some extent, has won its position because there is, or has been, some truth in this belief. This leadership, for the same reasons, believes itself better able to interpret new possibilities and developments. There is, furthermore, a real pressure on the leadership to appear to be united (i.e. to be offering a 'decisive' lead) even where there are internal disagreements. So politics tends to be concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchy who maintain that concentration, and only take to the membership issues which are of secondary importance, or ones which cannot be compromised internally.

Debate appears to hinder action—unless the outcome is guaranteed in advance, when it is more of a rallying call than a genuine dialogue. Above all, the leadership becomes protected against the rise of new groupings with new insights or emphases on party work. Perhaps some of the new forces will be recognised and coopted into the leadership, but it tends to be a slow process—and a painful one—and the party which is supposed to be able to respond

like greased lightning to every change in the mood of the class is often the last to notice . . . Trotsky at the end of his life understood this only too well, when he said that Lenin in 1917 'represented not so much the party machine as the vanguard of the proletariat . . . (he) exerted influence . . . because he embodied the influence of the class on the party and of the party on its machine'.

In the absence of a Lenin, however, there is a greater likelihood of a self-destructive spiralling: the more individuals and groups try to question the direction the party is taking, the more the pressures to restrict such activities. If some section of the existing leadership is involved in this refusal to compromise it is likely to find itself ritualistically demoted and hounded out of any position of authority, if not actually expelled. And the follow-up to such a battle tends to be the further stunting of political debate of any sort for some time to come.

There is nothing inevitable in this organisational development, though there are factors predisposing towards it in the absence of countervailing political pressures. And it is here that the real danger of the concept of democratic centralism lies—in its encouragement of a monolithic and undifferentiated politics. The need for single-minded and decisive action in October 1917 is generalised into a principle of everyday life so that on every tactical question an immediate and wholehearted response is expected, whatever ones private disagreements or doubts. This is of course a parody, and only the wildest sectarians make such demands. But there is a wider tendency to accept that this is what democratic centralism ought to mean, and purely moral pressures play a disproportionate part in encouraging and sustaining political activity in small groups. Indeed, the more the crisis is felt to be upon us, the more important it seems to be to move quickly, crushing anything which might cause delay.

But what if the political analysis is wrong . . . ???

Party and Class

To begin to evaluate the concept of democratic centralism, we should return first of all to the greatest single problem (or rather constellation of problems) surrounding it—the relationship of party to class. For the whole notion of the party is predicated on the belief that while the party spearheads the seizure of power it is the class which actually takes power—through the soviets or whatever autonomous institutions the class generates. And herein lies the nub. While the revolution is being consolidated (which may be a matter of years rather than days) a strong workers' state is undoubtedly called for; the party, which has spearheaded the revolution sees itself, not unnaturally, as the guardian of the long-term interests of the working class, and concentrates executive action decisively in its hands.

The danger of substitutionism is inherent in this—that is to say it is inherent in the revolutionary process itself. The problem is how to guard against it, to build the party in such a way that after the seizure of power it will be reabsorbed into and subordinated to the autonomous institutions of the class where effective power must be located. To put it baldly, it is not just the state but the revolutionary party itself which must wither away.

The Communist International was wrong on this question—decisively wrong—when it affirmed at the Second Congress that 'the importance of the Communist Party does not diminish after the conquest of power by the working class, but on the contrary grows extraordinarily'. Why a party monopoly of power may have held the only possibility of saving that revolution by spreading it, is not the issue here. Suffice it to say that it was a desperate gamble—and a gamble which failed. That very failure laid the foundation for the development of the quite unprecedented monolithicism of the Stalinist party.

This is refigured not just in the 'extraordinary' growth in the importance of the Russian party after the revolution but also in the development which culminated in the April 1921 decision to ban factions. Of course the triumph of Stalinism represented a massive political defeat; but that political defeat had to be both won and consolidated organisationally and ideologically. The notion of the democratic centralist party as it had evolved by 1921 played no small part in that defeat.

In other words, the way the concept of democratic centralism is interpreted and applied is extremely dangerous. It might be argued (as IS did implicitly in 1968) that it needs refurbishing and rescuing from the distortions of the Stalinist era but the analysis here suggests that the problem goes deeper. We must pose afresh the question of what kind of organisation is appropriate to the class

struggle in contemporary capitalism.

Under 'normal' i.e. non-revolutionary circumstances, the disciplinary, machine-like aspect of group organisation is not of supreme importance: what binds people together is not 'complete centralism' but a shared politics, and any attempt to impose a greater unity than is politically feasible leads rapidly to splits and divisions, as the history of the Trotskyist movement testifies. IS's great strength in the late 60s and early 70s lay precisely in its willingness not to force political disagreements into hard organisational divisions i.e. in its receptivity to and tolerance of a diversity of political ideas, around a framework of shared assumptions about socialism as the self-liberation of the working class.

Under conditions of an ebbing revolutionary wave, democratic centralist organisation has proved to be extremely harmful, since it predisposes to a monolithic organisational response, just to stem the tide as it were. The experience of the 1920s and 1930s suggests that once a monolithic party monopolises the loyalties of militant in non-revolutionary situations, the construction of global alternatives (i.e. of revolutionary parties) is a non-starter. (That is not to say there is nothing to be done—keeping the revolutionary tradition alive was a vital contribution made by the Left Opposition in this period).

It is only in revolutionary periods that the unified intervention which democratic centralism makes possible might be fully justified, but even then organisation is subordinate to politics. No organisational structure was capable of compensating for the political inadequacy of the German left from 1919 to 1923. And, in arguing that the Bolshevik Party was not monolithic in 1917, the examples brought out always show that when party leaders were divided on issues they felt strongly about they had no hesitation in taking matters **outside** the party, both to the soviets and other working class institutions and to the non-party press. **One might well ask in what sense it was the democratic centralism of the Bolshevik Party which brought about October.**

Conclusion

All this is not to suggest that we can possibly do without organisation—and indeed centralisation. But the idea that there is a simple answer as to how we can achieve this must be categorically rejected.

The problem must be reposed. It is essentially a political one. Given our broad agreement on socialism as the self-activity of the working class and the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state to achieve it, the question at every stage is the following. What kind of centralisation will enhance and develop the struggles, self organisation, self-confidence and self-activity of those groupings who share this view of socialism? What kind of centralisation (i.e. organisation) will win others over to this conception?

A pre-condition for real success in building over time lies in the fostering of the tendencies towards self-organisation inherent in the struggles of any oppressed and exploited groups and in the rejection of elitist solutions which may be suggested. In other words, the centralism required must be defined as a centralism which starts from the real democracy of the struggle and which enhances it.

All too often revolutionary groups have become impatient with the difficulties inherent in the struggle. Short cuts are sought after, organisational solutions imposed: 'toughness', 'discipline' or whatever substitute for the painful work of winning a genuine position of leadership in the class struggle. And indeed there might be short-term gains in numbers or votes; but what is never taken into account is what is lost—in terms of the effective participation of party members in their own organisations as part and parcel of their effective participation in the wider struggle.

The experience of manipulation by leaders of left groups leaves no less bitter a legacy than manipulation by trade union officials and no amount of ranting against the latter makes the former any more bearable, or justifiable. Worse, it discredits the belief in the very possibility of achieving socialism amongst those who have been won over to a conviction of its necessity.

At a time when whole new social layers are being mobilised (for instance, around Grunwicks, Lewisham, Windscale, the Anti-Nazi League, the socialist feminist movement, and the electoral interventions of the SWP and Socialist Unity) the willingness to fight is not being matched by an adequate response from the left. New organisational forms are urgently required, before yet another generation is alienated from the organisations of the revolutionary left.

Chris Harman For Democratic Centralism

Richard Kuper's case rests on six main arguments. Each seems at first sight to be almost unquestionable. Each is, in reality, fundamentally false and dangerous.

(1) Democracy and centralism are opposed to one another

This is an old red herring that has received a new lease of life in the most unexpected quarters with the international crisis of the revolutionary left. For instance, Alain Krivine of the French Trotskyist organisation the LCR said in an interview in the issue before last of this review, 'democratic centralism—it's two words which contradict one another'.

But the popularity of an idea does not prevent it being false. Democracy is a method by which an organisation takes decisions. Those decisions only make sense if they are **binding** on members of the organisation.

If they are not binding, there is no point in their being made. If a minority can ignore the will of the majority, why bother about finding out the will of the majority? Why go to all the effort of having elections, counting votes and so on? You cannot have democracy without some means (moral or physical) of ensuring obedience to majority decision. When people enter a democratic organisation they necessarily surrender some of their freedom of action in favour of a **centralised** decision making process—whether or not the organisation calls itself 'democratic centralist'.

It is absolute nonsense to pretend that there is something 'undemocratic' about this surrender of individual freedom: democracy depends upon **limitation** of individual freedom in the interests of majority decisions. You cannot have democracy **without** centralism. There are, of course, various forms this centralism can take. It can be the centralism of a ballot box into which the organisation's members drop their voting papers; it can be the centralism of a mass meeting; it can be the centralism of a leadership elected to take day-to-day decisions. These various forms differ from one another significantly. But all are democratic *and* centralised.

The extent to which an organisation lacks this element of centralised decision making, it ceases to be democratic. The workers' movement has a rich historical experience of non-centralised and therefore, in reality, undemocratic, forms of organisation.

For example, in Germany in the course of the first world war the old Social Democratic Party expelled those who objected to its collaboration with the government's war effort. Nearly half the members broke away to form a new Independent Social Democratic Party (usually known by its initials as the USP). The new party reacted against the bureaucratic tendencies of the old by building a highly decentralised structure.

But this did not in practice result in a more democratic party than

the old SPD. The MPs, trade union officials and newspaper editors of the new party, who tended to be on its right wing, were able to exploit the lack of a coherent centralised structure. Without it there was no discipline capable of making them obey the feelings of the majority of members (who veered rapidly towards the revolutionary left). They continued to publish anti-revolutionary articles and to make anti-revolutionary speeches.

Eighteen months after the foundation of the Independent Social Democracy a revolutionary party, the German Communist Party (Spartakus) was founded also on a decentralised basis. Again the result was the opposite of 'democratic'! In this case the lack of centralism and discipline meant that the party was compromised on its ultra-left. Courageous, but foolhardy or inexperienced members were left to initiate armed actions, to call for localised seizures of power, and to form breakaway unions without any consultation with the organs of the party as a whole. The party could not control their actions, but still got the blame for them in the eyes of the rest of the working class. Without democratic centralism, minorities were able to take decisions for which the rest of the party was held responsible—and often paid for the responsibility with their lives.

These were not isolated or accidental examples. Ultra-left adventurers and self-seeking careerists alike often relish in the joys of 'decentralisation'—because it means a movement they can exploit to their own advantage without being bound by its discipline. Today in Britain, for example, lack of a common discipline is one of the hallmarks of the Tribune group of Labour MPs. Why? Because it allows the members to enjoy an aura of 'leftness' without impeding their pursuit of careerist and opportunist policies. In the same way it is precisely the lack of centralism of the Broad Left in a number of unions that gives it such an appeal to aspiring bureaucrats. It can elect them but not control them.

Whatever the intentions of those who propagate it, the notion that 'centralism contradicts democracy' can only provide an ideological cover for the unprincipled and the self-important.

(2) Centralism may be needed in the revolutionary situation, but certainly not in the day-to-day struggles most of us are involved in now.

This assumes that we face a centralised enemy, capable of manoeuvre, of taking on and defeating us one at a time, on the day of the insurrection but not before. But we are always faced with enemies who are organised to manoeuvre against every struggle of the working class. Hardly a single strike takes place without management—and often the state—trying to turn workers in one place of work against workers elsewhere. Revolutionaries have to try to provide a single, unified, 'centralised' response in such situations. For, we know that if one group of workers returns to work while others stay out, the whole struggle can be smashed.

The struggle for power brings out in the starkest detail the need for centralisation. But it does not exhaust that need. Richard writes as if the Bolsheviks needed centralism only 'between July and October' 1917, when they were 'concerned with the military preparations for the seizure of power'. Really Richard, have you not heard how in July they had to work, with a single, centrally determined will, to prevent a premature attempt to seize power.

(3) Centralism chiefly means hierarchy, 'a massive concentration of authority', 'unbridled discipline, jumping to at a word'

The need for centralism flows out of the very character of the class struggle itself—of the way it is composed of battles, big and small. In any battle it is an advantage to an army to operate in a coordinated fashion, according to a single set of tactics.

All of us have experience of struggles where the most proficient fighters do not operate in this way, where militants make decisions of enormous importance in the heat of the moment without consulting their fellow militants, where demagogues arise who make speeches demanding action without having given a thought as to how the action is to be carried through, where no-one has bothered to assess the overall balance of forces or to seek out the weaknesses in the enemies ranks, where at best militants come together on an ad hoc basis, without any real knowledge of each others strengths and weaknesses, so that requiring the utmost reliability are given to those who are temperamentally unreliable and decisions requiring the coolest head are taken by those most easily carried away by events.

The party is necessary precisely to overcome these weaknesses at every level—to provide a pool of militants who have collectively trained themselves to intervene, whether in a sectional strike or a

full blooded insurrection, to discuss with each other what to do, to assign tasks to one another on the basis of known abilities, to provide at least the crude elements of some centralised direction to the struggle. Such an organised network of experienced revolutionary socialists (often referred to as 'cadres') does not arise out of thin air. It takes many years for a party to develop the necessary traditions of coordinated, collective effort: otherwise it is all too easy in the heat of the struggle for members to forget the need for a cool head, for scientific appraisal and, above all, for coordination with the other members of the party.

So democratic centralism is essential, not just as an abstract national principle, but as the germ of party activity in each locality or factory. But once you accept the need for coordination and centralisation in this way, you also have to accept mechanisms to make it efficacious. You cannot organise a referendum of party members every time you want to decide whether to spread a strike or to respond to a racist attack. The question is not whether there is going to be a centralised response (or non-response), but whether this response is properly organised.

The selection by the party of those of its members who are best able to take rapid decisions is, like the building of a tradition of collective intervention, a process that takes many, many years. The existing leadership has to be tested in struggle, its deficiencies discovered and corrected. Hence the importance of the democratic component of democratic centralism: it provides the mechanism by which the members discipline the leaders, feed the experience of the class struggle back into the centre of the party.

But none of this is possible unless leadership decisions are implemented. Does there then have to be blind obedience by the membership to every call from the leadership? There are all sorts of incidents in the class struggle which are not of a vital nature, which a centralised national leadership certainly cannot provide detailed guidance about. Here the unit of decision making is the branch, the workplace organisation of the party, or even the individual militant. The leadership has to try to coordinate these decisions by developing an overall theoretical and political perspective among the membership.

There are, however, many occasions on which the party has to move very quickly, as a single force. Then the leadership has to be able to demand *immediate* action from the membership and to be judged on its performance *after* the event, without debate beforehand. Otherwise the party reacts to emergencies in a disorganised way. The decisions of the leadership are not tested by the practice of the party as a whole, and so there is no easy way to tell whether the decisions were right or not.

(4) The real day to day activity of revolutionaries consists in 'fostering and encouraging the self-confidence, self reliance, self activity of those among whom they work', not in executing demands from the party centre.

This assumes that somehow 'self activity' and 'self confidence' arise independently of struggles in which centralised direction is necessary. But they do not. The 'self activity' of the working class develops through a struggle against the enemy class. As part of this 'self activity' revolutionary workers have to be able to suggest ways of generalising the struggle, tactics that can produce victory. They can only do so successfully by suggesting tactics, by offering leadership, that fits in with the leadership offered by revolutionaries active in other parts of the class. The question of coordinated direction, of centralised leadership, necessarily arises again.

The existence of a centralised revolutionary party does not, therefore, form an obstacle to the self-activity of the masses—on the contrary, the latter is incomplete without it.

(5) 'Under conditions of an ebbing revolutionary wave democratic centralist organisation has proved to be extremely harmful . . . Once a monolithic party monopolises the loyalty of militants in a non-revolutionary situation, the construction of global alternatives (ie of revolutionary parties) is a non-starter'

Here Richard simply confuses effects with causes. It is true that in periods of defeat and demoralisation workers parties with centralist notions have often declined into counter-revolutionary sects (whether big or small). But many workers organisations with non-centralist notions have historically undergone similar degeneration. The cause of the degeneration lies in the period and the political response of the party leaders to it, not in the organisational form.

Again, once you have a party with mistaken views that

'monopolises the loyalty of workers', it makes the creation of new revolutionary parties very difficult, regardless of whether it is formally centralised or not. One of the most graphic examples of an organisation leading the class to defeat was that of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in the Spain of the 1930s: its failure to see the need to build a workers state to wage the war against Franco left the room open for the liberals, social democrats and Stalinists to rebuild a bourgeois state structure that could only lose the war against Franco. The libertarian notions of the CNT did not stop it from 'monopolising the loyalty' of the most advanced workers.

For an existing revolutionary party, the answer to a declining revolutionary wave is not to do away with the whole notion of developing a leadership—it is to develop a leadership that knows how to retreat as well as how to advance.

(6) Democratic centralism leads to the party substituting itself for the class

You don't have to be a democratic centralist to substitute yourself for the class. Trade union bureaucrats, councillors, MPs, do it every day. So do the proliferation of terrorist groups throughout the world with their 'proletarian justice' without the proletariat. So too do many 'individual revolutionaries'.

In the case of Russia, the democratic-centralist Bolshevik party distinguished itself in the course of 1917 by its repeated refusal to substitute itself for the class. The 'non centralist' Mensheviks were prepared to go behind the backs of the workers to arrange governmental coalitions. The 'non-centralist' anarchists were prepared to substitute their own adventures for the mass action of the class. It was the Bolsheviks who insisted to waiting until, very late in the year, they had the majority support of the workers.

The problem after 1917 was not that the democratic centralism of the Bolsheviks led the party to substitute itself for the class—but that the decimation of the working class in the course of the civil war gave the party the crude choice between either substituting itself for the class and resisting the whites or seeing the victory of full blooded counter-revolution. As Trotsky noted, had that happened the word for fascism would not be an Italian word from 1922 but a Russian one from 1919.

Of course it is true that the Stalinists adopted the words 'democratic centralism' to describe their bureaucratic dictatorship, just as they took over the words 'Communism' and 'Socialism' to describe state capitalism. But that does not mean there was not another model at work in the revolution itself: after all, even as late as 1921 the platform of the workers opposition was printed in a quarter of a million copies on the official party presses. No doubt that is why one of the early oppositions in the party referred to itself as the 'democratic centralists'.

Incidentally, Richard is out of this world when he claims that the 'Communist International was wrong when it affirmed at the Second Congress (1920) "the importance of the Communist Party does not diminish after the conquest of power by the working class, but on the contrary grows enormously". Here Richard is playing with the 'suicide' view of the party, popular in semi-anarchist 'council communist' circles—the party is necessary to propagate a regime of workers councils, but must dissolve itself once this comes into existence.

What the arguments forgets is that the victory of the workers in one country is not the end of the struggle, but in many ways the beginning. It will be greeted with bitter and violent internal and external resistance, which will produce wavering away from the revolution among the lower middle classes and the less militant sections of workers. Only the most determined, organised, coordinated and centralised agitation by the advanced section of the workers—that is the most energetic activity of the revolutionary party—can lead the rest to defend the revolution. To believe otherwise is to substitute a pacifist dream for the reality of revolution and civil war.

(7) What matters is the correct politics and not the form of the organisational structure

Richard justifies this claim by writing, for example, that 'no organisational structure was capable of compensating for the political inadequacy of the German left from 1919 to 1923'.

Rarely have the facts of history been so inverted for the purpose of argument. When the German revolution broke out in November 1918 the most experienced leaders of the revolutionary left—Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, Karl Radek and Johannes Knief—had a very clear idea of what needed to be done. They all saw that it would

take some months of partial struggles, especially of economic struggles, for the majority of workers to break with reformism and to support a dictatorship of workers councils. In the meantime, they insisted, it would be folly for the revolutionary minority of the class to try to seize power behind the backs of the rest.

Rosa Luxemburg's articles for these months are absolutely clear on these matters. If the revolution went down to defeat it was not through 'inadequacy of politics'—it was because the politics of this leadership was not tied to a coherent 'organisational structure'. There was not even the embryo of a party capable of transmitting the political analyses of Rosa into the key sections of the class. Indeed, such was the lack of a tradition of coordinated revolutionary activity that Karl Liebknecht simply ignored the decisions of the rest of the leadership of the newly formed party and, in the heat of the moment, put his name to a call for the forcible overthrow of the Social Democratic government. The result was that the most advanced layer of militants blundered into a premature struggle for power, which led to the annihilation of much of the Communist leadership.

The tragedy in Germany was that the democratic centralist party was not built until after the party had suffered major defeats and until after many of its best leaders had been murdered. Of course organisation is useless without the correct politics. But correct politics is impotent without organisation. To pretend otherwise is to guarantee in future a repetition of many of the massive defeats of the past. Yet this is effectively Richard's conclusion.

Building a democratic and centralised revolutionary organisation is not an easy task. Our model cannot be the so-called 'Marxist-Leninism' that was elaborated after Lenin's death by the new bureaucratic rulers of Russia. We have to develop forms of leadership that learn from the spontaneous struggles of workers, generalising the lessons, and feeding them back into the class. But that also means that our model cannot be the existing ritualised patterns of bourgeois democracy. Few things are more stultifying for debate in a revolutionary organisation than a 'government-opposition' arrangement by which one section of the organisation feels that it is compelled as a matter of principle to oppose the elected leadership on every issue: this makes it extremely difficult for either the leadership or the opposition to learn from the concrete development of the class struggle.

Finally we have to remember that a small revolutionary organisation certainly is not the embryo of a new society. We do not exist as an island of socialism within capitalism, but as a voluntary organisation of militants whose task is to lead the class as a whole to construct the new society. So the aim of internal democracy is not to show 'this is how things will work under socialism', but to tie the development of the party to the concrete experiences of its militants in the workplaces.

But what then happens when the 'democracy' of the party fails to reflect the experiences of the most advanced sections of the class? When the party members have become routinised and cut off from new upsurges of spontaneous struggles, or when they come from milieus which have no real contact with the factories? In such cases, as Cliff argues in the first volume of his *Lenin* or as Trotsky argues in his *Lessons of October* the party leadership cannot simply sit back and reflect the 'democratic will' of a party that is lagging behind the class. It has to campaign vigorously for the sudden turns in the line of the party if necessary reaching to forces outside the party to pressurise the party members to shift their position.

This may not seem very 'democratic' to Richard, but the alternative is disastrous: it is to abandon the aim of building a vanguard organisation that can lead the class to power for the easier path of remaining a cozy, 'democratic' sect that coexists with the system. That is why the history of any serious revolutionary organisation—whether in the time of Marx and Engels, in the time of Luxemburg and Lenin, or today, is not just a history of linear growth from conference to conference, but also of 'lurches' in one direction and then in another, and on occasions of splits and expulsions.

It is not possible to tell from his article whether Richard has given up the perspective of building a revolutionary party for the easier option of friendly, 'democratic', non-centralised discussion circles. All he says is that 'new organisational forms are urgently required', without specifying what these are or how we are to get to them. But it does look as if those of us who remember the succession of massive defeats the working class has suffered because its most militant elements were not united in a revolutionary party are going to have to build without him.



I think I'm a socialist because I've got faith. I now it sounds a cliché but I have got faith that people will open their eyes and see that they possess the power to make their lives better and create a society which doesn't use us. A society where people are not scraping and struggling to live, where it's possible to have human dignity, where we don't feel inadequate because of who or what we are.

I believe the system has to be turned upside down and replaced. When I was about eleven I was convinced that life was beautiful, that everyone could be rich and famous and that people just chose to be lazy or poor. People still say that to me in arguments.

People at school have always called me a nutter but I now that they can't deny that a lot of what I talk is sense. The media label us extremist in our views, but then people who want to create a better life have always been called extremist lefties. Just like the people who defend themselves against a violent system, like the freedom fighters in southern Africa, are labelled 'terrorists'. Like the unemployed marching and lobbying the TUC because of the violent way they've been treated, no jobs, having to live on nothing and being labelled as failures and scroungers...they were the ones who were called violent.

I didn't really pay much attention to socialism although I've more or less been brought up in a socialist household. It wasn't until I related it to myself and the people around me when I actually saw it was the system which creates racism and hatred between people. When I saw the crummy, non-existent opportunities being offered to me and my mates at school. When I saw and felt the effects of things like demonstrations and especially things like Rock Against Racism. The music which I love so much is fighting against the things I hate and for the things that I believe in, it does mean a lot when you see people wearing that badge, it means discussions about racism, the reasons, the effects.

**it's in
their
ignorance
our
strength
lies**

Lewisham showed me that it's important to be united, I was terrified but I left knowing that people aren't apathetic and are prepared to stand up for themselves. I suppose that is the one and only advantage about fascism, it unites everyone else to smash it and to realise that there must be something wrong with the system if fascism is slowly creeping in!

I was a bit frightened at first that the Socialist Workers Party was full of intellectuals who were only interested in boosting their egos by showing how much they know about history, Russia etc., but then I realised that the majority of members are decent people who do give a stuff about other people and who believe that enough to get off their bums and try to change society.

Things have changed in the two years that I've been in the party, like at school, words like 'racism', 'sexism' and 'injustice' were never really discussed, now they're a part of our vocabulary. Kids do know that politics isn't just boring old slops on telly talking way above our heads. Politics involves us; it involves the fact that we're allowed to go to school; the fact that we can eat cornflakes every morning. It involves us in our everyday living.

Kids know that, they know that politics involves them and they are opening their eyes to the fact that it is a class struggle world wide, not a race struggle, not a sex battle, not a height battle but a class struggle.

We can't go on forever putting up with these injustices sitting back and saying things will never change. The capitalists are clever. They've created a system which profits from racism, sexism and ignorance. But their ignorance is the fact that they think we're blind and apathetic and that we'll never unite.

It's in their ignorance that our strength lies.

As long as I believe that is as long as I'll call myself a socialist. *Polly Wilson*

Polly Wilson is a schoolstudent in Walthamstow

... I AM A SOCIALIST