

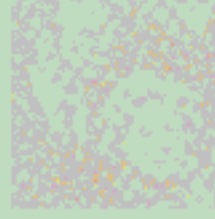
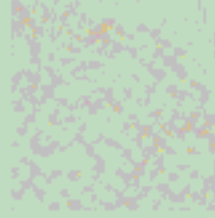
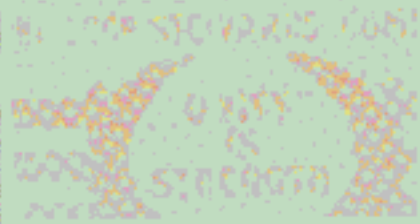
socialist REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

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a new Cold War



Leyland: The Rise and Decline
of Shop Floor Organisation



Steel Hard Blues?

model for the present period was the 1930's, when the wholesale destruction of older industries and the wholesale devastation of whole chunks of country was accompanied by a modest but sustained growth of new industries.

Through most of its first months in office, the government itself was content to shape a framework within which this cutting back occurred, but tried to keep out of any direct confrontation with the trade union movement. It relied on the union leaders to restrict action against the cuts to demonstrations and token stoppages, and it put the squeeze on companies that acceded to high wage claims by keeping up the interest they pay on borrowing and by allowing the international value of the pound to stay quite high (thus making it difficult for firms to cover wage increases by increasing the price of goods they sell abroad). This provided a framework which, it believed, would leave private industry no choice but to confront the shopfloor.

The strategy worked to some extent. At Leyland, Edwardes did locate the weaknesses of the stewards organisation (see the article in this issue). The commercial television employers and then the engineering employers *did* move in the summer towards good old confrontation. The difficulty was that it did not take long for these last two groups of employers to discover that they had not calculated correctly, and to retreat back into compromise.

The Tories were then faced with the situation in which it seemed that the 'going rate' for wages would be 16 per cent or more - despite the very low level of the settlements by some firms.

The point began to be reached where, if the government did not put itself on the line, then the line might simply disappear and predictions from the Labour front benches (and, in private, from some of the Tory ministers!) about a U-turn to interventionist policies and a formal incomes policy might be proved true.

The *Financial Times* Lombard Column reports 'a growing expression of doubt' in the City about 'the government's ability to achieve its main objectives of reducing the inflation rate and increasing growth.... The key to all this gloom is pay.' (4 Jan 80)

That is where steel comes in. While in opposition, the Tories commissioned studies of why they had lost out on the confrontations over pay in 1972 and 1974. Some of their conclusions were very pessimistic:

'A future Conservative government would be unable to defeat certain powerful trade unions in a direct confrontation. That is the advice contained in a secret report to Mrs Margaret Thatcher..... It concluded that use of troops on a large scale to break such

strikes would not be possible.' (*The Times*, 18.4.78)

However, not all were gloomy:

'A Tory policy paper on the nationalised industries singled out steel as one of the industries least vulnerable to strike action where the government should be encouraged to stand and fight.' (*Observer*, 30.12.79)

That is the fight that is as we go to press taking place. The Tories, quite crudely, are out to show that the balance of class forces established by the defeats suffered by Heath at the hands of the miners can be reversed.

The Union Response

The main aim of the union leaders this winter has been to head off any serious struggle against the Tories with token demonstrations and limited actions.

Even when the steel union leaders were driven into a corner, with no choice but to call at strike. The TUC acted in the way it thought would limit active involvement. As in the miners strikes of 1974, it imposed massive official blacking in an effort to limit picketing, especially so-called 'secondary picketing'. Its calculation was that it would then keep control of the union members and easily reach a settlement with the employers and the government the moment they showed any signs of moving. It was, after all, the passivity built into the 1974 miners strike that enabled the TUC to sell the membership to the Labour government so soon afterwards.

Yet the first indications from the Steel Strike were that the union leaderships were by no means been successful. Reports from Yorkshire and from South Wales indicated a massive, active involvement in picketing. In Sheffield at least 3000 picketed out of the total workforce of 25,000 on strike or refusing to cross picket lines. The advice of Bill Sirs, leader of the ISTC, to ignore private steel was ignored by strike committees made up of lay delegates. The miners' leader Arthur Scargill, who organised the flying pickets in the 1972, boasted that he has been advising the S. Yorks strike committee. The pickets' leaders were completely open about their intention to resort to 'secondary picketing'.

No doubt by the time *Socialist Review* is printed the response to this of the national union leaderships will have been to try to clamp down on the picketing. Already by the second day of the strike they were offering to settle for the most miserable deal with the Steel Corporation. As we go to press, it remains to be seen whether the scale of the picketing will have given the Tories a big enough shock to make them turn their attention away from the steel workers and look elsewhere in their search for a union to hammer. If not, the strike could be very significant for the whole course of the class struggle.

'The coming recession, unlike the Wilson-Callaghan recession of 1975-6, will be accompanied by a sharp reduction in overmanning and a general improvement in efficiency.'

'The evidence is all around for those with eyes to see: the new attitudes at British Leyland and British Steel, the small print in some of the high wage settlements in the private sector, the reaction of companies to the high exchange rates...'

The words are those of Samuel Brittain of the *Financial Times*. But they sum up admirably the intention of his monetarist co-thinkers in the Tory government. They show how the cuts, the offensives against the workforces in Leyland and steel, the high exchange rate and the high interest rate, the refusal to take any action to lesson the rigour of the recession, are all part of a single strategy. They also indicate the key role of the struggles in steel and Leyland for the whole pattern of Tory policy.

The government holds that British capitalism has too much fat on it to survive in an increasingly crisis-prone and competitive world - fat in the form of subsidies that were meant to keep industries intact through a short downturn that has turned into an endless trough, fat in the form of welfare services meant to ensure plentiful supplies of fresh productive labour for a boom that now seems gone for good, fat in the form of plant which is operating at less than average profitability, above all, fat in the form of concessions to the trade union movement that were necessary in the aftermath of the fall of the Heath government, but which seem a luxury as that memory fades into oblivion.

Its answer is to use the recession - if necessary deliberately to accentuate the recession - in order to slim British capital down to size, to cut off the fat!

It believes it will leave a slimmer and fitter British capital, capable of growing of its own volition. Keith Joseph even went so far a few months back as to let slip that his



A New Cold War ?

The deployment of a new generation of nuclear missiles with increased fire-power throughout Western Europe, the announcement by Carter in December of a five per cent increase in the US arms budget, the manoeuvres of the US fleet off the Gulf, the open Russian takeover in Afghanistan, the freeze on grain shipments from the US to Russia, the rushing of arms from the US and China to Zia's military despotism in Pakistan, the postponement by Carter of the ratification of the SALT arms limitation agreement, a further upping of arms expenditure East and West — the world is suddenly a more unstable and dangerous place.

All the signs are that the 'detente' of the 1960's and 1970's is breaking down into a new version of the Cold War of the 1950's. Then, a minor incident in any one of a dozen flashpoints throughout the globe would send nuclear shivers down a billion spines.

With the slide back into super-power confrontation, comes the attempt to reactivate all the old ideological stances. In the West, that means portraying the breakdown of detente as a result of 'Russian aggressiveness', or even, in Carter's words, 'atheistic Communism'. The Kabul coup then becomes an excuse for Western militarism in the same way that the Prague coup was back in 1948. We are told there is no choice but to increase arms spending so as to ward off the threat from men in the Kremlin who see the world balance of forces tilting in their favour.

The question is asked: 'Are you for the Russians in Afghanistan?' and if you answer in the negative, then you are expected to accept the denial of food shipments to feed Russian workers, the enlarged contracts for the arms profiteers, the rushing of weapons to the self-professed hangman in Pakistan.

It is an obscene logic that socialists have to combat. The takeover of Afghanistan by the Russians is a sordid manoeuvre that can be of no possible benefit to the various peoples who inhabit that land. But it cannot be considered in isolation from the long chain of cause and effects, originating in the West as well as the East, that has produced a new aggressiveness on both sides.

You cannot talk about Russian troops in Kabul without also talking about the US

fleet in the Gulf. In the West, to say "Russians out of Afghanistan" without, at the same time, saying "US hands off Iran", risks simply echoing the cries of our own cold warriors at a time when they are raising their voices to a crescendo.

Why the new aggressiveness?

The winding down of the cold war in the 1960's and 1970's was based on the mutual acceptance by Washington and Moscow that the balance of forces that emerged from the Second World War was frozen into a fixed form by the military alliances of the late 1940's. But already, even 15 or 20 years ago, the balance was beginning to crack.

Sizeable chunks of the West's old colonial empires declared themselves 'neutral', Egypt moved from the Western to the Eastern camp; China moved into hostility to the Russians; Europe was unwilling to bear the burden of maintaining US hegemony in Vietnam; Rumania fell out with Moscow and prepared its troops to repel any Czechoslovak-type invasion; the Portuguese empire collapsed and that meant that Southern Africa was a new area of instability for the US; Egypt's rulers reacted against Russia pressures by swinging right back into the Western camp; the US showed its power by imposing an Israeli-Egyptian peace; the Iranian revolution suddenly pulled the plug out of the network of US allies on Russia's southern borders.

The cumulative effect of these changes were not, as facile pro-Western commentators claim, to shift the world balance of forces in a Russian direction. Rather, what they did was to make it very unclear what the balance exactly was. (How do you weigh the loss of Iran and Angola to the US against the gain of the alliance with China? How do you measure the advance of Russia in Afghanistan or Ethiopia against its losses in Egypt or Somalia?) The uncertainty itself is a destabilising factor, feeding illusions to those on both sides who think there is something to gain from quick military manoeuvres.

This might not have mattered, were it not for the way in which, since 1973, the regimes of both West and East have stumbled into repeated economic crisis they don't understand and cannot begin to cope with.

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Economic crisis bring political instability to new areas of the world. The 1973 recession spelt the end of the regimes in Ethiopia and Portugal and spilt over into rioting in Egypt and Poland. The present round of crisis has already seen upheavals in Central America and certain Caribbean islands, together with Iran. It is producing prognoses of discontent in some of Russia's European satellites which point to a malaise that probably stretches into Russia itself.

The instinctive response of all ruling classes in such situations is to reach for the guns. In the US, the military establishment exaggerate the threat to US dominance and draw the attention to key sectors of capital to the way that they will be protected from the recession by a new burst of arms spending. In Russia, crucial chunks of the bureaucracy based in heavy industry and the military identify their own power with displays of armed might. This alone, they

argue, will make people in Poland and Hungary and perhaps Russia itself put up with declining living standards. The Americans in turn exaggerate Russian armed might in Afghanistan in order to make the Iranians see sense and to persuade US interests to accept an enlarged arms budget and the reduced market for grain.

Rulers everywhere see it all as a welcome way to divert attention from the burdens of the advancing recession.

Afghanistan What's really happening ?

Question and Answers about Afghanistan by Jane Morrison

What was the sort of regime in Afghanistan when the Russian troops moved in?

The people brought to power by the military coup of April 1978 were essentially from the urban middle class. Taraki, the leader of the first revolutionary government, made up of the Popular Democratic Party, admitted that most members of his Khalq faction were teachers. What happened has quite rightly been described (by Fred Halliday, in *New Left Review*) as 'the seizure of power by a radical section in the state machine, led by civilians and aided by army officers'. Parcham, the other faction (which initially shared power, was ousted and has now been brought back by the Russian troops) controlled important sections of the armed forces under the pre-revolutionary Daud government.

What was the motivation of the revolution?

There was increased dissatisfaction in certain parts of the army and among the middle class intelligentsia. The Daud government's increasing conservatism frustrated the intelligentsia's aspirations, and the Soviet trained officers found they had little chance of promotion. Abdel Khedir, who had led Daud's own coup in 1973, was disillusioned with Daud's drift away from the Soviet Union and his failure to solve the country's economic problems.

There had been widespread discontent before Daud took power - as early as 1968 there were student demonstrations and strikes among Afghanistan's small working class (150,000 construction and factory workers out of a total population of 15-20 million).

Then, early in 1978 the Daud government highlighted its own authoritarianism by the assassination of a PDPA leader Akbar Khyber and the arrest of Taraki and five other PDPA leaders.

A coup brought Khalq and Parcham to power. Coming from the middle classes, they attempted basically to push through reforms that would modernise the country

a land distribution reform, the institution of primary education for every child in its own tongue, abolition of the worst forms of patriarchal oppression of women. The modernisation took for granted the already existing nationalisation of industry and the alliance with Russia.



Why did the new rulers begin to face revolt in the countryside and to fall out among themselves?

The urban population upon which the regime was based was tiny. The vast majority of the country's population is involved in agriculture - the main exports are dried fruits and nuts.

Ethnically the population is divided into various groups. The biggest and most powerful are the Pushtuns (Parthans) who have tended to dominate the Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkomans in the north, the Hazaris (descendants of the Mongols who are Shia Muslims) and the Baluchis in the south. In addition there are about two million nomads for whom international frontiers do not exist.

Politically, the different groups are not noted for their loyalty to central governments.

Economically, the land was farmed by share-croppers. Taraki's government attempted land reforms that aimed to get rid of this system. Early on the government

claimed to have redistributed 600,000 acres of land out of 3m acres expropriated.

But the reform failed disastrously. Because of the share-cropping system the farmers relied on the owners for their seeds, fertiliser and farm implements which of course were not provided once expropriation had taken place. The government could not help because the tax levied on land was obviously not being collected. As a result, a lot of land remained uncultivated with disastrous consequences for food supply.

Ideologically the government claimed to be pro-Islam, but opposition was inevitable because the basic reform, that of the land, was considered to be anti-Islamic.

Faced with the resistance to its measures, the government found its own base too narrow to impose them without the crudest repression. Before the Russians deposed him, Amin published a list of 12,000 people killed in the 18 months since the revolution. It was not surprising that the new rulers fell out among themselves over the question of whether to make concessions to the backwardness of the countryside, or to proceed with their modernising measures and isolate themselves even further.

After all, this is not the first time that a modernising group from the urban middle class has taken control of a country with basically state capitalist intentions, found itself overwhelmed by the problems it has faced, and ended up with its members slaughtering each other. Look, for instance at the record of Ethiopia over the last four years.

What is the character of the forces in revolt against the regime?

Opposition is based on the countryside, where most of the population lives, but which is fairly inaccessible for government troops and party administrators. Fighting is organised around traditional tribal ties therefore a tribal leader, invariably a landowner, would be in command. There are disparate groups, all of which claim to control the majority of the mujahiddin

(fighters). Ideologically, the groups are united only in their hatred for the central government. There is no distinct political programme, although the leader of one group, the Afghani National Liberation Front, says the government would be replaced by a moderate Islamic republic, not totally against modernism but strongly respecting ancient traditions.

The army's support for the government is shaky. There have been two mutinies in the past six months — one in Bela Hissar barracks in Kabul — and frequent purges of 'non-revolutionary' soldiers have not improved morale. Many soldiers have deserted and gone over to the rebels.

In the towns an organised opposition movement has been virtually impossible with curfews, surprise night arrests, imprisonment and re-education camps.

Why did the Russians intervene?

They found themselves in a situation in some ways similar to the Americans in Vietnam in the early 1960s. They were committed to a regime which was losing control of the country. If they did not move in their troops on a large scale, they risked a serious rebuff which would hurt their international prestige and their ability to keep other client regimes in order. At the same time, again like the Americans — when they organised the overthrow of the dictator Diem in 1963 — they felt they had to change the government in order to put in someone who might get a wider base of support.

What has all this got to do with socialism?

Nothing. The revolutionary governments in Afghanistan have had the goal of modernisation, but have not in any sense been based upon the working class. It was precisely because they were intent on implementing reforms from above that they were forced into wholesale repression, and, its logical sequel, the wholesale murder of one another. It is time for the left internationally to recognise this, otherwise, the spectre of one 'socialist' ruler murdering his 'socialist' predecessor and in turn being murdered by a successor imposed by 'socialist' Russian tanks can only discredit the whole notion of socialism.

Chronology

Before 1973. Monarchy founded by Durrani confederation of Pushtun tribes in eighteenth century, and dominated by Durranti elite practically ever since. Occasional periods of unsuccessful attempts by monarchy at modernisation. Brief intervals of liberalisation. Russian influence always strong (1953 to 73 Russian aid 1,500 million dollars compared with US's 500 million). Important wave of strikes by tiny working class in 1968. More common, growing

dissatisfaction by students and urban professionals.

PDDA (Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan) founded 1965. Biggest social group in it teachers. 1967 splits into Khalq (People) faction led by Taraki and Parcham (Flag) faction led by Karmal. Differences obscure: Khalq if anything more pro-Russian, Parcham perhaps more flexible.

1973. July. Army coup overthrows monarchy and establishes republic under Mohammed Daud. Daud was a cousin of the former king and had been royal prime minister 1953 to 63. Parcham actively involved in coup and represented in government, but ditched after a few months. Daud government initially appears reforming and more pro-Russian. But does little to break the power of the old elite. Under pressure from USA and Iran shifts away from Russian orientation (Russian advisers decline from 1000 in 1972 to 200 in 1976). Daud government increasingly unpopular in last years.

1978. April. Army coup overthrows Daud and brings PDDA (both Khalq and Parcham factions) to power. Taraki new president, and prime minister. Karmal is vice president. Coup apparently unexpected

by Russians follows move by Daud against PDDA and anti-Daud demonstrations by students and civil servants.

New regime purges old royal elite from state, and announces programme of land reform etc. US cuts off aid, Russia rapidly increases it (by May 1976 Russian advisers up to 3000)

1978. Summer. Parcham faction ditched. Karmal sent to be ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Parcham supporters tried and purged. Karmal recalled to face same fate, but stays on in Eastern Europe.

1979. March. Amin becomes prime minister, thus replacing Taraki as top of the Khalq hierarchy, though Taraki remains president. Amin takes tough line against rebels, but despite big Russian military aid, war goes badly.

1979. September. Taraki killed, apparently in botched attempt to oust Amin. This attempt had apparently been backed by the Russians concerned at the worsening position in the war. Amin becomes president.

1979. December. Russian invasion. Amin killed. Karmal installed as president.

Crisis in the Eastern Block

When people talk of 'world crisis' they often make a mental reservation that excludes the so-called socialist countries. The reality is that all the major indicators point to a crisis in the Eastern bloc which is developing at the same time as the one in the West.

The last year has seen the lowest Russian growth figure since World War Two — a mere two per cent. The same figure is forecast for this year. It is thought that real consumption did not grow at all last year.

A similar pattern emerges all over Eastern Europe. In Hungary the plan target for 1979 was for 3-4 per cent growth; actual growth, according to government newspapers, was a little over one per cent. Real incomes fell by between one and 1½ per cent. In Czechoslovakia the projected growth rate will be the lowest for a decade at 3.7 per cent.

The crisis seems to be most severe in Poland. In the early 1970's the country seemed to have reversed the long term trend to falling growth rates. But, towards the end of last year, the chairman of the state planning commission announced that the results for the year were 'significantly below' the growth target of 2.8 per cent, itself the lowest set since 1962.

As in the West, falling growth rates have been accompanied by sharp price rises. In July, the Czechoslovak regime announced 50 per cent increases in the price of electricity, coal, coke and oil. In Bulgaria,

the price of basic foodstuff recently went up by 30 per cent. Hungary raised the price of electricity by 51 per cent, fuel oil by 40 per cent, and coal by 30 per cent last July. At the same time, the price of baby food and other consumer goods also went up.

In the last ten years the Eastern European countries have tried to solve some of their problems by an ever more massive scale of borrowing from Western banks. By mid-1977 total Comecon debts to Western banks had risen to 48.4 billion dollars and it shows no sign of petering out. In Poland, the point has been reached where a quarter of new loans are eaten up in interest payments on previous loans.

In a desperate attempt to ease these debt burdens, new investment plans throughout Eastern Europe have been scrapped and prices raised, producing new symptoms of crisis.

This opens up the likelihood of new clashes between rulers and ruled. Reports from inside Poland indicate that much of the population expect some sort of elemental upheaval in the period ahead. A recent 76-page 'Report on the State of the Republic' by a semi-official committee concluded that 'the expected fall in the standard of living for the next two or three years may go beyond all limits of society's psychological resistance.'

Background to the Steel Crisis

It is not difficult to prove that the steel strike was provoked deliberately by the government and the Steel Corporation as the latest stage in a general employers' offensive against wages and conditions. The first 'deal' offered by the Steel Corporation means a huge cut in real wages at a time when inflation is running at around 17 per cent.

The Corporation offered a maximum of 3 per cent nationally, with up to 10 per cent available at the local level in the form of productivity deals. A further 3 per cent was offered if the union agreed to abandon the guaranteed week agreement, which gives 80 per cent of earnings for lay-offs not due to industrial disputes. Since all sorts of bottlenecks in production occur in the course of the year, the guaranteed week works out to be worth just 3 per cent of wages, so the BSC additional offer was worth exactly nothing.

As for the local deals, they offered nothing new. There are no national wages set for BSC production workers. Local deals have always been negotiated. Given that BSC want to reduce the workforce by up to 75,000 jobs - i.e. by about half - most plants will not be in a strong negotiating position this year.

In other words, the BSC's real offer was 3 per cent and there was little prospect of any more without local agreements to massive job losses. The offer was a calculated insult.

The Viability Argument

The BSC and the government justified their offer in terms of the 'viability' of the Corporation. In fact, the perilous financial state of the steel industry is mainly the result of the impact of successive booms and slumps. In 1972 UK capacity was 28 million tonnes (metric tons). The BSC then embarked on their development strategy to raise capacity to 36 million tonnes. This, of course, meant a massive capital investment programme which saddled the Corporation with huge interest payments.

The aim was to fit in with the forecasts made by private industry as to its steel needs in the years ahead:

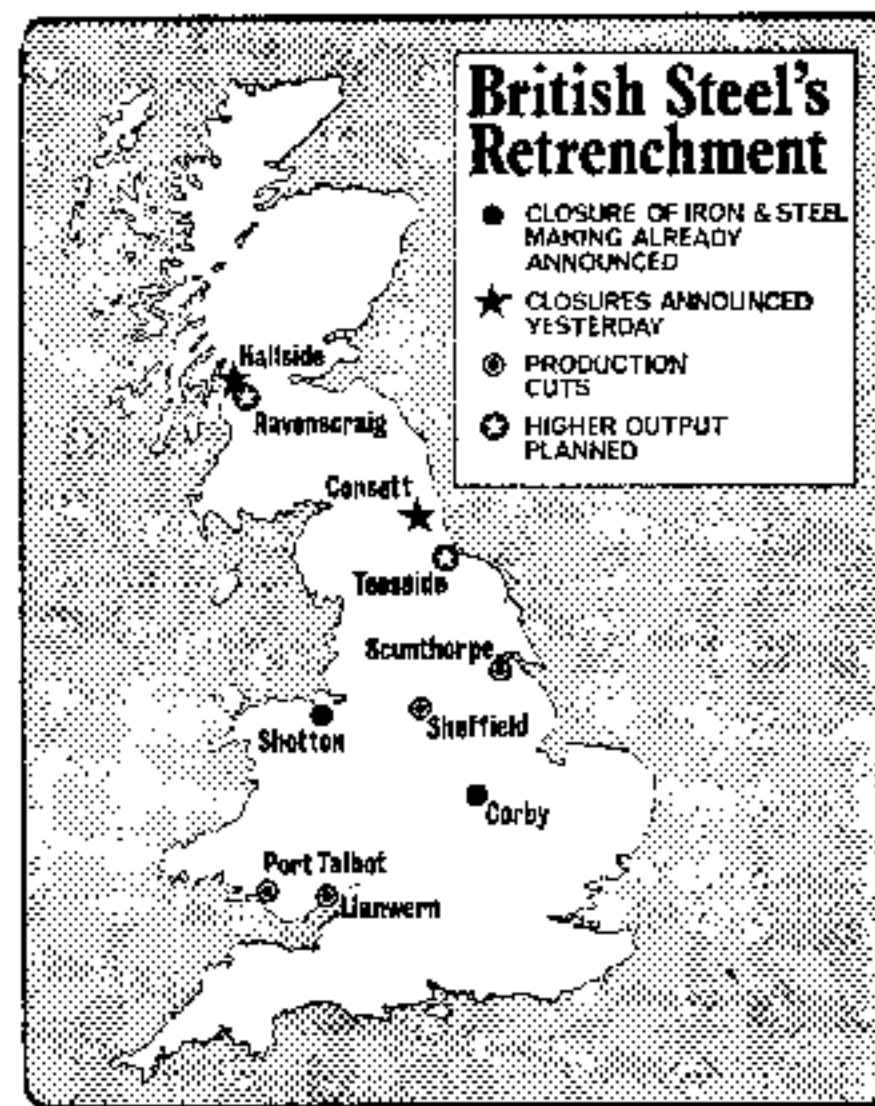
'The Corporation listened to its customers as they sketched out their ambitions for growth and adjusted its own forecasts for steel demand up accordingly ... As a result, British Steel was consistently too optimistic about the future market prospects.'

(*Financial Times* 14 September 1979)

The recession of 1974-75 began to knock the props from under this optimism. The market for steel failed to materialise and a world-wide crisis of overproduction set in. The Labour government set out to destroy 40,000 jobs in four years and accepted

the EEC-inspired 'Davignon Plan' which called for an output of 17 million tonnes. No, the Tories have cut the target to 11 million tonnes.

The result is that, in just six years, BSC has been driving full speed for production targets of 28, 36, 17 and now 11 million tonnes a year. No wonder the industry is in chaos.



WHERE THE BRITISH STEEL CUTS WILL FALL

Present work force in iron and steelmaking	153,000
Proposed closures:	Job losses
Consett	4,000
Hallside, Scotland	400
Proposed partial closures:	
Scunthorpe	3,800
Llanwern and Port Talbot	11,000-15,000
Further cuts in rolling mills	2,500
Proposed manning reductions at surviving plants	12,000
Announced closures of iron and steelmaking at Corby, Shotton and Cleveland	13,000
Already agreed at local level at a number of works	8,000
Planned remaining workforce 100,000	

The new situation makes nonsense of any dreams of 'profitability':

'The new round of capital spending is almost complete and has resulted in the Corporation securing the best array of steel-making plant anywhere in Europe. It could pay off if there were to be a revival of steel demand in the early 1980's. But there is little likelihood of that....'

(*Financial Times*, 14 December 1979.)

The BSC claim that they are hopelessly uncompetitive with other European steel industries and that cut-backs and low wages are therefore essential. There is certainly world over-production of steel and every industry is propped up by its government, but the BSC deliberately overstates its case. In fact, the losses since 1975 have been £1,102 million. This corresponds to interest and depreciation costs of £1,100 million.

In fact, British Steel has quite a good record compared with other European industries:

'Meanwhile, the capital spending is saddling British Steel with interest payments of £207 million this year. Every

tonne of steel is made to carry a burden of £12 interest.'

'The league table of loss makers among European steel makers in 1978-79 is headed by Sacilor (France) losing £32 a tonne, followed by Italsider (Italy) £21 a tonne, Cockerill (Belgium) £20 a tonne, British Steel £17 a tonne, Salgitter (West Germany) £10 a tonne, and Arbet (Luxemburg) £6 a tonne.'

'If the interest component is deducted from British Steel's losses per tonne, it can be seen that the Corporation comes down to a relatively low rate of loss of £5 a tonne - a good performance by current European standards.'

(*Financial Times*, 4 July 1979.)

If BSC's debts on capital expansion programmes subsequently abandoned were written off the BSC would break even. But Keith Joseph has now said that the condition for the government writing off this loss is the sacking of 75,000 workers. In other words, the closures are a political decision. They form part of an overall strategy for demoralising the working class and rationalising British capital at our expense.

The Background to the ISTC

If the present redundancies are all carried through, the union will lose half its existing membership. This is the basic reason why Bill Sirs, the most right wing of trade union leaders, has taken a hard stand on the BSC wages offer.

The ISTC is a totally bureaucratic union. The General Secretary is not elected but appointed. Once there, he stays for life. At last year's conference, during a debate on a resolution calling for the election of full-time officials, Bill Sirs announced: 'I have a contract of employment and I'll sue you if you pass this resolution.'

The Executive is a lay body, but elected in the most undemocratic manner. In addition to geographical areas, the electorate is subdivided into sections. These were originally based on trades but most of these have long since disappeared. The result is a totally confusing voting situation which is deliberately used by the full-timers to get certain candidates elected.

The annual conference is a very recent innovation—only four have taken place. It remains non-policy making. According to Section 1 of the standing orders for conference:

'A resolution on any matter considered by the conference ... shall in no way be represented as or inferred to be the policy of the Confederation unless expressly adopted by the Executive Council.'

Even the delegates to the conference are elected in an undemocratic manner. The sectional rule applies with the resulting confusion. But, in many areas, there is not even a vote and the delegates are chosen by the local official. In a recent meeting of one of the South Yorkshire Joint ISTC branches one of the members asked about the election

of delegates. He was told: 'Joe (the district official) has already decided who's going.'

At local level, there is very little factory-wide organisation. There is no real equivalent to a shop stewards' committee in the ISTC. The factory is divided into branches, each with a secretary who negotiates with management. There are, of course, many fine militant branch secretaries who ensure good wages and conditions for their members and who, on occasions, lead unofficial strikes. But they are, by and large, cut off from the rest of the factory and there is not the same collective organisation amongst production workers in a steel factory as there is in, say, engineering.



In summary, the ISTC is a union dominated by the General Secretary. All officials are effectively appointed by him, and removed by him. The officials see their jobs as keeping smooth production going and avoiding disputes. It is therefore hardly surprising that the ISTC is known as a scab union.

In the last nine months a few ISTC members have attempted to overcome the divisions and organise both a more militant fight on wages and conditions and to get the union democratised. The BSC have replied by sacking two ISTC branch secretaries in Sheffield. One of these is the Chairman of the South Yorks Joint ISTC, which is roughly equivalent to a lay District Secretary in the AUEW. 400 workers struck in his factory to get him his job back. The response of the officials was not to close the whole works but to declare the stoppage unofficial and attempt to get the strikers back to work. The outcome of this dispute is unknown since the local strike has run into the national strike.

Bill Sirs is a right-wing Labourite, a Callaghan supporter. He accepts the need for sacking in the steel industry. He has refused to support any of the closure battles. The result is that the two major works at Bilston and Corby have closed despite the readiness of local steel workers to fight. He accepts the need for an incomes policy and argued for one at the June 1979 Conference of the ISTC. He is a man who has been pushed too far, not one who has changed his spots.

Simon Turner

Corrie's Bill - The Final Act

A fair number of people on the left have got the impression that the Corrie anti-abortion bill was being watered down in its House of Commons committee until it is almost innocuous. Anyone who has thought this should think again.

The twelve anti-abortionists -- out of a committee of 17 -- didn't make any concession. If anything, the bill comes out of committee harder than it went in. The time limit for abortions will be 20 weeks, as in the original bill. This caused some problems earlier, particularly with Tory health minister Gerald Vaughan, who wanted the time limit lowered to only 24 weeks.

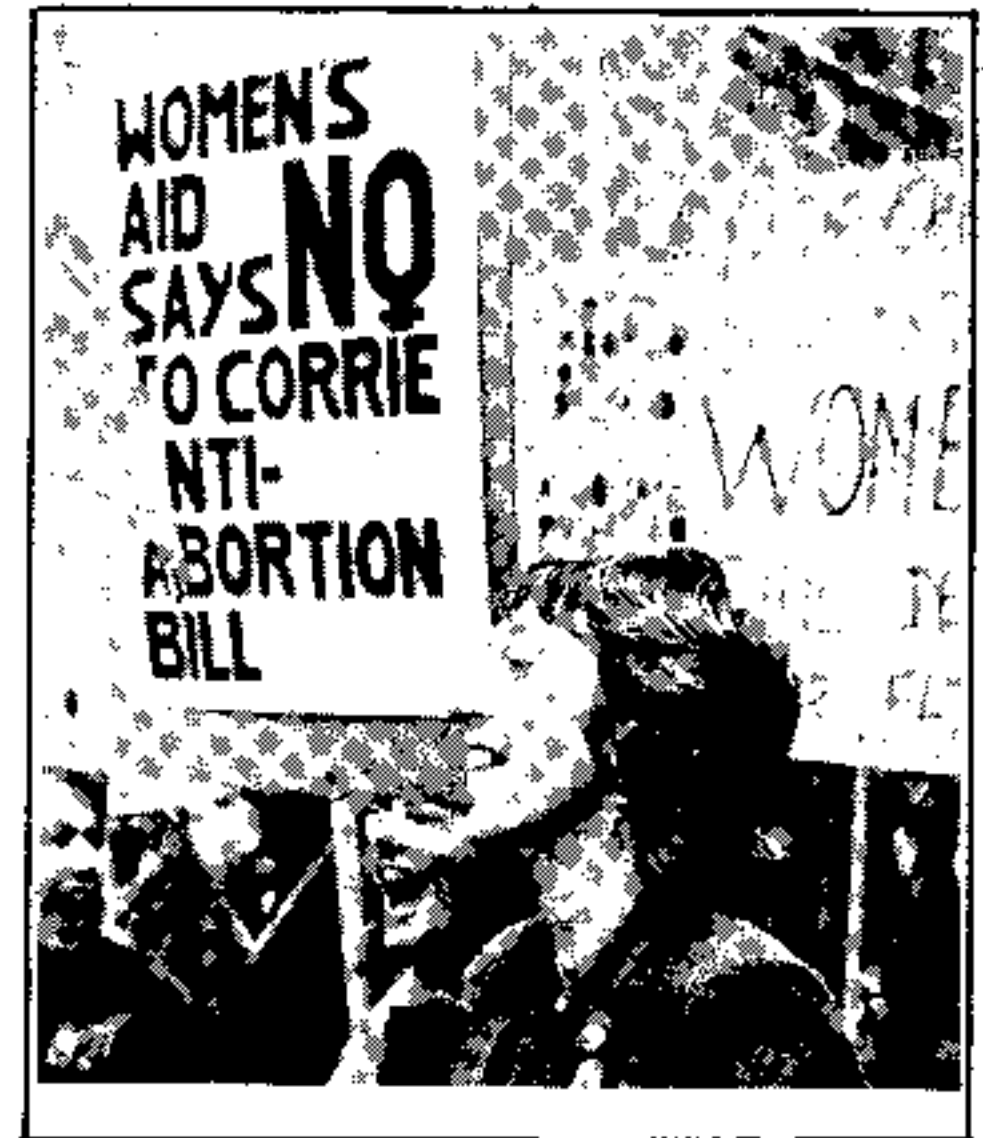
That problem seems to have been resolved. William Benyon, sponsor of a previous anti-abortion bill, has added a new clause which will allow abortions beyond 20 weeks only in order to preserve a woman's life; or to prevent grave or permanent injury to her physical or mental health; or to terminate pregnancy if the foetus is deformed. He also persuaded the committee to allow a statutory instrument to lower the time limit -- which means a government minister can lower it without even a vote in parliament. But there are features to the bill which are even nastier than the time limit.

It provides that it will only be possible to get a termination if a pregnancy would 'cause serious injury to the woman's mental or physical health or a substantially greater risk in childbirth'. The words 'serious' and 'substantially' will completely alter the grounds for abortion and mean that most doctors will be unwilling to refer a woman for fear of prosecution. A particularly vile indication of the way the anti-abortionists' minds work is the decision to recommend to doctors that they use methods of abortion which avoid killing the foetus.

What it all adds up to is that the limited gains of the 1967 Act are being thrown out of the window. If you are likely to die, or if the foetus is likely to be deformed, then you will probably get an abortion. If you are not in quite such a sorry state then your chances will be very slim indeed.

The changes in the law mean the effective junking of any idea of the right to choose or control over our bodies. Abortion when the gynaecologists want it, not when women want it.

Unlike the two previous anti-abortion bills, this one looks like becoming law. February 8 is almost certainly the day of the third reading. Despite a certain coyness when the bill first came out, the Tory government will go along with it. We will have the spectacle of the first woman prime minister voting for a measure which allows religious bigots to dictate which rights women are allowed.



Opposition to the Corrie bill is at one level very impressive. The TUC demonstration on October 28 was at over 60,000 the largest ever with contingents from many trade unions. More trade union branches support abortion than ever before. Abortion is increasingly seen as a class issue, not as one of individual conscience.

But the size of the demonstration hides the weaknesses of the campaign. Locally there is a lot of passive support, but activity is still low. Trade union support doesn't often go beyond resolutions. The fragmentation of the women's movement and the small size of the revolutionary left mean that the impetus for a mass campaign is very small.

The activity which needs to be done is being carried by small numbers of people in most areas. It is ironical that even though we have more support than ever before activity is not much greater than in 1975. This must be partly a sense of *deja vu*--this is the third campaign against an abortion bill -- and partly of the misplaced idea that nothing will come of the Corrie bill after all. But it is also a failure to mobilise the real rank and file of the trade unions -- particularly women -- to fight on the issue.

The next month is full of activities such as regional demonstrations in the North East, West Midlands and Scotland and of course the lobby at Westminster on 5 Feb. This along with the assembly of women on the 8th can provide a national focus, but their success will depend on the work done locally.

We have to accept that most MPs will only be persuaded to change their minds by a mass movement outside parliament, not by the number of letters they receive from their constituents. If the third reading is passed that mass movement has to have a focus round defiance of the law. Probably the best way of doing so would be by keeping clinics open and using them like occupations as a focus for trade union and local community support. That will be the only way the fight for abortion will be kept a collective one, and not just a problem for individual women.

Lindsey German

Portugal back to square one

The most recent stage in the return of Portugal to bourgeois 'normalcy' after the revolutionary turmoil of 1974-5 began last month. The right Democratic Alliance coalition won the narrowest of parliamentary majorities. The Socialist Party, which played such a key role in 1975 in halting the forward march of the revolution, saw its own governmental aspirations crushed as it lost 10 per cent of its votes. Robin Peterson visited Portugal during the elections and interviewed many figures on the left. He spoke to Socialist Review afterwards about the situation today.

The victory of the right wing Democratic Alliance in the December elections was a shock and a setback to the left. One indication of how concerned people were with the danger of a victory for the Alliance was that both Otelo da Carvalho and the leaders of one of the revolutionary groups, the PRP—whose leaders are in prison—were advising people to vote for the Socialist Party to keep the right out.

It's hard to say how the victory of the right has affected the feeling within the factories, except to say that people are really pissed off. They see that there is going to be a very hard struggle. Both the Communist Party and the Socialist Party are talking in such terms. They are saying, 'This government won't be able to get away with anything'—although personally, I'm sceptical about taking seriously rhetoric from such leaders.

However, there is no doubt that the working class remains tremendously strong. There's very little of the *revolutionary* feeling of 1975 left. But the *class* feeling is amazingly strong. For example, Rosario da Costa from the Textile Workers Union told me about the demonstrations. She says the May Day demonstration this year was bigger than anything since 1974, as big or bigger than the demonstrations of 1975. And there have been a number of other very large demonstrations, organised through the CP-led union, the Intersindical, or through the Workers Commissions of the Lisbon Industrial Belt, which is also a CP-led body.

Also, according to her, the CP 'can call strikes in more factories than they could before. They don't call strikes in all the factories over political issues, but they do call strikes in single factories over wages'. In the month of September there were 108 'registered' disputes—which for an industrial population the same as that of Birmingham, means there is a lot of class feeling.

The same thing is shown in the elections. The Socialist Party lost a lot of votes. But the vote of the right was only about three per cent up on 1976, so that although they got

the majority of seats, their total vote was still slightly less than the combined left vote. And the CP gained votes—its electoral front got 46.9 per cent in Setubal, 50.7 per cent in Beja, 48.8 per cent in Evora, 26.1 per cent in Lisbon. And in many places in the North, where it has traditionally been very weak, its vote nearly doubled.

Again, the workers' commissions have by no means disappeared. Such is their strength that the pre-election governments had to write them into the labour law—even if only to try and incorporate them. They didn't feel able to challenge them head-on. The reaction to this has been very mixed. In many small factories, for instance in textiles, the commissions had completely collapsed and have been recreated by the law. The Confederation of Portuguese Industry was pretty upset about that and attacked the government.



'There is no doubt that the working class remains tremendously strong.'

At the same time, there's hostility to the law in some of the big factories. It means that the commissions have to be elected by a secret ballot. And a minority of workers can insist that the election is on the basis of political lists. So there is no chance of a single militant getting elected by the group of workers he works with, unless he is on such a list. I think that could eventually take an enormous toll in terms of organisation.

The numbers of workers in the unions are very high. There are 1.7 million in the Intersindical, and about 300,000 in the union formed jointly by the Socialist Party and the right parties, the UGT.

The Communist Party members are fantastically self-assured. They say to you, 'We have done well. Look at the gains we have made by not going mad. We are still very strong, and we've had an extraordinary degree of success'.

In the workers' commissions, because the CP are an organised force and the revolutionary left has no organisation at all, any militant will, in effect, follow the CP, because it gives a lead, even if he or she disagrees with the CP. I'm sure the membership of the CP has grown. There are quite a number of people who were with the revolutionary left in 1974-5 who are with the

CP today.

The Socialist Party has moved to the left overall. But you can't trust it at all. It's like the Labour Party going into opposition. And the Socialist Party has no real base in the factories. I've got the figures for the Petrogal workers' commission. Of 5000 votes, 40 per cent went to the CP, 25 per cent to the right wing and only 10 per cent to the Socialist Party.

A scheme has been set up by which every sector of nationalised industry has to have a worker elected to its board. Thirty sectors elected representatives—and 30 members of the CP were elected.

That does not mean that the UGT union does not exist. They've probably got 300,000 members in reality and control two big unions, the office workers and bankworkers. But remember they were formed by the right wing parties as well as the Socialist Party. And it's a union federation based upon affiliation of entire individual unions. It's not a situation like France or Italy where rival political unions organise among the same group of workers within the same workplace. Hopefully the victory of the right in the elections will produce a split within the UGT between the Socialist Party supporters and the right.

All the big Portuguese firms remain nationalised, and it is going to be very difficult for the government to denationalise them, although everyone says this is what the right will attempt to do. I don't think they will begin such an onslaught until after the next two rounds of elections, because of the instability of the situation while further elections are pending and because of the reservoirs of strength among the workers movement.

The real problems are going to be in the longer term, in say four years time. At present living standards are going down. But they are still nowhere as bad as they were under fascism. The real crunch will come in the future, as the inflation (at 25 per cent), the weakness of the currency, the rising unemployment and the impact of the new world crises have their effects. The question then will be whether the working class will have the strength to resist the attacks of the Democratic Alliance. I'm frightened resistance will be defeated.

The trouble is that the CP are not using their strength in a way that can win. They organise token strikes, strikes over wages in individual factories, and demonstrations against the cost of living, and the attacks on the agrarian reform. But they insist everything has to be 'orderly' and respectable.

One example of the way they respond was a miners' strike at Panasceira near Castelo Branco. The miners, with a bit of prompting from the extreme left, decided on an occupation. But the CP argued against that, on the grounds that it was a British company!

In this case, the left won the day. The police were called in to evict the miners—and were driven back by the whole

community—the wives, the old people, the children—coming to the aid of the miners. But this was a very rare example of the left getting workers to go beyond the CP.

Another example of how the CP reacts has been with the attacks on the agrarian reform. Two farm workers were killed on a demonstration against the return of one of the owners. The CP went in immediately and told people to cool it, on the grounds that 'we don't want riots'. Again, farmworkers have been sabotaging the machinery and burning down the hayricks and barns of the returning owners. The CP denounces this as the 'work of right wing provocateurs'.

The return of the former owners to the land shows how the right can succeed. They have been going about it in a piecemeal fashion. Two or three owners return every week. They are given their old homestead, a piece of the best land around it, the machinery and even the chickens leaving the cooperative somehow to get along with what's left. So gradually, the strength of the workers is being eroded.

The revolutionary left has by no means disappeared. The combined vote of the parties to the left of the CP was still 5 per cent—higher than anywhere else in Europe. But it is so disorganised that it cannot usually present a real alternative to the CP in the workers' movement.

There's a crisis of the revolutionary left, and people are open to all sorts of ideas. But they are often learning the wrong lessons from the past. Apartidaria (anti-party) notions are very wide-spread. People are sick of party politics. They say, 'what we need to do is to organise the left in a non-party format and somehow a revolutionary party will emerge.' It seems that such people haven't learnt anything from the defeat of 25 November 1975. The problem then wasn't any lack of strength of workers' movement. It was the inability of the left to organise to do specific things.

The PRP, which appeared to make much of the running in 1975 scarcely exists. About half its hard core cadre have been held as political prisoners for more than a year, and the rest have been very much preoccupied in the defence campaign. An organisation much influenced by it, the OUI, held a 1400 strong national congress and four public meetings with Otelo da Carvalho which attracted 1700 people in 1978. But the OUI has done hardly anything in terms of intervention in the workers struggle.

The most cohesive section of the revolutionary left has been the Maoist front, the UDP. They got 2.2 per cent of the vote. The atmosphere in their offices was quite different to that of other groups. It was busy. There were trade union posters up on the wall. They had leaflets talking about the work of their cells in particular industries. They've got a really good record of intervention in concrete struggles in the class.

The UDP does not call itself a party, but a front of democracy and against

fascism. This leads them vastly to exaggerate the significance of fascism at this stage. The party behind the UDP is the pro-Albanian PCP(R). The problem is whether the UDP is a sufficiently flexible umbrella to allow other militants to co-exist with the determined Maoist group that runs the

front.

The real question in Portugal is whether out of the present ferment of ideas, there will develop a revolutionary current capable of building for real intervention in the very acute struggles that can be expected in two or three years as things get really tough.

An Italian Connection! Militants Sacked from Car Factories

Militants sacked from car factories; waves of hysteria in the press about wreckers and saboteurs; a union capitulation. It sounds all too familiar—but this time it is not Derek Robinson in Birmingham rather it is the Fiat 61 in Turin.

In October, the FIAT management took the plunge and sacked 61 workers, claiming that their presence and activities first, disrupted production and secondly, insinuated that they were linked in with the terrorism of the Red Brigades and the Front Line organisations.

The back-ground to the sackings has some interesting parallels with the Robinson case. Fiat is the key firm in Italian capitalism. Not only is it the largest and richest, but the class struggle there is decisive for what happens in the rest of Italy. The 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 reached its highest point there; the struggle over the signing of the new contracts in July 1979 gave heart to militants all over Italy.

Over the last three years, however, the level of struggle in FIAT had declined. The mass strikes of the previous 7 years had ebbed, many workers were disillusioned. The key reason for this was the role of the trade unions inside the plants.

As the Communist Party moved closer to governmental power in its vain pursuit of the 'Historic Compromise', the Communist dominated trade union became increasingly committed to boosting FIAT productivity and began to join in all the usual participation committees. The results were a worsening of conditions in the plant, a decrease in employment as FIAT introduced robots and sub-contracted out work to small factories. Union membership declined; instead some workers began to look to the urban terrorism of the Red Brigades and similar groups or the 'diffused violence' of the 'collectives' inside the factories.

Over the last five years, 60 management cars have been burnt at the steady rate of one a month. Over the last three years there have been at least ten major fires in the plants. Over the last few months 18 managers have been wounded and three killed. On a more traditional level of industrial relations there have been a whole series of small strikes which have badly hit production.

FIAT's response was to sack the 61. Their motives were clear from whom they hit. The sacked are not central figures in the union structure, rather they are representatives of

all those who have not accepted the union-management participation schemes. They include six women who have been amongst the most vocal in arguing for women's rights. While it is true that a few of the sacked do sympathise with the Red Brigades, that is not the basis for their selection; their real crime has been to attempt to fight back outside the limits laid down by the unions.

The strategy of FIAT with these sackings then is not a frontal attack on the unions, but rather the destruction of any unofficial structures inside the factories in order to further enmesh the trade unions. They have managed to throw the unions on the defensive. What FIAT is saying by kicking out the unofficial militants is that if the unions can't control the work-force then management will.

By connecting these militants with the acts of terrorism that have taken place, FIAT are saying that the tactics used (like the blocking of the motor-ways, the unofficial strikes, the sealing off of the plants and the verbal intimidation of foremen) cannot be distinguished from terrorism. Finally FIAT is giving notice to the working class throughout Italy that things are going to change, that the gains won over the last ten years are under attack. In short, that the bosses offensive is on.

The unions response was almost as pathetic as Duffy was in Britain. Faced with a witch-hunt in the press, they ordered a token two hour strike. For the militants in Turin it was far too little; for many workers disorientated by the press campaign it was too much. What it showed, above all, though, was the political and organisational weakness of the unions.

The unions had already taken an equivocal line. Just four days after the notice of the sackings came out: one of the leading CPers said 'if the 61 are violent, if they have committed crimes, they must not be supported by anyone least of all the trade unions'. No wonder the strike was not a huge success.

The sackings have been turned from a political affair into a purely legal one. The struggle against the sackings is now being 'fought' in the offices of industrial tribunals not on the factory floor. In itself that is a victory for FIAT and a setback for Italian carworkers.

Tim Potter

The Tory Employment Bill

The central feature of the proposals which the Tories put before Parliament in a new Employment Bill just before Christmas is the attack on *active* trade unionism. In contrast to the Industrial Relations Act of 1971 — which was an attempt at completely rewriting the terms of worker/employer relations — the offensive this time is relatively narrow and defined. It is designed to make going on strike more difficult, winning strikes more difficult and, above all, to undermine trade union militants.

So, again unlike the IR Act, the new measures are not a real threat to trade union officialdom — in fact they are based on existing legal precedents which make the steward or the rank and file member the fall guy, rather than the union itself or the bureaucracy. Thus the fight to defy the Tory proposals this time round is bound to be much harder than in 1971-72 (quite apart from the general political and industrial climate).

A second fundamental difference between the new laws and the IR Act will be that the really vicious elements in the proposals — for example, allowing solidarity or flying pickets to be sued for breach of commercial contract by employers — depend on the employer choosing the battleground.

The changes will allow employers, their organisations, and the courts to pick and choose the precedents they wish to set and at the same time minimize the chances of political action being gradually developed and organised on the shop floor, because the teeth of the changes depend on the employers' whim.

At the same time the Employment Bill ranges very widely — much more so than most of the legal experts thought it would. This is crucial for the coming weeks, as the Bill goes through Parliament's committee stage. A series of amendments to make the Bill's provisions both more specific and tighter and some additions — a ban on secondary blacking — are almost certain.

The Tories could even, if they wished, put through an amendment ending all union immunity against being sued for breach of contract — not just solidarity pickets as in the current proposals. The new laws, when enacted in the summer, may look quite different in some respects from the present proposals.

Pickets

The really fundamental change proposed in the Bill is on picketing. The explanation of the Bill (much clearer than the Bill itself) describes Clause 14 on picketing as limiting the scope of section 15 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 — which simply states that peaceful picketing is legal. This will now only apply to peaceful

picketing ... only when carried out by a person attending at or near his own place of work (or, if he has been dismissed, his former place of work), or by a trade union official accompanying a member of that union at his place of work.' Clause 14 also states that nothing in section 13 of the 1974 Act (the section which spells out union immunities from being sued) 'shall prevent an act done in the course of picketing from being actionable in tort' — unless the picketing is 'legal' as newly defined. This simply means that pickets on firms supplying plants on strike can be sued by those employers for any loss of business. And it means that a member of the AUEW in one GEC plant supporting a picket called by the District Committee at another GEC plant can be sued by the employer.

What's not at all clear about Clause 14 is the powers it gives to police to arrest flying pickets or solidarity pickets. Some Labour MPs in the first House of Commons debate on the Bill took the position that any such pickets could be arrested immediately they showed up on the picket line. This doesn't appear to be the case and, legally, the Bill still leaves the police absolute discretion on arrests. But of course it will make it much easier for full-time officials and right-wingers to duck out of organising solidarity or flying pickets altogether on the grounds that 'it's no longer legal'.

The police and courts will, however, be working on the basis of the legal status of the new law and being a picket outside the terms of the new law will of course put those arrested on the defensive. But arrests are still governed by the criminal law and there is no offence called flying picketing yet!

The Closed Shop

The Employment Bill's paragraphs on the closed shop are almost certainly going to be changed because of pressure from the employers — above all the CBI and EEF. They don't like the proposals because they tie employers down on when to concede a union shop, they leave the way open for massive litigation, and there is a lot of vagueness about some of the proposals. The increasingly strident 'small firms' council in the CBI is particularly opposed to these provisions.

The basic things which are bound to go through however are the right of objections to union membership on grounds of 'conscience', the rights of the courts to fine unions through 'compensation' — for certain expulsions and dismissals of scabs, and the right of the courts to interfere with union rulebooks by ruling certain exclusions and expulsions unfair. These elements are contained in Clauses 3, 4, 6 and 9 of the Bill.

A further development here is the new

rules under which the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) is to operate. Since it was formed the EAT has acted as an appeal court — on dismissal, equal pay etc — from industrial tribunals, adjudicating on points of law only. The Employment Bill allows appeals to the EAT on grounds of law *and* fact, which means that judges — and the higher courts — can be brought back into the heart of union decision-making and internal affairs. This is probably unimportant in the short term, but in the long term could be the thin end of the wedge in rebuilding the National Industrial Relations Court which existed under the Industrial Relations Act.

Codes of Practice

The new Bill also has provisions for Codes of Practice which will be designed to draw unions into the type of collaboration and participation machinery against shop-floor militancy which the CBI, EEF etc have been working on. These codes of 'practical guidance for promoting the improvement of industrial relations' could prove very important when drawn up. They can be approved by a simple majority vote by Parliament whenever the government sees fit and, though not legal documents, will be 'admissible evidence' in legal proceedings or at tribunals — in other words most union officials will tend to go along with them unless there is massive resistance. The Tories could also well decide to issue the TUC's Concordat guidance on picketing (as amended by the law) as a Code of Practice.

Future Plans

Because the Tories' proposals are relatively narrow but have massive implications for *effective* trade union action, part of the battle to win a substantial minority to active opposition is going to involve explaining that the changes in the law are designed to dovetail with much more aggressive and determined attitudes from employers. Under the Industrial Relations Act, the employers as a mass refrained from attempts to enforce legally binding agreements or take unions to the NIRC for 'unfair industrial practices' — blacking etc. The picture now is very different.

The EEF or the CBI and half a dozen other employers' organisations probably have the authority to dissuade their members from precipitate use of the law and to keep their powder dry so as to use the law as part of a more coordinated move to shift the balance of power.

The Employment Act, when it is passed, will be a *deterrent*, a device to get union officials to pull the membership into line which is a key reason why the campaign against it has got to involve the *practical* implementation of the Rank and File Code of Practice and a commitment to trade union militancy which full-time officials will oppose or support only in a half-hearted way.

The danger is that formal protest action will leave unanswered the question of what the laws are really aimed at.

Leyland: The Rise and Decline of Shop Floor Organisation

As we go to press, the report is due out of the AUEW executive three-man, inquiry into the sacking of Derek Robinson, chairman of the British Leyland combine committee and convenor of the biggest Leyland plant, Longbridge. But it already seems clear that the sacking constitutes the biggest success yet for the employers' offensive against basic union organisation.

Michael Edwardes of Leyland has in his grasp success in the onslaught on the shop floor — the success that so eluded the engineering and commercial television employers in the long drawn out disputes of last summer. His success is already leading other employers to study his tactics. The CBI is urging its members to imitate his use of the ballot to appeal to the shop floor over the heads of the stewards and the unions. From up and down the country come reports of stewards who feel management is trying 'to do a Leyland'.

Yet when Edwardes first launched his offensive against the rank and file, many representatives of the ruling class were in doubt as to whether he was doing the clever thing. Even after he had won a seven-to-one vote from the workforce for his proposals to 'save Leyland' (ie to sack 40,000 workers), a Financial Times feature article was doubting whether he would be able to implement his measures for speed-up on the shop floor without considerable resistance. And the Economist could ask, three days after the sacking of Robinson, 'Has BL gone over the top?' Apparently, 'Middle managers at BL are now saying how silly the whole Robinson thing is. The influence of Mr Robinson's unofficial stewards committee had just begun to wane ... Now Mr Robinson has united the workers again.'

A week later Longbridge had returned to work after the AUEW decided not to make the strike official, and employers everywhere had dropped their reservations about Edwardes' approach.

The question for stewards' organisations in scores, possibly hundreds, of other firms now is: how can we stop management doing to us in the next few months what Edwardes has done to Longbridge?

This article attempts to provide some of the answers, by looking at the way in which, over the years, the leading stewards at Longbridge followed policies that opened up fissures in their own organisation. It was these fissures that enabled Edwardes to crack the organisation apart and prise Robinson out of the factory. The article is based upon long interviews with SWP members inside Longbridge. It is hoped that it will help other trade unionists learn the lessons of Leyland.

The Rise of the Stewards' Organisation

Longbridge had one of the most powerful shop stewards' organisations in the country

in the 1950s. That organisation did not arise out of thin air. It had to be built through struggles against what was, initially, an anti-union management. By the late 1940s the company had been forced to accept the unions, but it was much more reticent about accepting basic shop stewards organisation. Yet the use of piecework gave the stewards significant power at the sectional level inside the plant, since there was continual haggling between workers and management over rates.

A long time worker in the plant tells:

'When I first went into the plant at the end of 1948, 100 per cent trade unionism was just about established. The plant was then on piece-work. The power of the shop stewards was particularly strong. It was very much on a sectional basis. We did have a convenor who was elected, but not recognised by management and a works committee, again not recognised by management. Basically their function then was to organise support for any section that was in dispute. They were very much a *service* to sectional stewards.'

The management made an attempt to weaken this organisation seriously in 1953. The result was one of the biggest motor industry strikes of the 1950s. In that period it was common for motor employers to sack large numbers of workers during downturns in sales, and to take them on again a few months later when sales picked up. So in 1952 they sacked 800 workers, who began to be taken on again in 1953.

A vehicle builders' steward called McHugh could not get reemployed. McHugh happened to hold three posts not recognised by the firm — he was chief vehicles builders steward, secretary of the Longbridge joint shop stewards committee and chairman of the joint stewards committee for the combine formed when Austin and Morris were merged. The 2000 workers in McHugh's own union struck for his reemployment in February, forcing management to layoff half the total workforce of 17,500.

'The vehicle builders were out for 13 weeks. After six or seven weeks strike, the management declared sacked all those who were still on strike. After that some of the vehicle builders began to drift back to work'.

The strike finally came to an end at the beginning of May, after most of the strikers had given in to management's blackmail. The company rubbed home the message of its victory by refusing, for some time, to accept back many of the stewards and activists involved in the strike.

The defeat of the 1953 strike was a setback for the organisation in the factory. But it was by no means a catastrophic setback. There was an expanding market for cars,



Mass Meeting at Longbridge

and the sectional stewards were able to use the piece work system to rebuild their strength.

The defeat had a weakening effect, but it was surprising how quickly the union organisation recovered from it ... Two or three years later, the power of the stewards was really strong. It was based on the shop steward being very much a section shop steward, and very much involved in every little argument that went on. There was nowhere else he could go if he couldn't settle matters on his own section. The strength of the developing stewards' organisation was shown again in the 1956 strike.

'Redundancies were announced for six or seven thousand people. That was before redundancy pay or anything like that. There was no question of management giving you advanced warning. I was made redundant then, and I was told at four o'clock in the morning that I was finished at 5.30.

That resulted in a strike for a week. It wasn't really a solid strike. I wouldn't say that support was anything more than 50 per cent. The axing of a third of the workforce certainly put the wind up the rest. Yet the strike stopped the plant. This was because of the way the pickets organised themselves. We had masses of police down there. We had relays of men diving in front of the wheels of lorries. As fast as the police got one, another one got down.

The gates of Longbridge weren't like the Saltley gates, but the pickets were in sufficient force for nothing to get through. We had a member of the works committee who was a JP. He said, "We can't do things like that, the police won't like it". They threatened to shove him in front of a lorry if he didn't sling his hook. He resigned from the works' committee, and that's the last we saw of him.

The reason the picketting was so good compared say to that in the strike over the sacking of Robinson was the close relationship the blokes had then with the stewards. Out of a section of 20 men, if you had six who scabbed, the relation the steward had with the other 14 was sufficient

to get them out on the gate, and stand up to the scabs and the police, rather than just go home and wait for the strike to be sorted out.'

The outcome of the 1956 dispute was indecisive. The strikers returned after a week, gaining no more than a week's severance pay for those sacked, and the guarantee that they would be reemployed when trade picked up again (as it did a few months later). Yet in many ways the dispute was a turning point. The management realised that they were not going to crack the stewards' organisation, began informal meetings with the work's committee (the name of the elected executive joint stewards organisation) and finally recognised it formally. The functioning of the works committee in the years that followed was described in a book on industrial relations that came out in 1967

In practice, under the Austin arrangement the seven senior stewards act as part-time negotiators responsible for handling the grievances of 26,000 men. The management helps the committee to function in a number of ways. It allows it to hold its monthly general meetings in works time and pays wages for the three hours or so that the meetings last.

Until 1964, the secretary *(and)* chief shop steward *or* convenor, as he is generally known, even though the company itself refuses to use the term) used to work about ten hours a week at his machine but now almost all his time, and to a lesser extent that of the other committee members, is spent in negotiations.

While they are thus occupied the firm pays them the factory average earnings, and, where necessary, this is made up to the average of the section of workers with whom the man (nominally) works by shop collections. The convenor can be reached through the telephone by his machine; if he is too busy to handle the problem he will pass it on to one of the other committeemen, but most requests for assistance are made directly to him.

Although most of the calls are from shop stewards, many are from managers and foremen who want the convenor, or one of the committeemen, to come along to iron out a problem. In effect, the Works Committee — and particularly the convenor, the apex of several stages of internal grievance procedure before the local union and employers' association officials are called in — are skilled, and near-professional negotiators.

(H. A. Turner, G. Clark and G. Roberts, Labour Relations in the Motor Industry, pp209-10)

At first, recognition by the management did not seem to stultify the militancy of the leading stewards. A Birmingham SWP member who was a CP steward in Longbridge at the time still insists that the convenor, Dick Etheridge, was

'possibly the best militant in this country. We used to fetch him down to disputes, and he just to lean on the table, get the big book (of procedure agreements) out, flip it through, and if it went against us, close the book and put it on the seat. Management feared him. He could close the plant at any



The 1956 Strike. 'The reason the picketting was so good — compared say to that in the strike over the sacking of Robinson — was the close relationship the blokes had then with the stewards!'

time. Whenever we won a battle, we would march round the factory singing the Red Flag'

The Leyland worker we quoted before insists that

'1956 was the turning point, although the effects of it weren't so obvious for 10 years. For 10 years there were no redundancies in the plant. Then in 1966 some were declared, with advance warning and a bit of redundancy pay. There weren't as many as in 1956, and the redundancy pay created a new situation, there were people jumping at it.

'Etheridge was important in pushing for action in 1953 and 1956, but by 1966 he'd had 10 years as convenor, 10 years of permanent involvement in committee work and discussing with the management. He'd certainly changed his style of work.

'The only real fight against the redundancies was a train to join a demonstration down at the Brighton conference of the Labour Party.

'Even at the demonstration, Etheridge had one or two of his people from the Communist Party going round saying, "Don't take any notice of the extremists". Myself and another chap found out how to get in to the conference through the backdoor. When we suggested to Etheridge getting some workers in to take over the platform and put our case to the conference, he went white and started shaking.

'On the train on the way back, Robinson and the rest were saying what a great triumph it was, because we had managed to put our point to the prime minister, and he was that sympathetic he ordered a cup of tea for us. By that stage, that was their idea of a victory — talking to someone who only told them he was going to do bugger all for them.

'The works' committee at that time had started on the path of degeneration and negotiation and cooperation rather than giving any sort of fighting lead. It was round this time when Dick Etheridge got the nickname from some of them of "Old GBTW" "Get Back to Work".

'It was almost unheard of by that time for the Works Committee to come out in support of a section that was on strike. They

were always looking for ways and means of getting the blokes back to work. The usual line was, 'Well, you've made your point, if you get back to work they'll *have* to see us, they'll *have* to talk to us.' That was the basic approach.

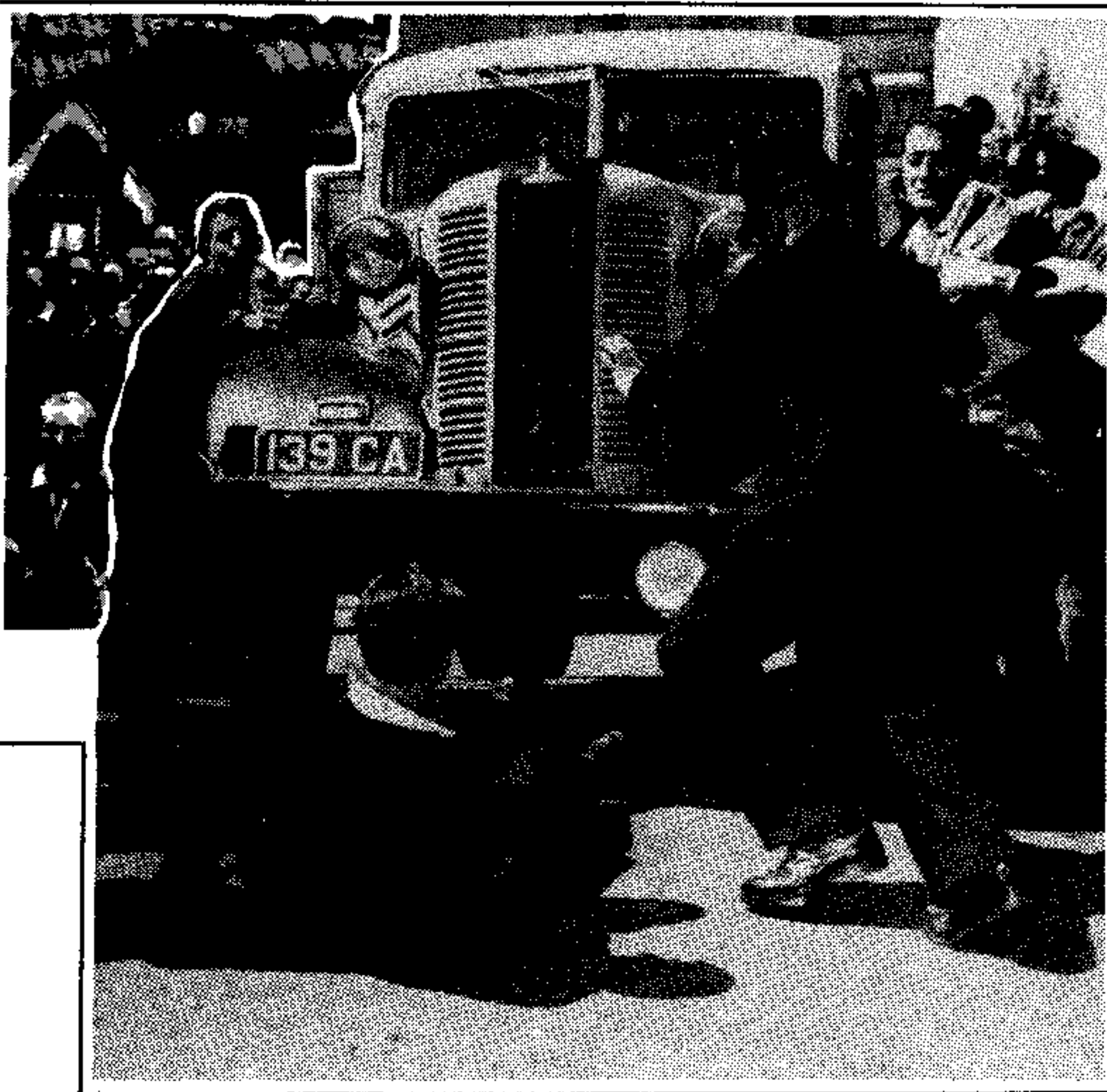
'I remember one occasion the labourers in the East Works went on strike. The works' committee along with one or two of the union officials had a meeting. I sat in on it purely by accident. While I was going in I heard one of the officials turn round to a member of the works' committee and say, "It doesn't matter what we do, if we can get them back to work, that's the end of it — so tell them what they like." And that's effectively what they did do. They promised the moon to the blokes who were on strike, who agreed to go back to work, and that's the last they heard of the claim.

'So by 1966 the degeneration had already set in'.

Yet, the incorporation of the senior stewards in this period could still be accompanied by a relatively militant organisation in the sections. While piece work persisted, there was no avoiding continual disputes over payments, in which sectional stewards were forced to play the leading role. This was all changed when measured Day Work replaced piece work at the end of 1972.

'Whereas the place could still be militant, in spite of the works committee, because the section stewards still had power, when we went over to Measured Day Work it removed the involvement of the steward in the running of his own section. That was when the attitude of the Works Committee really had some effect on the general level of militancy.

'In the negotiations for Measured Day Work, the Works Committee went off to a hotel in the country with the management for six or seven weeks. They started off, as usual, opposing Measured Day Work completely, but finished up by accepting it entirely. In those six or seven weeks of negotiating, they didn't go into the factory at all, let alone hold report back meetings. It was only through gossip that anyone on the



shop floor heard anything about what was going on.

'The timing of the recommendation to accept Measured Day Work was very interesting. A wage freeze was due to be instituted one day in early November 1972. So they had meetings across the plant that morning where members of the works' committee recommended acceptance of the move on to Measured Day Work, saying "You've got to accept it now, because if we leave it until after 3 o'clock when the wage freeze announcement is made in parliament, we shan't be able to get extra money." So blokes voted for a rise.'

It was shortly after the changeover to Measured Day Work that Etheridge retired, and was replaced as convenor by his protege, Derek Robinson. Etheridge, for all his faults, had presided over the growth and consolidation of shop steward organisation in Longbridge. Robinson was to preside over its weakening.

Participation

The introduction of Measured Day Work was the beginning of the end of effective shop floor strength in Longbridge. But for a couple of years sectional militancy retained a certain life. This was because in order to get Measured Day Work through, the company had had to agree to a degree of 'mutuality' (ie shop steward influence over the setting of the work speed).

'There was quite a lot of mutuality. The industrial engineers had to have a steward with them when they decided on speeds and reach agreement with him at every stage. Shop stewards were completely attuned to

piecework style negotiations, and the move over to Measured Day Work couldn't change their attitudes all at once. This gradually weakened over time. But what finally put the covers on it was the institution of participation with the Ryder Report in 1975.'

'Up until then we'd got a works committee of seven men plus a minutes secretary. That's just eight men who were basically full-time and even the works committee used to do a bit of work. But with the Ryder report and the formalisation of participation on a wide scale, we had the growth of lower levels of bureaucracy.

'There are about 800 stewards at Longbridge. As well as the fulltime works committee of eight, there were six unit committees of seven stewards each — so there were at least 50 full time stewards. The bulk of them never make any pretence of going on a machine on a section. Only a few would make a point of paying a flying visit in the morning, hanging up their coat and then disappearing.

'It amounted to them not representing their sections at all. Usually the burden of work they should have been doing as sectional stewards was passed on to someone on the next section. So the steward on one section was looking after the next section, and the guy who was supposed to be the steward for that section was stuck down there in an office and wouldn't anything decisive, until he was chased round and found.

'It wasn't necessarily the creeps and collaborators who went on these committees. Quite often it was the really good stewards who'd built up a reputation who got elected to these posts. They were

whipped away, shoved on the committees and destroyed.

'The rot spread from the top downwards. It very soon reached a situation where the unit committees as well as the works committee at the top were looking for ways of avoiding a problem rather than dealing with it. They became very upset if anything went outside procedure. So instead of just having the seven-man Works Committee telling us to put things in the procedure, we have seven-man committees throughout the plant telling us to do so.

'It was very, very occasionally that any meetings were held where anyone really involved in participation spoke to blokes on the shop floor. Even at the lowest levels inside the unit, the stewards became full-timers, had their own offices, and the only contact with the shop floor was if a bloke came in with a query over his union contributions or something like that.

'The whole basis of a shop steward's approach to his job changed. As it was before then, the shop steward used to regard himself as the bloke who'd got to deal with the problem on his section. But as a result of participation his whole approach became completely different. The first thing then became, "Who can I see who can deal with this matter?" So the steward, instead of dealing with the problem right away, would be looking for a unit committee man, for someone a bit higher up could see a top line representative of management and sort the problem out.

'Shop stewards began to see themselves as intermediaries between the committees and the blokes, rather than as the real, genuine leadership on the shop floor. The net result was a complete lack of confidence on the shop floor in the stewards.

'Robinson more than any other man was responsible for hammering participation home. When it came to individuals, he bears more responsibility than even Lord Ryder probably.

'The others among the Works Committee always tended to say, "It's not that good, but we can get somewhere with it, it's no good throwing the baby away with the bathwater". But he was enthusiastic about it.

'Considering he was supposed to be a Red Revolutionary, his arguments were really pretty pathetic. Usually when we heard them they were just bucket loads of patriotism — "the absolute necessity to maintain a British motor producing firm as against the foreign multinationals".

'He also used to say how when you were sitting round the table with the top boys from the NEB and the government, you could persuade them. I remember him telling me how pleasantly surprised he was to find that Lord Ryder would phone him up, or even come down to see him, listen to what he'd got to say, and say how interested he was in it.

'That's the time he told me his favourite booze had gone from bitter to brandy and champagne.'

The participation scheme was certainly very successful, from management's point of view, in enabling them to deal with the shop floor.

A Financial Times labour correspondent could write, in May 1975,

Chronology

Sept 72 Longbridge direct workers accept flat rate payment system, industrial engineering techniques: 80 per cent of Leyland car workers on MDW-type systems.

July 73 'Carworker' correspondent from Longbridge reports 'It is necessary to fight for a restructuring of the shop stewards' organisation at Longbridge. I suggest that this could be along the lines of area committees—in order to check the drift away from rank and file involvement. . .'

May 74 Leyland denies report by Counter Information Services that plant closures and nationalisation are now serious possibilities

Dec 74 Benn announces government stake in the company. Eddie McGarry, Chairman of combine committee says 'I am delighted. It's in line with Labour Party policy of saving jobs.' Leading stewards admit that Leyland's position may mean short-time working or natural wastage.



Sir Don Ryder

April 75 Sir Don Ryder reports on Leyland to the government. £1.4 billion state subsidy announced, along with joint management/union participation councils, a new model range and . . . decentralisation.

May 75 NEB begin takeover. Bob Wright says unions want to strengthen participation machinery. Leyland managing director, John Barber, gets £370,000 pay-off.

Aug/Sept 75 Senior stewards accept 3-tier system of participation, government takes over and announces 12,000 jobs to go by mid-1976.

Oct 75 Participation deal. Personnel Director Pat Lowry claims the company has considered recognising the combine committee but was 'warned off' by union leaders

Feb 76 Leaked reports about closure plans for 4 Birmingham plants

April 76 New Chairman Sir Richard Dobson appointed on April 1st

Aug 76 Talks on common negotiating date begin. Jaguar stewards withdraw from participation machinery.

Feb 77 Toolmakers strike over differentials and separate bargaining

Sept 77 Stewards reject central bargaining

'Since the three-level participation scheme was brought in last January it has proved so successful that management has felt able to reveal to shop stewards on the top, national, tier, virtually every detail of the 10-year plan it has submitted to Lord Ryder, chairman of the National Enterprise Board ...

'Another example of the participation scheme's effectiveness was the shop stewards' willingness to sign a joint recommendation to car workers to cut out disputes and boost productivity ...

'When Mr Derek Whittaker, Leyland cars managing director warned last month during several disputes over pay differentials that "many thousands of jobs might disappear", he was supported by Mr Derek Robinson . . . (7 May 75).

In the long tool room strike of 1977, 'Robinson spent the whole dispute attacking the strike as being divisive,' says the worker we've quoted above. His efforts did not go unaided—up and down the country literally hundreds of Communist party supporters got the line from him. The same attitude meant that Robinson denounced the 1978 strike of skilled workers at Leyland's SU Carburettors plant—at the same time as the newly strengthened right wing on the AUEW executive were threatening disciplinary action against the strikers.

All this was justified in political terms by Robinson as part of the struggle for socialism.

He told an interviewer from the Communist Party's fortnightly magazine *Comment*, in August of 1978:

'It's a political battle ... If we are able to make Leyland successful as a publicly owned company, then it is self-evident that that will be a major political victory. It will prove to work people, millions of them, that ordinary working people have got a contribution to make, that they've got sufficient intelligence, determination and level of understanding to do whatever is necessary ...'

But, as SWP supporters in Leyland told *Socialist Review* a few weeks later, to make the nationalisation of Leyland work in capitalist terms, more than verbal attacks on sectional strikes or rhetorical calls for harder work were needed. The only way to implement that programme was through 'the end of shop steward organisation inside Longbridge' (*Socialist Review*, October 1978).

Participation had had a debilitating effect on shop floor organisation. It had turned the senior stewards into apologists for profitability. But it could not deliver everything to management they needed. Having used participation to weaken shop floor organisation, management could now discard it for different tools.

As the SWP worker we've quoted previously puts it, 'Management changed their hand because they'd got everything they wanted with participation.'

The brakeup of participation

When Edwardes took over at Leyland, there was an attempt to continue with participa-

tion. But the signs of strain soon began to tell. He introduced his first plan that involved redundancies. The trade union side of the cars council — the top tier of participation— were against this. They put the usual line of expansion not contraction, maintain our British industry, import controls etc., and walked out from discussions. But Edwardes started a new style of negotiations, fixing up a meeting at a hotel in Kenilworth of about 300 top level management and about 300 stewards and officials.

'I remember going down there on the coach from Longbridge reading the *Morning Star*, which had an article inside from Derek Robinson putting all the arguments against the Edwardes' plan. Then, at the meeting, after Edwardes had spoken, Robinson took the microphone and spoke for the plan as well. Only two of us from Longbridge voted against the plan, although it involved the loss of at least 12,500 jobs.

'That was the first time Robinson did such a somersault. But then, a fortnight later, in the spring of 1978, came the decision to close one of the Speke plants in Liverpool as punishment for a long strike. Edwardes made the decision, and then only told the union 'participators' about it after the event. Effectively, he made it clear he was not really interested in participation any more.

'Speke had been on strike for about 17 weeks. But no-one in Longbridge had really heard anything about the fact. There was no question of organised support until the dispute was crumbling. Robinson did go up there and then and promise all support possible, with tears in his eyes'.

'But following that, when I should have thought it would have been clear enough even for Robbo to see that the situation had changed completely, he was still pushing the participation line right up to these last few months.

'The initiative in breaking up the participation really came from Edwardes and the management, rather than from Robinson and the leading stewards and officials.

'Even in the pamphlet for which Robinson was victimised, they talk about a return to 'industrial democracy'. This sort of thing is only hankering after the old cosy days of participation.'

Edwardes was past such things. An SWP steward in another part of Longbridge tells,

'The straw which broke the camel's back was the question of grading. The plants which qualified for the management's promise of parity went into a scheme where there would be mutual discussion and a mutual slotting of jobs into five grades ... Then management made it clear they were going to use the fifth grade to downgrade most workers, and they said they would unilaterally impose it. That's what enabled us to put the resolution through calling for withdrawal from participation in Longbridge.'

The first SWP member insists, however, that

'I think Robinson and the top layer expected to walk out, and then be back in participation again within a few weeks. But

they found themselves in a situation where management was quite happy to see an end to participation.'

In January of last year came the first real bust up. Management refused to pay the £1.50 every six months increase which they had promised towards establishing parity between different Leyland plants, because it claimed productivity had not risen enough. The senior stewards of the whole combine decided on a strike, but postponed implementing the decision. At Longbridge a group of left wing stewards pushed a resolution calling for the plant to stop and were amazed when Robinson said, 'I'm swinging my support behind you lads.' This was the strike for which management 'warned' him, and which, they claim, gave them the right to sack him on his second warning for producing the pamphlet.

But the other plants in the combine didn't stop, and at a mass meeting after a week on strike, Robinson persuaded the workers to return to work. Interestingly enough, however, at this stage the feeling inside Longbridge itself seems to have been fairly solid. There was no trouble with scabs, and an attempt by one scab to organise a march back to work failed miserably.

Then in the late summer of last year there were the national engineers' one-day and two-day stoppages. This time there were more concerted efforts to organise a return to work by scabs. But a call at a stewards meeting by left wing stewards for a good turn-out for picketing succeeded in putting an end to that — despite the fact that elsewhere in Leyland, at Cowley, the strike call was ignored.

Management had broken with participation. But they had still not succeeded in undercutting what remained of union organisation. The decisive testing of shop floor strength still had to come.

The Boot Goes In

The employers offensive began in earnest on 10 September in Leyland while the firm was still hit by the national engineering two day a week stoppages. On that day Edwardes announced his '1980 plan'. It aimed to cut the workforce by 25,000 with closures or cutbacks of 13 plants. Union sources suggested the real cut in the workforce would in fact be 40,000.

The initial response was one of outright opposition from the unions as well as from the stewards. The confed set up a 28 member emergency committee of full time officials and stewards. At its first meeting it declared:

'The Edwardes plan is not acceptable to the trade unions ... All members are called upon to refuse to accept plant closures and mass redundancies. All plants must refuse to accept or organise the movement of work from the plants threatened with closure.'

On 1 October the full confed meeting endorsed this response. It was a passage virtually identical to this in the combine committee's pamphlet on the plan which was used by management as an excuse for the sacking of Robinson seven weeks later.

The senior stewards, characteristically, based their own campaign against the plan



'Etheridge was important in pushing for action in 1953 and 1956, but by 1966 he'd had 10 years as convenor, 10 years of permanent involvement in committee work and discussing with the management. He'd certainly changed his style at of work.'

around reliance on the confed officials. As one of our members in Longbridge recalls,

'There was a three week period when the senior stewards and the shop stewards expected to get official support for their opposition to the Edwardes' plan. The officials actually produced a leaflet against it.'

Yet by 9 October, when a protest demonstration was held in London, Edwardes was already claiming that the unions were backing him — a claim confirmed three days later when the confed withdrew its 'total' opposition.

'We knew a deal was on the cards. At the end of that week there was a senior stewards' meeting in Birmingham which voted nearly unanimously to oppose the plan. We thought that might bring the officials back to our side!

So when, the next day, Edwardes declared he was going to ballot the workforce over the heads of the unions,

'The campaign against the ballot started with semi-reliance on the full time officials. Adams and Robinson from the combine committee were pushing the idea that the officials were behind us and that we should hang on to that.' Then, on the Tuesday of the next week, the leaders of the confed did a complete somersault and backed the Edwardes plan. Within three days Edwardes had ensured that balloting was taking place.

Despite the several advance warnings of a danger of a sell-out by the confed, the senior stewards were by no means ready for it. The stewards weren't prepared for such short notice. They didn't have any follow up propaganda. There was no real campaign against the ballot. The works' committee did

put one leaflet out. But it only worked out at one for every four or five members in the plant. I doubt if many actually saw it. The leaflet came out too late, on the Monday — the ballot forms had been sent out by management on the Friday.

The TGWU also produced leaflets against the plan. But these two did not appear until the ballot had been taking place for two or three days. The ballot paper itself simply asked workers, 'are you in favour of the Leyland survival plan', without even pretending to spell out what this meant. The workforce voted 'yes' by seven to one.

In part this was because it seemed a very hard question to answer 'No' to for many ordinary workers.

'In my area, most of the blokes seemed to regard the vote as meaningless for Longbridge, the first SWP member told us, 'I think quite a few of those who voted 'Yes' did so purely on the basis that "It won't affect us, and so why should we put our necks out".'

At the Canley plant, due for closure under the plan, management told workers that they would get £7000 redundancy pay if there was a 'yes' vote, but only the statutory minimum if it went the other way.

Yet this cannot be the total explanation of the vote. The fact that the stewards were incapable of communicating quickly and effectively with the members was a result of something besides accidents or management plots. It was the logical conclusion to years in which participation had cut the stewards

Oct 77 Sir Richard Dobson resigns over speech referring to 'wogs'. Michael Edwardes, Chloride chairman, appointed BL chairman



Sir Michael Edwardes

Nov 77 Secret ballot in favour of common bargaining date, parity and central wage agreement

Jan 78 Edwardes plan to sack 30,000 workers leaks out; actual redundancies announced amount to 12,500

Feb 78 Kenilworth conference. Edwardes announces another restructuring. Closure of Speke plant announced. Stewards come out against company plans for incentive schemes and the end to mutuality. Secret ballot backs stewards.

Aug 78 SU Carburettors toolroom strike: officials and combine committee line up with management

Oct 78 Edwardes presses for more sackings

Nov 78 Strikes against 5 per cent pay offers peter out

Dec 78 Stewards vote in favour of parity, productivity and 5 per cent

Feb 79 BL stewards vote for all out strike against company refusal to pay parity increases because of low productivity. Birmingham plants walk out, but stewards refuse to spread strike and back down in face of overall 2-1 vote against stoppage.

Aug 79 BL implements parity over the heads of stewards and officials

Aug/Sept 79 National engineering one-day and two-day a week strikes. Attempt by scabs to organise 'back to work march' at Longbridge defeated after increased picketing by stewards

10 Sept Edwardes reveals latest 'plan'—for 26,000 job loss

1 Oct Confed endorses decision of its Emergency Committee to oppose plan

9 Oct Demonstration of protest at plant in London. Confed denies company claim that it has agreed to plan

12 Oct Confed meeting draws back from total opposition, though its Emergency Committee maintains its opposition

14 Oct Edwardes lets slip his intention to ballot workforce

off from the shop floor.

Edwardes had found the weakness which he could exploit. The only question then was the speed at which he could proceed. The SWP steward tells how.

'Within a fortnight of the end of the ballot the company brought out an 85 page document, stating its conditions for a paltry increase. They issued only four copies at first, to the steward leadership. The document was a real stinker. When we heard about it, we thought the company had gone too far. They were asking for too much in return for a terrible deal.'

The other Leyland worker tells how,

'The particular things that upset workers depended on the jobs they did. In my area the overwhelming majority are production workers. The only thing that really stuck in their craws was the fact that lay-off pay would be effectively finished. As the present agreement stands, if there is a strike at British Leyland, that lays us off, we're entitled to 56 hours at 80 per cent of the rates. But under the document if there's a strike at any plant at Leyland no lay off pay will apply. But at least 90 per cent of the lay-offs are a result of Leyland disputes, and even if they're not, management can soon manufacture a dispute ... The maintenance workers were probably more incensed that they'd have to accept the three shift system.'

After reading out part of the document at a shop stewards meeting, the Longbridge joint stewards voted to reject the deal unanimously. They duplicated a hundred copies of the document, and circulated it around the membership in the various departments. This, in turn, forced the company to circulate the document widely. Within a couple of days, meetings were being held in the shops which were heavily attended.

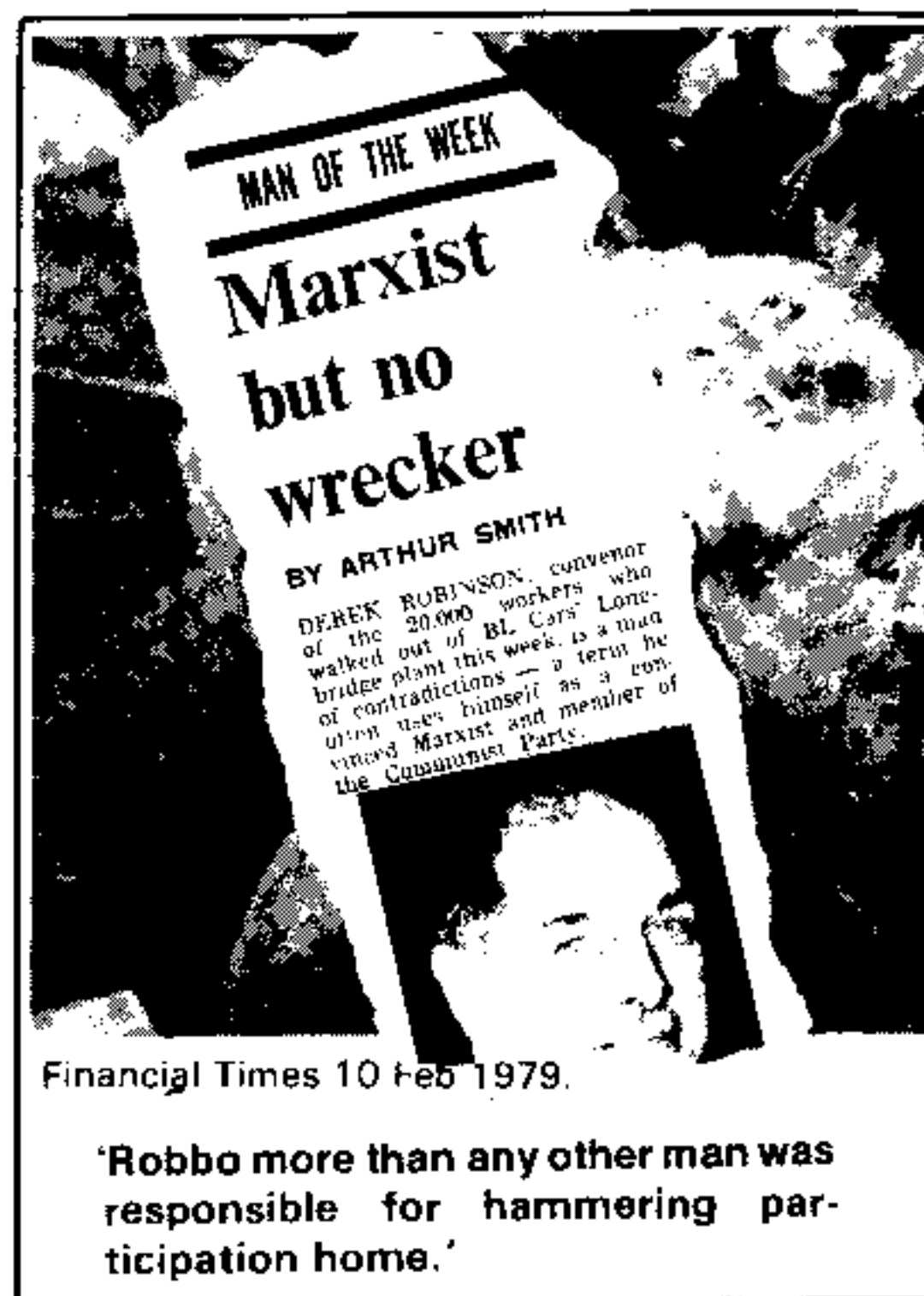
'It was almost as if the management had dropped a present in our laps. It gave us a chance to pick ourselves up off the ground.'

The other SWP member adds,

'We had a meeting in our section at lunchtime on the document. It went on for three-quarters of an hour. I heard no-one say any word in support of any section of the 85 page document. I think a real campaign could have developed against it.'

The opposition to the document did not just come from Longbridge. A 150 strong national stewards meeting, with two representatives from each plant rejected it out of hand. In passing, this meeting decided to use in the campaign against the document a pamphlet they'd printed two or three weeks earlier, urging a 'No' vote in the ballot — they had produced it too late for use in that campaign. It was for putting his name to this pamphlet that Robinson was to be sacked.

The sacking came just as the campaign against the document was beginning to gather momentum. Both of our informants were at shop meetings actually discussing the document when the sacking occurred. There is no doubt at all that it was



Edwardes' way of preempting that movement, and opening up an all-out offensive, over wages and conditions. As the steward puts it,

'The sacking of Robinson was simply the opening shot in a war against the shop floor. It was Robinson in Comment a few months ago who complained that he had not convinced the majority of Leyland workers of his political line that we had to make Leyland the most prosperous car firm in the world. Neither he nor management had convinced the majority of Leyland workers. That is what the sacking of Robinson was about.'

Many of the workforce were at least partly aware of this. The immediate response in Longbridge was for sections to hold meetings and walkouts to occur. The SWP steward tells,

'On our section we were having a meeting on the 85 page document when we were informed that there would be a stewards meeting at 2 o'clock to discuss the sacking of Robbo. It was not all that fully attended, since the news had not got round to all sections, and being in the middle of the day, there were no night stewards there. Adams addressed us, Robinson addressed us, and so did Benson from the AUEW and Barker from the TGWU. They all said the same thing. We had to get the plant out. After a unanimous vote we went back to our sections.'

'In the sections it was pretty messy. It was a question of getting the blokes out as soon as possible. Some of the shop had meetings and went out. Some decided to stay in. The vast majority of areas had split votes. In our shop we had a split vote, so I appealed for all trade unionists who understood it as a matter of principle to walk out ...'

The unevenness of the initial response did not stop the complete shut down of the whole plant. Nor should it have prevented a very effective strike. After all, the feeling had been, if anything, weaker in both the

(8 December) the scale of the response in the various Leyland plants in that city:

'At Jaguar, Browns Lane, the morning after the news broke the rank and file themselves called section meetings and decided to organise a mass meeting. Having organised it they demanded that senior stewards attend it.

'When everyone was together there was simple speech: 'Are we going to put up with this?' 'No!' came the reply.

'It was as simple as that. It was one of the senior stewards who said it should be a 24 hour stoppage only and that a further mass meeting should be held to review what the officials had done and what had happened at Longbridge.

'At Radford, another Jaguar plant the response was similar. Group marched round the plant about a thousand altogether and then went off to the club where the senior stewards were meeting.

'At the Canley plant in Coventry people were asking all morning: 'When are we going?' At 2.30 pm there was a mass meeting and only a dozen voted against an all-out stoppage.

'Two days later came the biggest and best when the engine plant in Courthouse Green came out on strike for two days - the plant is well known for its normal lack of militancy.

'I was surprised at the speed of the response and how good it was. With the right leadership throughout Leyland who knows what the response might have been.'

But this leadership was not forthcoming. The only flying pickets that went out were organised by SWP members and their contacts in the plant. A senior stewards' meeting for the whole combine had been organised for the morning of the day after the sacking. The SWP steward tells:

'At the meeting there was a resolution in terms of action in support of Robinson. But verbally Robinson and Adams put a very soft line, to the effect that 'if you don't think you can deliver all out action, don't demand it. Pitch your demands at the level of the workforce.'

This gave a let-out for any senior stewards who did not want to do anything. The result was that.

'At certain factories there was no effort made to get action. The most blatant example was at Cowley. They didn't call a stewards' meeting to report back to when they returned to the plant. And the following day they went off to a tour round the local biscuit factory to have tea and biscuits with the managing director. So they didn't report back to anyone until the Thursday. They just allowed their members to be laid off on 80 per cent pay. The management were very keen on this.'

Without flying pickets from Longbridge, there was no pressure on the other senior stewards to behave any differently. The attempts to involve people in picketing and propaganda at Longbridge itself were just as feeble.

'The numbers involved in the picketing

15 Oct Regional meeting of Leyland stewards in midlands still relies on officials to oppose ballot

17 Oct Confed accepts Edwardes plan and agrees to ballot. TGWU abstains

17-18 Oct IGWU and TASS come out against ballot. They represent 100,000 of 164,000 Leyland workers, but are minority in official confed bodies.

19 Oct Ballot papers sent out by company

22 Oct Some leaflets against plan and ballot put into factories by Works Committee and by IGWU

25 Oct Ballot result

9 Nov 85 page document on wages and conditions condemned by Longbridge Joint Shop Stewards' Committee

14 Nov Under pressure, management distribute document on a wide scale

16 Nov First section meetings reject document heavily. A mass meeting on the document for whole plant planned after section meetings a week later

Mon 19 Nov More section meetings on document. Robinson sacked. Strikes begin in Longbridge

Tues 20 Nov Senior stewards meeting for combine calls for action as walkouts take place in Canley, Radford, Castle Bromwich, Browns Lane etc.

Wed 21 Nov Split vote at Tractors and Transmissions over all out strike leads to compromise decision for one day stoppage. No action at Cowley

Thurs 22 Nov Longbridge management use pay-out to put their propaganda to strikers. First signs of weakening at Longbridge. AUEW stewards quarterly told that Duffy will make strike official

Fri 23 Nov About 800 workers cross Longbridge picket lines

Mon 26 Nov About 1000 workers cross Longbridge picket lines. A thousand strikers take part in Birmingham rally. Leyland Lancashire workforce vote overwhelmingly not to strike.

Tues 27 Nov Management succeed in organising meeting in front of TV of 1500-2000 of those working in plant. AUEW calls off strike while three members of union executive hold inquiry into sacking. Duffy explains that a strike might lead to closure of BL.

Wed 28 Nov 4000 workers go into plant

Thurs 29 Nov Full return to work



1953 and 1956 disputes.

As the other SWP worker argues,

'I don't think it's necessarily wrong or weak or unusual in a plant this size to have a weak response from part of the membership. The way to overcome this is to organise the strike effectively.'

It soon became clear, however, that effective strike organisation did not exist.

'The Works Committee did nothing to make the strike effective. They did nothing apart from arrange tea and toast for the pickets. They made no attempt really to get to other Leyland plants to extend the strike. There was no question of them supporting the idea of sending flying pickets out or even of getting round and talking to senior stewards in the other plants.'

The SWP steward spells out the same point:

'The strike committee was small, and because it was small and because they were all committee men, most of their efforts were directed to getting the campaign made official - in involving TGWU regional committees, in having talks with Moss Evans, etc.

'What the activists were made to believe was that as soon as the TGWU and the AUEW made it official, the whole thing would swing into action. They had plans made for the docks and transport everywhere. The official strike notices would go up and everything would stop.'

One result of this attitude was that very little effort was made to get support in Leyland outside Longbridge.

In several plants there was a spontaneous reaction when the news came through about the sacking of Robinson. A senior steward in Jaguar, Coventry, told Socialist Worker



could not have been more than 200 altogether - compared to 600 stewards. There was no attempt to organise the stewards for the picketing.'

The dangers were first shown on the Thursday, the fourth day of the strike. The whole workforce turned up to collect the week's pay owing to them. Management kept them waiting in the rain, while it took them in a few at a time, and argued with them about how bad the strike was. By contrast, the strike committee seems to have made no real effort to use the occasion to put its arguments across to the mass of the strikers. It was at this point that it first became clear that there was the danger of a drift back to work in Longbridge. The next day 800 went into work, and on the Monday some 1000, out of about 10,000 on the dayshift.

'It grew on the Tuesday. Management claimed a figure of 4000 at the time - but more recently a notice they put up in the factory only claimed 4000 for the Wednesday, after the AUEW had called off the strike.'

An attempt by some organised scabs to call a march back to work seems to have flopped. But there were enough people in the factory on the Tuesday, including office workers and management personnel, to get all those working to a large meeting in front of television cameras. This was effective in creating an atmosphere in which the AUEW could even consider calling off the strike.

Meanwhile, all the strike committee's efforts had gone into organising a march and rally in the middle of Birmingham. However good an idea this might have been in itself, it did nothing to make the strike more solid. It left the situation one in which everything depended on the right wing AUEW executive - with disastrous consequences. As the SWP worker puts it,

'The conduct of the strike shows the degeneration and bureaucratisation of the trade union movement even at the shop floor level in Leyland. This really reached its lowest ebb in the course of the strike, when

there was no way in which the works committee could function effectively as an organisation for leading the strike.

'The leading figures had become inoculated by the process of taking every argument a further rung up a structure of committees with management, that when management decided it didn't need that structure any more, they didn't know how to respond.

'I don't think they've got any grasp now of what it really means to mobilise the members. They've been tied up for so many years with resolving problems by sitting down in committee, that they're incapable of understanding, never mind mobilising the power of the shop floor.'

The fight back

There are only a relatively small number of SWP members in Longbridge. Yet they rightly feel proud of the efforts they made, together with the whole Birmingham district of the party, during the dispute. They were the only people arguing in any coherent way for the involvement that was necessary to win the strike. They boast, without exaggeration that, 'during the course of the strike we certainly did more active work than the strike committee.' The effectiveness of this work was based on 'the work we've done for the last two or three years, consistently putting in the bulletins, selling papers on the gates, selling papers inside the plant.'

The main message SWP members are putting across now is that the only way to stop Edwardes destroying shop floor organisation completely is to close the gap between the stewards and the members.

'The key is getting back to establishing a proper relationship between the section steward and the blokes on the shop floor. Break down the idea that works' committees and anything like that are the leadership. You have to regard them as being nothing else than liaison committees, where information can be exchanged from one section to another, to regard them as doing a

service, rather than as being the leadership.

'One of the weaknesses for management in breaking up participation is that it does give the shop steward on the section the chance to take up the position of really relating to the men. Without participation, the shop steward can't run to this or that committee man ... He has to start looking to the strength of the blokes on the shop floor.

'From that we can start rebuilding the proper relationship between the shop floor and the stewards, and a proper relationship then between the stewards themselves.

'There must be a whole layers of stewards now who are scared, because with Robinson going, they've seen that what they've done is just run away from the strength, they've just shoved themselves out on a limb. The only real protection lies in being really embedded in the rank and file on the shop floor. If they haven't got that, they're sitting ducks.

'Because of this fear, there'll probably be a few dropping off from what's left of these committees. Even the stewards on the committees will be looking for ways to dive back to the ranks of the shop floor.

'Because these committees have shown themselves to be so feeble about doing anything, it does give a chance to build at the shop floor level.

'The management are doing everything to try and break down the links on the section between the stewards and the men, saying there's no need even to see the steward on this or that, see the foreman and he'll deal with it sympathetically, and so on. But that really isn't getting off the ground.

'Management's own plan could reinforce the section shop steward. It doesn't take all that long for real strength to grow.

'If they're going to force through their document, to increase all the speeds, destroy any element of mutuality, they've got to get it done quickly, before the shop stewards rebuild on a sectional basis. If the shop stewards do start feeling their feet, do start operating as section stewards, do start getting the confidence, then all the 85 page documents don't mean anything.

'I think it's a question of management racing to ram this home before the section shop stewards can get themselves sorted out. The urgency for us is to get that organisation as quickly as possible and restore the confidence of the stewards in themselves and the confidence between the men and the stewards. I think we stand quite a reasonable chance of being able to do that.'

This is not just a lesson for Leyland. It applies to many other factories, where senior stewards have behaved in recent years very much like Robinson. 'The main political point from the strike is that it shows for Leyland - and I think for industry generally - that the era of participation and cosy chats and cosy committees with management has come to an end. Management right across the board feel that they can now afford to put the boot in. They can get away with it in the initial period, because the shop stewards' movement has become so bureaucratised. But what it has done is to create an opportunity for members and our intervention. My experience during the strike is that there is a receptivity to our ideas among shop stewards, particularly among rank and file Communist Party members.'

The Anti Nuclear Campaign

It's Origins and Prospects by Mike Simons

Nearly a month after the leak of top secret Cabinet minutes on nuclear power to the press, the Tories have given the go ahead for the first part of a massive expansion of the nuclear power industry. Implementing Tony Benn's decision when Minister of Energy, Thatcher has ordered the first pressurised Water Reactor to be built in Britain. It was this type of reactor that went wrong at Harrisburg, where a disaster was narrowly averted.

The cabinet minutes reveal fears that 'Opposition to nuclear power might well provide a focus for protest groups over the next decade and the government might make more rapid progress towards its objective by a low profile approach, which avoids putting the Government in a position of confrontation with the protesters.'

So far the British anti-nuclear movement has shown no signs of developing into a mass campaign. The Tories are basing their fears on the European experience.

Mass anti-nuclear movements have developed in France, Germany, Holland and Spain. In Germany the organised anti-nuclear movement claims a membership of over two million. Popular feeling in Europe is such that there have been many victories. A moratorium on nuclear construction exists in Norway and Denmark and in Sweden a government fell on the nuclear issue. In Austria a referendum was held to decide whether a completed nuclear plant should go into operation, and the voters said no! All these are important victories for the movement but they remain extremely fragile ones.

The experience of France, Germany and Spain shows the lengths to which the state will go to defend its nuclear interests. The principal tactic of the anti-nuclear demonstrators has been to occupy the sites of nuclear plants under construction. The police have defended these sites using CS gas, riot shields and water cannon. The ensuing confrontations have developed into pitched battles involving tens of thousands of demonstrators, with the police rioting in Southall style.

The European anti-nuclear movement has organised itself on a community basis. Workers involved in the movement do so as individuals rather than as organised trade unionists. Union leaderships in Germany and the Communist unions in France have been solidly behind the nuclear industry, to the extent of expelling union members for anti-nuclear activity. The lack of a trade union base for the movement has severely limited the fightback. Although the turnout on demonstrations is impressive, day-to-day activity tends to focus on lobbying officials and giving evidence to planning enquiries.

In Britain the movement reflects the

weaknesses of its European counterpart without the advantage of its size. The anti nuclear movement has only existed in Britain for the last 3-4 years. This is mainly due to the small size of the British nuclear programme. Britain generates 10 per cent of its electricity from nuclear power. France generates nearly 30 per cent from nuclear and this is expected to rise to 60-70 per cent in the next five years.

None of the existing national groups initially tried to co-ordinate the movement nationally. Instead they focussed on the establishment. They all submitted detailed technical evidence to the Windscale enquiry, at great cost in terms of time and resources. Not surprisingly their arguments were contemptuously brushed aside in the final report: a foregone conclusion that recommended expansion.

The experience of the Windscale inquiry caused a split in the movement. Friends of the Earth (FOE) Ltd turned their back on mass campaigning focussed more sharply on the establishment lobbying MP's and offering technical evidence to committees. Others realised that it was direct action that would publicise the anti-nuclear case and stop nuclear power. This led to the occupations by thousands of people of the Torness power station site in '78 & '79.

The Torness occupations drew a wide range of support, from ex-hippies, anarchists, members of Students Against Nuclear Energy, a considerable number of local people and some Scottish SWP members. A number of political problems emerged as to how to organise the campaign and take it forward. The occupiers knew they couldn't remain on the site permanently. SWP members argued that the campaign should be taken up with rank-and-file trade unionists. During the 1979 occupation they



'If we don't have it run along the lines of the Anti Nazi League we are only playing with the issue'

Arthur Scargill

suggested sending a delegation to take part in and leaflet the May Day march in Edinburgh, as a first step; this got a hostile reaction. The anarchist ecologists who dominated the occupation argued for a 'community' policy, perhaps hoping that local people would carry on the occupation when they left. Most working people have neither the time nor the willingness to sit on a building site in the middle of the Scottish countryside indefinitely.

The dilemma of the occupiers over future strategy was vividly illustrated in 1979 when a number of people broke into a compound where machinery was stored. Some set about wrecking the equipment, less than a flea-bite on the arm of the nuclear industry, while others planted trees and flowers. Even as symbolic gestures, these actions only expressed the frustration and confusion of those taking part.

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The practice of taking decisions by consensus had its impact at Tormess. Rather than encourage people to submit clear, concise proposals to a vote, consensus requires discussion to continue until a position is arrived at, to which everyone agrees. The real result of this is not 'more democracy' but interminably long meetings where those with the loudest mouths and the most stamina get their ideas accepted.

Until summer 1979, the anti-nuclear movement was split between its right wing, Friends of the Earth and the conservation Society, and a left dominated by the anarchist/ecologist milieu. At the 1979 conference of the Yorkshire based Energy 2000, its chairperson, Arthur Scargill, proposed the establishment of a national campaign against nuclear power. Throughout last summer, a series of feverish discussions were held between representatives of the Yorkshire NUM, regional anti-nuclear alliances, FOE Ltd, the Ecology party, the Conservation Society, liberals, CP members who failed to divulge their party loyalties, SWP and IMG. The end result was a decision to launch the ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN (ANC) with the following demands

**'Stop Nuclear Power
Reduce Energy Waste
Develop Alternative Energy Programmes
Guarantee Employment During The
Change Over.'**

Friends of the Earth Ltd decided that such a programme was unacceptable, objected to the support of Arthur Scargill and withdrew.

The campaign has the possibility of transcending the existing anti-nuclear movement, getting anti nuclear arguments to millions of people who have never come across them before and drawing them into activity. Scargill stated to Time Out

'To me this sort of campaign is common sense. If we don't have it run along the lines of the Anti Nazi League we are only playing with the issue. We should have branches in every town, every city and every village'.

Unfortunately, the majority of the interim steering committee, Scargill included decided not to launch the ANC in the same way as the Anti-Nazi League. Rather than establish a regional organisation and then announce its arrival by organising demonstrations and stunts, the ANC held a founding-conference instead.

Anti



The conference held in November last year was a success in its own terms. Six hundred people attended, many of them delegates from existing anti nuclear groups.

Despite the broad range of people at the conference, the enthusiasm of those present, and the large amount of media coverage it gained, the delegates returned home with no way of building the ANC if they wanted to. And the ANC found itself with little organisation and no base. The hard work required to build its support is now just beginning—work that should have been done long before a conference was even dreamed of.

Because the ANC failed to build on the publicity gained from the conference, it now faces hostility rather than equivocation from Friends of the Earth Ltd and a number of anarchist/ecologist anti-nuclear groups. This hostility is often expressed as antagonism to socialist and Trade union participation in the movement. Furthermore, a number of the interim steering committee appear to be more interested in keeping an eye on the campaign than in building a national fightback against nuclear power. While they were squabbling among themselves, their true weakness was revealed by the virtually nonexistent response to Thatcher's announcement last December of the first stage of her massive

nuclear expansion programme.

If the picture so far is rather gloomy, we ought at least to pick out the bright spots. Following the Harrisburg incident last March, there has been an increase in public awareness of nuclear power. Hardly a day goes by without the press carrying a story on the nuclear industry. There is increasing disquiet over the safety of the nuclear industry, the power stations, the reprocessing plants and the transport of nuclear waste through our cities.

The Trade Union movement is also beginning to realise the threat posed by nuclear power. Thatcher's leaked cabinet papers spell out government thinking.

'... a nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption by industrial action by coal miners or transport workers.'

The Tories still have bitter memories of the defeat of Heath by the miners, they don't want a repeat situation. They are intent on withdrawing electricity production from any prospect of workers' control.

Nuclear power will remain a major political issue both internationally and in Britain throughout the 1980's. Tens, possibly hundreds of thousands of people will be drawn into action on the issue during the next decade. This will happen whether or not the Anti-Nuclear Campaign succeeds. However, if the ANC fails to draw mass support, then the political leadership of the movement will remain in the hands of right-wing environmentalist groups like Friends of the Earth Ltd, and the newly formed Ecology Party.

The Anti Nuclear Campaign is an attempt by the left in the anti nuclear movement to broaden their base and to make the movement habitable for workers and trade unionists, which it manifestly is not at present. However the success or failure of the ANC greatly depends on its ability to draw socialist groups, who in the main have so far ignored the nuclear issue, into the campaign.

The reformist left are equivocal over the nuclear issue. The CP has come out *against* opposition to nuclear energy. The left of the Labour Party are also in a dilemma. A number of Tribunites have expressed their support for the ANC.

But the doyen of the Labour left, Tony Benn when Minister of Energy, threatened to smash GMWU picket lines at the Windscale reprocessing plant with troops!

The involvement of revolutionaries in the ANC is also limited. Socialist Worker was the only paper on sale at the ANC conference, and our turn-out was not huge. Despite this, the press managed to label the whole affair as an SWP front. Those SWP members working with the ANC have been arguing that the ANC must orientate to Rank and File trade unionists, and that there must be mass propaganda work aimed at factories and housing estates. These ideas are far from accepted within the ANC and will be viewed with suspicion while the practical commitment of revolutionary socialists to the campaign remains limited.

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INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION



'Why work on plans that may only change a production line.'

Alternative Production

A reply to Hilary Wainwright by Roger Cox

The biggest single problem facing us today is the complete ease with which employers are destroying jobs, not just in single firms, but in whole industries like steel or British Leyland. Not just the scale, but the pace speeds up month by month. When Hilary Wainwright wrote her article in the last issue of the Review, Derek Robinson was not sacked. As I write a few weeks later, the situation has changed dramatically. What was just bad has become catastrophic.

Hilary Wainwright argues that the best way to fight back in defence of jobs is to develop plans that describe alternative products that can be produced by workers under threat. She writes,

'The plans provide the argument and the unifying force necessary to build up the strength to defeat the management's plans', and that the SWP attitude to alternative plans is that they are a 'dangerous diversion from building a rank and file workers' movement.'

Let's examine the specific problems you face when the 'order of the boot' is announced. There are two problems from the point of view of a socialist on the shop floor.

Firstly, the workers, to a greater or lesser degree, accept the idea of viability—that is, that if industry is going to the dogs, no profit can be made, therefore our wages cannot be paid, no one wants our products because of competition, etc. etc. The ruling class's arguments are accepted, because apart from revolutionary socialists everyone in the movement—the union leaders, the Labour left, the CP—repeat them in one form or

another.

Secondly, for an alternative argument to be accepted, it must be connected to the question of organisation and action.

When UCS and Fisher Bendix fought successfully against closures, the workers had the confidence to fight for the right to work, adopted tactics like sit-ins, occupations, and won solidarity with them right across the movement.

Today the workshop organisations have been weakened and put on the retreat.

The question is then, not whether we can begin the fight back now. I wish it were. But rather how we can begin, modestly, to rebuild workshop organisation that stands a chance of resisting, growing and fighting back. Do we build a rank and file movement, or do we take the different road that Hilary Wainwright suggests, of developing alternative plans?

There is no argument between us about the need to explain and win the understanding of workers of how their labour is wasted, of how in every industry they could be making more useful things. This argument is central to all socialist propaganda.

But then we come to the real difference. To convince workers of these arguments it is necessary to fight the ruling class ideas about viability mentioned before. But you cannot do that unless you connect the argument with action—the occupation, the sit-in strike, the overtime ban, the refusal to do other people's work, resistance to productivity deals, rejection of natural wastage.

The history of the alternative plans

advocated by Hilary Wainwright has been disastrous. Not one has led to a real fight back. Lucas Aerospace is cutting back its workforce (see Dave Albury's article in *International Socialism* no 6, p88). The Vickers plan did not lead to a combine that could save the jobs at Scotswood; indeed, it couldn't even save the single job of the convenor of Ronco Vickers in Liverpool.

The reason, I believe, is quite simple. The plans describe what is possible. They don't call on workers to act to *make* them possible. They rely solely on the logic of the arguments they put forward to win, not on the muscle of the workers, and because of this they become talking shops, completely passive. Worst of all, they reinforce the hold on workers of the reformist idea that other people will save your jobs for you. You don't have to do anything, because the plan plus an MP or a trade union leader will do the trick!

Because the plans are separated from action, they don't expose capitalism as a system. I mean by this, that when workers are convinced to fight for jobs and act it is a thousand times easier for them to see the madness of the system. This is especially so if they are being led and supported by socialists.

The plans are based on the idea that small changes can improve things, that what is wrong is not the system, but management. Like reformism it is about tinkering, and when you tinker you don't want anyone rocking the boat.

Our SWP argument about building a rank and file movement looks at the problems seriously, without taking short cuts. What we have to do is very difficult, will take a long time, and will require constant attention to detail.

We aim to bring around the SWP, through our different rank and file activities, those militants who are looking for a bit of shelter from the storm outside. We have to overcome their isolation, and develop links between them.

This argument is not new. It's been written in our publications for 10 years. But what is different is this, that we, unfortunately, are the only socialist organisation that has an understanding—maybe not a complete or a clear one, but nevertheless an understanding that we need to rebuild shop floor organisation. We can't do this by ourselves, but only by convincing many militants of what is going wrong now, of why we are being given a good hiding all over the place.

We have to be prepared to work out from our experience how to defend and rebuild shop floor democracy, how to win back power to the shop floor. At the moment there is little chance of our ideas being taken up on any great scale. But given the growing level of repression everywhere, workers will respond. And when they do, we must be in a position to give a lead in action and prove our ideas and organisation.

Hilary Wainwright and her comrades should join us. Why work on plans that may only change a production line. Join with us and start making plans which will change the world.



The election of the Tory government and the revival of the left wing inside the Labour Party has meant that socialists outside of the Labour Party have begun to encounter the members of the 'Militant' group in areas where they have previously been invisible. This extremely tightly organised group of supporters of a newspaper originate from the break up of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party in the late 1940's.

They still carry with them many of the formal ideas and demands of Trotsky, e.g. the sliding scale of wages, the election of full-time trade union officers, the Transitional Programme, etc.. However, they long ago lost any serious commitment to revolutionary socialism: for example, none of their supporters on the Executive Committee of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) has ever, in any of the major struggles of the last few years, even raised the question of the sliding scale of wages.

The CPSA is a good example of their politics in action, because this is a major union in which they have a great deal of influence. They are the best organised grouping inside the Broad Left. In 1978-79 they had four members out of the 26-person National Executive Committee (NEC), and two out of 14 full-time officers. In the largest section DHSS they had eight members on the Section Executive Committee Committee (SEC). In Customs and Excise their members include the Chairperson, an Assistant Secretary and the Treasurer of the SEC.

Since their normal activity, until the last few years, was mainly concerned with political motions at Labour Party Young Socialists (JPYS) conferences, it is important to understand how they have built this base. I believe there are four main reasons for this:

Militant by name but not by nature

The work of the 'Militant' group in the Civil and Public Service Association (CPSA)

(1) The large turnover of ordinary members in the CPSA means that any political grouping can gain positions out of all proportion to its actual influence.

(2) The relative lack of struggle in the last few years meant that leaders (and their ideas) were seldom put to the test.

(3) Control of the JPYS has meant that they were able to direct young supporters into the CPSA.

(4) Their combination of Marxist rhetoric and reformist practice offers people a cosy place in the Labour Party.

The last point is the key to understanding their policies. Their elitist interpretation of Trotskyism leads them to believe that, if only it had the right leaders and the right programme, the Labour Party could bring about socialism. The *Militant* supporters in the CPSA have the same attitude to the union. Their complete obsession with capturing positions, and their success in doing so, bears no relation to their support in the membership. For example, they have less than 100 voting supporters within the Broad Left of a union which has 230,000 members.

In practice they differ little from the mainstream of the Labour Party, or, for that matter, the right wing of the Communist Party. In fact, in the CPSA, most members of the Communist Party are well to the left of that party in general and are certainly to the left of the *militant* group.

In order to provide evidence for these assertions I will look at their record in four of the major disputes the Union has faced over the last four years.

1. The Department of Employment ban on the production of statistics.

The management threatened a national lock-out if our members did not work normally. In the face of their threat the NEC voted to back down. Kevin Roddy, the only lay *Militant* supporter on the NEC at the time, supported this decision. The two *Militant* supporters who hold full-time jobs, appointed for life, did not argue against the back down. (The present author must admit that he also supported the back down at the time, but I soon admitted that I was wrong after discussions with Redder Tape supporters.)

2. The Gibraltar lock-out.

Our members in Gibraltar were locked out

for six months in 1976-77 over a pay differential dispute. The *Militant* supporters on the NEC argued for arbitration long before the eventual settlement while the majority of the NEC supported the members unconditionally. The CP, and myself, argued for extending the dispute to involve our members in Britain. For this we were accused by the *Militant* of 'adventurism'. This is a favourite *Militant* word; it is applied to anyone who is prepared to take even the smallest risk or gamble.

Far from representing the substantial minority who were prepared to fight surely the task of any revolutionary—the *Militant* group provided left-cover for the right-wing bureaucracy to sell an arbitration deal to our members. It took days to convince a reluctant Branch Executive Committee to recommend this offer to an equally reluctant membership.

Terry Adams, the *Militant* full-time officer responsible for Gibraltar, played an interesting role in this dispute. His internal memorandum to the Deputy General Secretary, Alistair Graham, states:

In my view, Gibraltar should be told in the strongest possible terms to call off their industrial action.

Alistair Graham, in a memo defending Adams, wrote:

He also demonstrated his courage by supporting a Board of Inquiry when many activists with whom he had close links saw it as a 'sell out'. At the end of the dispute, though he had not been involved in the final stage of the negotiations, he loyally abided by the National Disputes Committee's controversial decision to call off the one day (national) strike and he helped to sell the final 'package' to the Gibraltar membership and to keep the branch together in a very bitter atmosphere after they had narrowly voted for it.

This 'very bitter atmosphere' was partly caused by the actions of a supposedly revolutionary militant—Terry Adams.

3. The long-running Air Traffic Control Assistants strike.

A compromise offer was made 24 hours before escalation of the dispute was due to take place. The membership were badly split. 353 were for the offer, 214 against. One of the reasons for this was that the *Militant* supporters, including full-time officer John McCreadie responsible for this area and lay official Frank Bonner, supported the offer instead of arguing for the escalation.

Incidentally, the same full-time officer, John McCreadie, has issued at least two

INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

circulars to the members in the British Airports Authority announcing the signing of a productivity deal. No campaign was carried out opposing the deal and no hint of criticism appeared in the circulars.

4. The Department of National Savings, Glasgow, and the ban on overtime working.

The Department of National Savings, Glasgow, one of the largest and most militant (with a small 'm') branches in the CPSA has been enforcing a ban on overtime in line with national policy as part of the fight against the cuts. This action led to five hundred suspensions of members refusing to process the work carried out by a handful of scabs who were working overtime.

A deal was cooked up between the full-time official (yes, you've guessed it, Terry Adams), the senior lay officer, Communist Party member Peter Coltman, and management. This provided for a return to work without victimisation in exchange for an agreement 'that there is probably a present need for some overtime working.' In other words, this was a complete backdown.

The deal was put to the NEC without consulting the branch and was narrowly carried. Even some of the right opposed such a major sell-out. The branch was then faced with a *fait accompli* which has caused much bitterness and widespread demoralisation among those members nationally who are fighting to maintain the overtime ban in the teeth of suspension threats.



Len Lever

Kate Losinska

It would be wrong to leave this catalogue of sell-outs without some reference to the electoral strategy of the *Militant* group.

The sharp political polarisation in the CPSA is complicated by the existence of a 'personality politics' figure, Len Lever.

Nobody—least of all Len—is able to define his politics, but he is certainly not a socialist of any description. The only section of the left that supports him is the *Militant* group, using the classic reformist argument that he is the only character running for President who can beat the ultra-right-wing Kate Losinska. The only point in their favour is that they have at last grudgingly agreed to support the Broad Left candidate after years of backing Lever.

Their unprincipled use of the 9000 block vote of the vast DHSS Newcastle Central Office has given them eight seats on the DHSS SEC. Some of them have been totally inexperienced: one was only in the Department for six months and left after

being elected.

It can be no co-incidence that the *Militant* group are the most articulate defenders of the corrupt block voting system. At the 1979 conference they were the only grouping to oppose the introduction of the individual vote at work-place meetings.

I hope that this article has gone some way towards exposing the pseudo-leftism of the *Militant* group. They will not disappear overnight. In many ways they are the

successors to the Communist Party. They combine a more vigorous Marxist rhetoric with the attractions of membership of a large party—the Labour Party. To them we must counterpose workers' self-activity and mass involvement. In the words of Marx, 'The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class.' It is not the act of self-appointed elitist groups such as *Militant*.

Mike McGrath



Fighting the Cuts in Camden

The size of the Anti-Cuts demonstration on November 28th was respectable. We estimated an attendance of around 50,000, many being the trade unionists directly under attack in the public sector. Little organisation was undertaken for it by the trade union leadership which belatedly supported the day of action (excluding the National Union of Teachers and Society of Civil and Public Servants who refused to).

Most unions sent out one or two letters to branches urging delegations to be sent but not much else. So who was it that brought the masses onto the streets?

About 500 Camden Council workers went along to the march and getting them there took a lot of work by our SWP branch, rank and file organisation, Nalگو Action and other activists in the union.

The difficulty was winning the idea of activity against cuts to Camden Council workers when the cuts seem as yet barely visible in Camden. Camden Council has adopted (from Lambeth) a superficial policy of "no cuts". Hypocritically however they have halved their housing programme, frozen posts and some new projects and begun renegeing on recently negotiated grading and condition improvements. However members in the three main unions, NUPE, UCATT, and NALGO are not experiencing redundancies, closures of

establishments or even as yet overtime reductions. Indeed earlier this year NUPE members by striking won their biggest ever rise and a £60 minimum wage which has since been granted to UCATT and NALGO members. So in this "far from 'Butchers Shop' atmosphere" we put forward the following arguments to win support for the one day strike.

1. Cuts have not yet hit us directly but inevitably must. Don't wait until it is too late—start organising now with the other Camden trade unions.
2. Cash limits mean not only cuts in services or jobs but in real terms cuts in our pay and conditions. It is lose one days pay or this years pay rise.
3. Our local health service particularly several local hospitals have been severely hit. We must demonstrate to defend them.
4. The Tories are taking on working people through cuts and attacks on trade unions generally. We must unite with others already directly hit and fight back.

All three Camden unions had branch meetings to discuss the day of action. UCATT decided to strike with little opposi-

INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

tion but our main intervention was in NUPE and NALGO.

Victory

The NUPE Meeting was attended by 600 members. A SWP leaflet, (Council Worker Number 5) was well received - we argued against cuts, against Tories, no illusions in Benn and for a socialist alternative.

The NUPE Branch Secretary and UCATT convenor both set the tone for the meeting. All out on the day of action. Only two members spoke against—the first a Home Help, saying “the elderly and handicapped would suffer”, and the second, saying “a 1 day strike was useless and would not work.”

Yet they were well countered by two other rank and file members “It was the Tories who were out to make the elderly and handicapped suffer and the one day of action was the start of an ongoing campaign of activity”.

The result was approximately 450 in favour of branch strike and 150 against. So with two unions committed to striking only NALGO remained in the way of a total Camden Council shutdown.

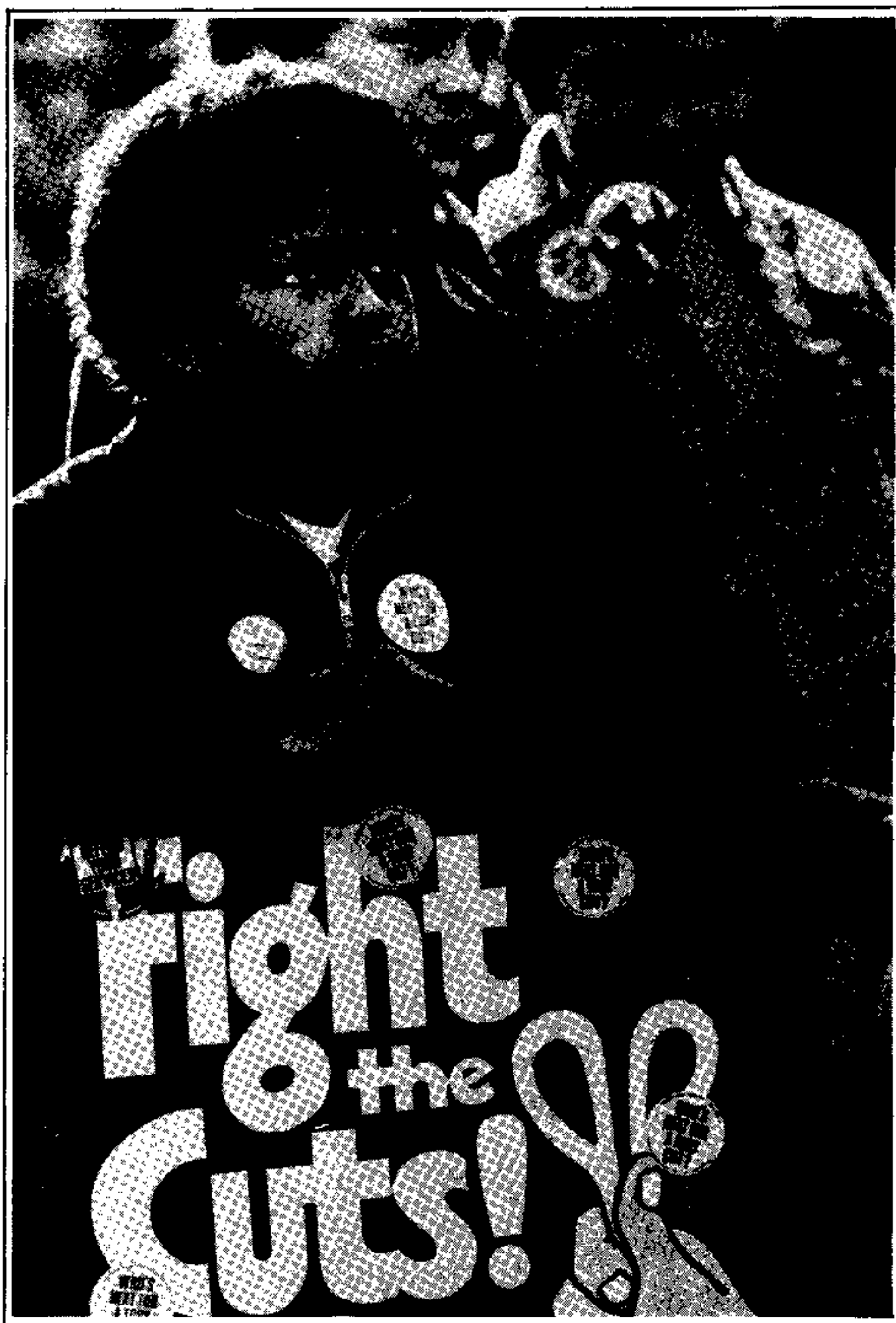
Disaster?

The NALGO branch meeting took place a few days later. The Camden NALGO ACTION GROUP had organised a requisition to hold the meeting which collected 100 signatures. The branch executive narrowly decided not to call a meeting themselves. Camden NAG leafletted a few days before encouraging members to attend the meeting and support the strike. Well, 900 members turned up and 500 were hostile, mainly from the Finance, Works and Building departments. Five speakers were in support of the 1 day strike, only one speaker was really against, but despite this, we lost by 553 to 337. It seems like a disaster?

Yet it wasn't! On the demonstration itself the vast majority of the 450 Camden Council members were made up of those 337 NALGO members who had supported us but had lost. About 100 NUPE members came with about 20 UCATT, but the turnout would have been much better if there had been a local feeder demonstration, but this was opposed by the Communist Party on the Trades Council and by Camden UCATT.

The Fightback

So organising a Day of Action was just one battle. How are we organising in Camden for future activity? We are organising on two levels. Basic work is the first. This means building up resistance to cuts in the workplace step by step as they hit us. At the same time extending shop steward committees into all sections of NUPE members. The local NUPE branch has already sent a letter to Shop Stewards and members



explaining the way forward and to counter any dissatisfaction amongst members about the strike. Our work will be aimed at ensuring decisions are implemented by all members and that basic trade union consciousness is raised in backward departments of NALGO members. This is being done by specific rank and file meetings, leafletting and selling rank and file papers.

The other level is distinguishing ourselves as the genuine socialists. We are not just against Margaret Thatcher or even just against the whole Tory cabinet! But against the system that produces them. We don't believe that a future Labour Government with or without Benn can win socialism for us. Only workers by their self activity can win and control their own society.

Therefore we are having a series of SWP

public meetings including a debate with left wing councillors to put across our answers and expose the 'wasteland' of theirs. We are also running discussion groups, and continuing with leaflets which give our politics undiluted.

Yet to succeed we must particularly orientate ourselves towards women, who are hit the hardest by cuts but possess the biggest potential for fighting back. Building Womens Voice is therefore crucial although in Camden Council we have not yet decided how this can best be done.

So we believe that these are the best ways forward for us in Camden Council and perhaps other socialists and activists in workplaces — If you agree or disagree we ask you to write into Socialist Review with your experiences.

Dave Weiss, Roger Galloway Camden Council Workers

THE MOVEMENT

The 36th Congress of the CPGB

A Dying Gasp!

The 36th Congress of the Communist Party, held in Camden Town Hall from 10-13 November last year marked a major transition in the CP from being a genuine (although mistaken) party to a sect. One part of the distinction between a 'party' and a 'sect' is that a party attempts to relate its principles to the reality of the world outside, while the sect has to bend reality to fit into particular shibboleths.

Six years ago the 1973 Congress recorded the first increase in membership—a modest growth of some 1100—and looked forward to success for the blend of wage militancy, nationalism and left reformism embodied in the *British Road to Socialism*. It anticipated 'left advance' with the return of a Labour government with a significantly stronger left tendency in it.

The period since has totally shattered those expectations. There was a giant shift to the right of the very people the CP had selected to lead the 'left advance'. Jones and Scanlon.

Yet at the November Congress there was no serious examination of what had happened to 'left advance' under Labour. There was no asking of questions such as why was the Social Contract accepted; what the role of the left trade union leaders was; how far senior shop stewards have been incorporated; what happened to the mass movement—the issues which formed the central discussion of the SWP 1979 Conference which took place over the same weekend.

CP membership cards issued (July)

1973	29,919
1975	28,519
1977	25,599
1979	20,599

The general line from 1973 was un-animously reaffirmed, without question.

'The longer term aim is for a Labour Government of the left—one that would help to bring about fundamental change in society, a government that as the *British Road to Socialism* puts it, 'would be the product of, shaped by, and responsible to the Broad Democratic Alliance.

With the shibboleth in place, the bloodletting began. If it wasn't a fatal flaw in the BRIS that was responsible for the disastrous last six years, then who was? The divisions between the 'industrial' and 'intellectual' 'pro-Russian' and 'pro-dissident' wings, of the CP exploded.

An alliance of closet Stalinists and trade

CP CONGRESS DELEGATES

	33rd Congress 1973		36th Congress 1979	
	No.	% of total delegates	No.	% of total delegates
Total number of delegates	459		319	
Delegates aged under 25	67	14.6%	28	8.8%
Delegates aged over 60	18	3.8%	27	8.5%
Delegates in predominantly manual trade unions	246	53.6%	130	40.8%
e.g.				
AUFW	83	18.1%	37	11.6%
TGWU	37	8.1%	34	10.7%
EETPU	25	5.4%	10	3.1%
UCATT	20	4.1%	12	3.8%
NUM	19	4.1%	18	2.5%
NUR	19	4.1%	5	1.6%
Delegates in predominantly white collar trade unions	109	23.7%	92	28.8%
e.g.				
ASIMS	22	4.8%	18	5.6%
NUT	23	5.0%	18	5.6%
NALGO	14	3.1%	13	4.1%
AITI NATEFGH	15	3.3%	10	3.1%
Student delegates (NUS)	18	3.9%	16	5.0%

union activists who interpret the 'broad democratic alliance' as still meaning an 'anti-monopoly alliance' led by the working class (or, rather, the trade union bureaucracy), had developed since the last Congress two years earlier. It now opened fire on the Right-Eurocommunists who it held responsible for the Party's losses.

Its main thrust was against the Right-Euro's support for community action. The 'left' answer was a 'turn back to industry', to work in the trade unions building up left alliances within the working class, and to work in the factories.

The 'Left' also fought against the Right's 'attempt to introduce pluralism'—more accountability, democracy and rights for factions—into the CP constitution. They moved 'no action' on the Inner-Party Democracy Report against a combination of the EC and the 'right' and received 102 votes to 175. And they attacked the 'right' for distancing the CPGB from 'the achievements of the socialist countries—the most convincing argument for socialism and for the Communist Party'. Their amendment to the political resolution was defeated by just 114 to 165.

Although defeated on these votes, the existence of a bloc of 100-120 fairly solid delegates committed against the 'excesses' of the Right Eurocommunists, set the tone for much of Congress. The Right Euro bloc was very much on the defensive: its leadership of the YCL was savaged on all sides; its proposals for 'open discussion of politics within the Party' and 'for full information and accountability' were defeated by 71 votes to 212 and 89 to 195 respectively. Its strength was thus between 70 and 90 delegates. The balance of forces within the CP had been totally reversed since 1977.

The voting for the new Executive also reflected this change. In 1977 the two leading protagonists in the recent battle, Political Committee members Dave Cook

for the 'right' and Mick Costello for the 'left', received respectively 313 and 303 votes. In 1979, however, Costello's vote was 229 compared to Cook's 188. These votes meant that a bloc of 70 delegates had refused to vote for the CP's Industrial Organiser and a larger bloc of 110 delegates had similarly boycotted the CP's National Organiser.

Despite this voting pattern, with the Right Euro members consistently getting lower votes than the Left Eurocommunists and non-aligned apparatus figures, the full recommended list was elected. And since it was drawn up by the 1977 EC, it leaned more towards the 'right' than did the Congress.

This slight accident of fate, while it will probably prolong the fulltime jobs of leading 'rights' like Jon Bloomfield, the Birmingham Organiser, Sarah Benton, the editor of *Comment*, Martin Jacques, the editor of *Marxism Today*, and Dave Cook, is unlikely to stem the flow of Right Eurocommunists out of the CP. The outflow began soon after their victory at the 1977 Congress when they found that merely adopting a new version of the *British Road* did not immediately create a new Communist Party.

Thus the CPGB faces its sixtieth anniversary year with the battle between its two warring tendencies still unresolved: the 'lefts' dominated the argument but lost the crucial votes; the 'rights' also lost votes, but kept their positions. The strategy they have chosen, the 'turn to industry' was not a 'new turn' but a turn back, back to the stress on the 'left' trade union bureaucracy.

Even if they had the enthusiasm and drive necessary to make such a 'turn', the fact that the CP membership itself is firmly entrenched in bureaucratic positions within the trade union movement means that the 'turn' is not a fresh start but much more the sign of a dying gasp, harking back to the good old days which, for the CP, have gone forever.

STEVE JEFFERYS

The Party and the Womens Movement

Celia Pugh

The debate about Leninism and womens liberation has hotted up with the publication of *Beyond the Fragments* and the development of *Womens Voice*. How has Leninism come out of this?

Leninism's defence does not imply that everything Lenin wrote was "correct" or adequate to today's conditions. Since Lenin's time, our programme has had to respond to new experiences—the crushing of democracy in the workers' states, the strengthening of the reformist parties and the united front, the explosion of anti-imperialist struggles. Recent movements for womens', black and gay liberation are further examples.

Today's womens liberation movement (WLM) exists in different conditions to those when Lenin and Kollontai were active. Productive forces in late capitalism laid the basis for women to break out of the oppressive division of labour between men and women, which is institutionalised in the patriarchal family. A more thorough-going liberation from all forms of sexual oppression seems more possible than at the beginning of the century when, for example, abortion and contraception were not as accessible and safe as today and when sexuality was bound up with childbearing.

Today, we see more clearly how the oppressive relations between men and women have been obscured by notions that these are natural. This was not fully appreciated at Lenin's time. The ideological aspects of womens oppression, sexuality and sexism were not so clearly understood.

So, the womens movement has confronted socialists with the need to broaden the issues around which we struggle. The question remains—how do we do this? Is it enough, as supporters of *Beyond the Fragments* imply, to redefine the conditions of everyday life? Such redefinitions are important. As Sheila Rowbotham argues, these "allow people to feel and see an alternative". But we need to go further than this. We cannot construct non-oppressive social, personal and economic relationships in a society where relations and structures of power deny these possibilities.

For example, womens' 'self help' health care and abortions raise important questions about control over our bodies. But, attempts to set up womens' self help clinics alone are not an adequate means of making this control a reality for *all* women.

Of course, the destruction of capitalist power only creates the conditions for non-oppressive relations to be reconstructed. The questions asked by today's womens movement point the direction for continuing liberation in the conditions of tomorrow. They also give us the self confidence to participate in the anti-capitalist struggles of today.

But we cannot forget that a general reconstruction of our lives is not possible under conditions of capitalist domination. A challenge to this domination, in its centralised forms, must feature in our demands and actions. This defines the *method* of Leninism—a method as relevant

today as at Lenin's time.

In *Beyond the Fragments*, Leninism is questioned for dismissing the spontaneity and inventiveness of mass movements like the WLM. This is a distortion of Leninism that emerged with defeats of the workers' movement. In opposition to Stalinism, Trotsky fought for movements like the trade unions and the black movement to be independent from any one political party and free to develop their own activities. He recognised that mass "spontaneous" actions of the oppressed are the force to shatter ruling class power.

No party can substitute for this. But, these spontaneous mass struggles do not guarantee victory. The energies and creativity can be diffused or destroyed if there is no open challenge to ruling class cooption and manipulation. So, while the revolutionary party is no substitute for mass movements, it can propose demands and actions to secure a successful outcome to a struggle for power.

Through open and democratic discussion and decision making, mass movements can accept or reject the proposals of revolutionaries. These cannot be organisationally imposed on them.

So, there is an active inter-relationship between mass movements and the party. They have distinct but complementary functions.

The SWP correctly identifies the need for a revolutionary party. But it ignores these necessary distinctions between the party, its programme and mass movements of the oppressed.

Womens Voice is projected as the nucleus of a mass, proletarian, socialist womens movement—the womens organisation of the SWP.

It wrongly counterposes this movement to the existing broad based movement of women—including the WLM—because this does not openly profess socialist policies. Revolutionaries do not reject building, and working in, the trade unions while they are dominated by reformist ideas. Why apply different criteria to the womens movement?

The WLM contains many different perspectives. But we must accept that its activities contribute to undermining capitalist authority. It shows millions of women that the deadening weight of sexual oppression is not inevitable. Through an experience of struggle, many more women in the WLM will be drawn to socialist ideas. Far from dismissing the WLM, or the broader movement, for failing to adopt an explicit socialist programme, revolutionaries should be fighting within it—aiding its growth and winning more women to revolutionary politics. We can only do this credibly if we prove our commitment to strengthen its impact.

Indeed, the SWP now reflects this approach by uniting with other feminists to build a broad abortion movement. Why apply different standards to groups of women fighting in the community, workplace and unions for the demands of the WLM?

As with NAC, we should support and build this broad movement of women, fighting for our revolutionary perspectives *within* it. For this, revolutionaries may produce a party journal and organise supporters around it. There is nothing wrong with this. But, just as it would be sectarian for *Womens Voice* to set up its own abortion campaign, it is quite wrong to see *Womens Voice* as a separate channel for organising the broad movement of women.

It is also incorrect to judge today's WLM by its social composition. As with anti-imperialist movements, our support comes from its impact and not the family background or jobs of its participants.

Womens Voice claims to draw on the traditions of Kollontai and Zetkin. In doing so, these experiences are applied outside their specific historical context. The international workers movement of the 1900's opposed the bourgeois currents inside the suffragettes against a background of intense divisions over the First World War—divisions which finally split the Second International.

Attempts to model ourselves on the womens' sections of the German SPD should be treated with great caution. The SPD was a mass revolutionary party operating in conditions of pre-revolutionary upheaval. Our tactics for building parties are very different in conditions where reformist parties and politics dominate and not those of the relatively tiny revolutionary left.

Lastly, the suffragette movement and today's WLM are very different. The suffragettes were involved in completing the process of bourgeois revolution by extending democratic rights to women. So, bourgeois women were influential. Today's WLM is based on different social forces and raises more fundamental issues of liberation. It identifies with anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movements. Many of its participants are white collar workers active in the trade unions.

This is not to say that the WLM is free from reformist or reactionary pressures. But this is a reason for being part of that movement, fighting inside it for our revolutionary ideas. It is not an argument for bypassing the WLM.

Womens Voice has raised the important problem of how the womens movement strengthens its ties and influence with working class women. But, this has always been a concern of the womens movement.

In its ten years, the WLM has campaigned with women on estates for nurseries and family allowances. Support has been organised for women strikers and in solidarity with other workers. It has made links with the trade unions on issues like abortion and supported the Working Women's Charter as a means of strengthening these links. This approach continues today through newspapers like *Women in Action* and the many campaigns of the womens movement. Instead of downplaying these approaches, revolutionaries, including *Womens Voice*, should build them, strengthening them with our contribution and in turn extending our own understanding of womens liberation.

*Celia Pugh is a member of the International Marxist Group and was until recently its womens organiser.



Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is hardly read today but in the early years of the Nineteenth Century he was far and away the biggest-selling novelist in Britain. *Rob Roy*, for example, sold ten thousand copies in the first fortnight after publication at a time when the average circulation of a new novel was about one thousand. His work was widely translated and used as the basis for plays and operas.

It is easy to see why he was so popular: his novels are historical romances with all the ingredients of action, mystery, love and suspense. They are, as the saying goes, 'rattling good yarns.' It is for that reason that his recreation of Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe* has provided a model for the hero of numerous swashbuckling films.

The same reason explains why he does not, today, enjoy the official seal of approval as a 'great novelist'. The educational institutions which decide what is desirable in the past and then force it down the throats of millions of kids have always preferred novels which concentrate on the detailed analysis of personal dilemmas to Scott's wild adventures.

This amnesia about Scott has nothing to do with politics. Scott pandered to the tastes of the capitalists and landlords of his day. The normal cost of a novel was then between 15s and 18s, but Scott and his publisher were able to sell *Kenilworth*, for example, at 31s 6d. Since the weekly wage of the compositors who set the books was 36s, and they were the best paid of manual workers earning six times as much as the worst off, it is obvious that Scott's phenomenal sales were amongst the very well-to-do.

And that class was not in a mood of benevolence towards those with opposing views: the year after the publication of *Rob Roy* the Peterloo Massacre took place in which cavalry charged a demonstration of unarmed workers near Manchester, murdering eleven. Scott's views, and the contents of his novels, were fully in accord with anything that this reactionary class

Great Scott ?

by Colin Sparks

could wish.

Why, then, should it be important for socialists to rescue Scott from his apparent neglect? The reason does not lie in the exciting aspects of his stories; indeed, for some readers, the dated language and ideology of Scott might make him less interesting than some more modern writers of historical costume drama.

The real reason is that, in the best of his works, Scott went beyond mere romantic tales and wrote novels informed with a real historical sense. In these novels Scott portrays great historical struggles not in the framework of great men but of whole classes and societies.

The best example is his novel *Old Mortality*. It is the story of the rising by a group of peasants in the West of Scotland in 1679. The rebels call themselves The Covenanters, after a religious oath, but the issues at stake are much broader than a particular form of church government. As one of the reactionary characters remarks: 'the evil spirit of the year sixteen hundred and forty-two is at work again as merrily as ever'. In other words, the novel is about one of the episodes of the bourgeois revolution.

Writing to a friend about the novel, Scott commented:

...it is a covenanting story...there are noble subjects for narrative during that period full of the strongest light and shadow, all human passions stirred up and stimulated by the most powerful motives, and the contending parties as distinctly contrasted in manners and in modes of thinking as in political principles.

This comment is interesting because Scott had apparently started out to write a costume drama about the reactionary leader Claverhouse, but the final version uses him only as one of the historical poles against the opposite of the leaders of the peasant rising. And when Scott speaks of 'the contending parties...contrasted in manners and modes of thinking' he is talking about *classes* with their different ways of living and thinking. He ends up portraying the rising not as the result of the efforts of leaders or timeless principles but of real historical circumstances.

The novel follows the rising from its origins through its early victories to its eventual defeat at the hands of the Royal authorities and the barbarous revenge of the great men.

The same historical grasp is present in a number of Scott's best novels, among them

The Heart of Midlothian, *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*. Many of his works do not reach this standard: after all Scott wrote for money and was therefore often concerned simply to produce another novel. But it seems to me that there was a deeper reason for the unevenness of his work than this.

The novels are all set in the past: the conflicts of classes which ravaged British society in his day undoubtedly provided the basis for his grasp of history, but they are displaced back in time. This enabled Scott and his readers to view with a certain warmth behaviour that they would have rejected amongst the lower orders of their own time. Thus, in *Old Mortality*, Scott comments on the early victory of the Covenanters at the battle of Drumelglogie:

And whatever may be thought of the extravagance or narrow minded bigotry of many of their tenants, it is impossible to deny the praise of devoted courage to a few hundred peasants, who without leaders, without money, without magazines, without any fixed plan of action, and almost without arms, borne out only by their innate zeal, and a detestation of the oppression of their rulers, ventured to declare open war against an established government, supported by a regular army and the whole force of three kingdoms.

Almost the same passage could have been written about the Luddites but, no doubt, for Scott and his readers, such a sentiment was literally unthinkable. But this lop-sided view of history carried with it a genuine price, in that it pushed Scott away from his grasp of history as a real process into an idealised version which *did* become costume drama.

The overall result of Scott's own contradictions was to drive him deeper into the history of the middle ages from which few if any uncomfortable problems arose. He did eventually devote most of his energy to mere historical romance. But he did, in a number of his novels, establish an historical dimension which resulted both in excellent literature and was to provide a model for others, like Balzac in France, who were to approach the history of the present.

Balzac wrote of Scott that he was a 'modern innovator' who conferred 'gigantic stature on a literary form'. It was from his greatness and his weakness that Balzac developed his project that: 'French Society was to be the historian, I had only to be the secretary'. Scott does not deserve oblivion: he can be read with fascination and interest.

A view from the top

White-Collar Unionism: The Rebellious Salarial

Routledge Kegan Paul £3.95

The Collapse of Work

Eyre Methuen £3.50

both by Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman

One of the facts of life that many militants have yet to grasp is the huge growth of white-collar strength in the TUC. In 1925 only five percent of TUC membership was white-collar; by 1967 it was at thirteen percent; now the figure is about forty percent, and by 1985 over half the movement will be made up of white-collar members.

This change is due to a host of factors, principally changes in the composition of the workforce and the growing propensity of 'middle class' workers to join up. The spectacular rise of ASTMS is a prime example: from 50,000 members in 1957 (this figure includes all the affiliates absorbed subsequently during the union's growth) over 400,000 today.

The causes and implications of this growth, and the history of many of the organisations involved are what Jenkins and Sherman tackle in 'White-Collar Unionism'. They are quite successful - using TUC records and their own considerable experience with ASTMS (Jenkins is General Secretary and Sherman is Director of Research) they have pieced together an account that deserves to be read by anyone interested in the labour movement in this country. In particular their concise history and economic demolition of incomes policies since the war will serve as a useful source of reference for socialists.

But unfortunately that's not all. The book also contains, scattered throughout its chapters, Clive Jenkins' view of how the union movement (both white collar and blue collar) damn well *ought* to conduct itself and this is where socialists will find they part company with him.

Jenkins' passion is the creation of a union movement that offers its members a professional service, a sort of industrial version of the AA. His argument is that the complexity of the modern world of industrial relations, and in particular the technicality of recent employment legislation, is such that trade unions are essential in order 'to cut through the jargon and to protect and advise those who lack either the time, the expertise or the inclination to protect themselves.' Time after time the point is hammered home in this book: a union does things *for* its members. Very little account of things done *by* the members gets through.

This approach is nowhere more evident than in the discussion of full-time officials:

'... the members rightly demand the best representation possible, since to them the unions act in defence of their industrial interests in much the same way as a doctor looks after their health and a solicitor after their legal interests. If a professional officer was capable of being rejected in an election, a rejection which would often be on political rather than industrial grounds, there would not only be a damaging lack of continuity, there would be little incentive to acquire all the expertise necessary.'



Now, this really is nonsense. Without the confidence of the members a full-timer is of no use at all, however thorough his or her training. And who is Clive Jenkins, anyway, telling his members they are too stupid and fickle to choose officers that will serve them well?

It is not a question of whether full-timers do a political job or a skilled technical job; to use their expertise effectively officials must have a commitment to the industrial strategy pursued by the members. The job is political *and* technical.

The final part of Jenkins' programme for the labour movement is his vision of the future, and 'The Collapse of Work' takes up where the discussion of new technology in 'White-Collar Unionism' ends.

There is a vast gap between the potential of microprocessors to improve our world

and the brutal reality of their introduction under capitalism. It is a gap that the most radical of reformists cannot jump; Jenkins and Sherman fall like all the rest.

They are profoundly pessimistic about the chances of fighting its implementation and argue that anyway British industry needs it to fight 'our competitors' (i.e. the poor sods in Japan, America and so on who are themselves being replaced by robots). The unions' role is reduced to one of negotiating good redundancy terms. Having thrown in the towel in the short term, the authors maintain that in the long term we need a society where 'the work-ethic' is dead and 'leisure' abounds. And how do we make this transition? Why, with tripartite talks between the government, the employers and the unions, of course! In the mean time, full speed ahead with implementation they even suggest that workers pension funds should be invested in firms developing new technology, so we in Europe can beat the Americans.

A last word on 'White-Collar Unionism'. Don't take all of it as gospel. On page 67 it says that in all unions the policy-making body is 'the executive council'. Wrong. The supreme governing body of ASTMS, according to the rule book, is its Annual Conference, not the National Executive Council. Slip of the pen, eh, Clive?

Colin Brown and Pete Gillard

Selling the World

The Space Merchants

Frederick Pohl & C M Kornbluth

Penguin 75p

The collaboration between Frederick Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth produced five science fiction novels before the early and untimely death of Cyril Kornbluth in 1958, and 'The Space Merchants' is arguably the finest. It first appeared as a serial in 'Galaxy' magazine in 1952 under the title 'Gravy Planet' and as a novel in 1953. Since then it has gone into over a dozen editions and has been translated into nearly forty languages. Its reissue by Penguin is both timely and welcome.

Set on the earth a hundred years in the future, it describes an over-populated world struggling in the grips of a monstrous production-consumption complex and dominated by the spurious ethics of the Madison Avenue advertising industry. The population is brainwashed and the politicians are firmly under the control of the advertising agencies and the giant corporations.

In this nightmare world, and doing very well too, we find Mitchell Courtney, Copysmith Star Class, an employee of Schocken Associates, the largest agency in New York. No mean outfit this, having put Industries on the map - the first spherical trust merging a whole sub-continent (India) into a single manufacturing complex. But

even greater things now call --to create an advertising campaign that will sell the planet Venus to the American people, and Courtney is the man who will head the campaign.

The task is a daunting one, not least because the Venus Project has been pulled from under the nose of Taunton Associates, a rival agency and the epitome of cheap advertising, of

'everything that keeps advertising from finding its rightful place with the clergy, medicine and the bar in our way of life.'

The exploitation of Venus --for that is what it will be--is also resisted by the Conservationists (Consies), the

'wide-eyed zealots who pretend modern civilisation was in some way "plundering our planet", and the only organised opposition to the ad-men and the corporations.

Selling Venus itself is no easy matter since it is very hot, covered in poisonous gas and hardly the kind of place you would go to even from an overcrowded and polluted earth. But Schocken Associates set to work and start field trials in the nearest equivalent area on earth--southern California.

It's an immensely readable book, full of excitement and humour. In pushing some priorities of the contemporary world to their absurdly possible limits it goes beyond the satirical and anticipates what reality could be. For a book written over twenty years ago Pohl and Kornbluth didn't do too badly, and it is pleasing to see that Bookmarx Club have made it one of their fourth quarter choices, thus bringing it to a new audience.

Bryan Rees.

The Swamp-Watchers

Eurocommunism: Myth or Reality?

Penguin, £1.95

Paolo Filo della Torre, Edward Mortimer and Jonathan Story (eds)

To publish a paper-back entitled 'Eurocommunism: myth or reality?' is to answer the question before one starts. The authors of this collection of boring if fact-filled essays have a vested interest in making the myth into a reality. As long as the Euro-communist bosses continue to vacillate and manoeuvre, they will need well-heeled commentators to explain their every movement to a waiting world.

The only trouble is that the various authors, while honest and accurate enough at the level of detailed fact, don't really understand the political problem at all.

Time and again they come back to a strange entity called the Leninist 'vanguard party', until we realise that they actually believe that the Communist Parties of Europe were, until at least the early seventies, really and truly preparing to seize power by violence. Small matter that all the facts they

themselves quote contradict this quaint notion; they are irrevocably hooked on it.

Stuart Holland, from whom one might have hoped for something marginally better, even claims that Alvaro Cunhal, of the Portuguese CP, 'still believes in the spirit of Petrograd and all power to the soviets.' (There was little evidence of this when the PCP was breaking strikes and grabbing hold of the trade union machine in 1974-75.) And if you don't know what the CPs are now, it's a bit hard to work out what they are turning into. (There's not much point in speculating what sort of butterfly a caterpillar will turn into if the caterpillar is really an earthworm.)

Again, Neil McInnes tells us that 'the communist party has no memory: its members are mostly young people, honestly ignorant of the past; few of them stay in the party for long; and the records are party secrets.'

Leaving aside the contempt for working people that this remark betrays, it is, purely and simply, a grotesque untruth. (When I was in France in 1977, the Khrushchev 'secret speech' of 1956 was making front page news in the national press. An awareness of history is an absolutely central component in the current crisis of the CPs).

The authors do have some inkling of the trap that the Eurocommunists are caught in. If they move too close to the social democrats then they give the social democrats the initiative; if they move back to the left they condemn themselves to isolation. Indeed, with the CPs having suffered electoral setback in Italy, a paralysing faction-fight in France, and stagnation in Spain, the Eurocommunists may have already shot their bolt.

Doubtless their decline will provide more copy for muck-raking Kremlinologists, but as far as the real political crisis in Europe is concerned, the key issue is 'Eurosocialism', not 'Eurocommunism'. Perhaps we shall see another little volume devoted to 'Euro-socialism'. If so, it will doubtless be deferential and platitudinous. The real allies of the bourgeoisie cannot be subjected to the same critical gaze as their mythical foes.

One theme which warms the hearts of the contributors is the Eurocommunist relapse into nationalism. Neil McInnes notes with glee 'communism's failure to conquer nationalism. The very vice in socialist internationalism that brought Lenin to denounce it and found a new International was discovered to have eaten the heart out of communist internationalism too.' Santiago Carillo, he will be pleased to note, agrees with him. 'Life', he is quoted as saying by another contributor, 'shows that vitality of national sentiment is a factor of enormous force.'

But proletarian internationalism will not lie down and die quite so easily. Nationalism retains its grip on workers, not because it is rooted in their nature, but because their own struggles have been confined within national limits, and, above all, because their self-styled leaders have capitulated to it all down the line. One need only note the hypocrisy of the Joint Declaration of the French and Italian CPs (15 November 1975) which speaks of 'free movement of persons

inside and outside their country', and contrast it with the French CPs shameful line on immigration.

To pander to the worst prejudices of workers and then to prove from this very pandering the 'vitality of national sentiment', such is the vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy that the charlatans of Eurocommunism have collapsed into.

Ian Birchall

The Revolution that never was

Passive Revolution

Politics and the Czechoslovak Working Class, 1945-8

Jon Bloomfield

Allison Busby £3.95

Let me begin by stating my prejudices over this book. The author is one of the younger leading elements on the right wing, Euro-communist wing of the Communist Party. He also wrote, some years back, a very rude and very unfair review in *Marxism Today* of my own *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe*.

Now let me admit the truth. He has written a very useful account of how the Communist Party came to power in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War *without* the working class being actively involved in the 'revolutionary' process.

Bloomfield believes that Czechoslovakia today is some sort of 'socialist' state. Nevertheless, this does not prevent him telling the story of that period in a more or less honest fashion. He tells, for instance, how as the German rule collapsed in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1945, the workers took over the factories and proceeded to run them and how the unions and the CP proceeded to work to destroy the powers of the emerging workers' councils.

He shows how this took place while the CP was following a policy that insisted that socialism was not on the agenda for Czechoslovakia.

He tells how the CP partly built up its support by being the most rabid proponents of the policy of driving the German speaking population including hundreds of thousands of industrial workers out of the country.

He shows how widespread nationalisation took place because there was no other viable way (other than through the workers' councils) of running the previously German owned enterprises.

He relates how the policies of the CP and the union leaders forced the working class back into passivity and how the workers were denied control over the residual workers' councils.

He shows how already in 1946 and 1947, long before the 'revolution', of 1948, the key

position in the state apparatus were in CP hands. He shows how limited and passive was the role of the working class in the events of February 1948 that completely legitimised this state of affairs.

Finally, he also shows that the February coup did not at all follow from the internal dynamic of social developments inside Czechoslovakia, but from Stalin's foreign policies as the wartime alliance with the US and Britain broke up.

Where Bloomfield fails—and fails miserably—is in his attempt to pull these correct observations into an explanation of what occurred. Residual Stalinism in his basic conceptions means that he continues to talk of 'left' versus 'right' as the bureaucrats who controlled 60 per cent of Czech industry endeavoured, at the behest

of Stalin, to take over the rest.

It leads him to write of the working class's passive support for the Prague coup without remembering what he himself has described very well a few chapters earlier—how that class was radically destructured as its German component (half the workforce in some of the key industries) was driven from the country and its possessions and jobs distributed among 'loyal' Czech workers.

These failings are important, because they alone allow Bloomfield to end up with Eurocommunist conclusions, in which revolution does not mean bodies like the works councils joining together and taking power for themselves, but rather never-ending collaboration with liberal and social-democratic forces.

Chris Harman

national part, the process of capital accumulation causes and is enhanced by an enormous centralization of the means of production—in terms of the size of production units, the ownership of those units and in the spatial concentration of modern activity. The processes are very similar, whether they mean concentration of production in the hands of a small group of advanced capitalist States in the world or of one leading region in a country.

This picture has always been true for developed capitalism, and in no way affects the socialist political strategy. Nonetheless, the use of the territorial argument in conditions where the Marxist tradition is weak or nonexistent aligns the Left with the interests of the ruling class of the 'periphery' against those of the 'core'.

In such a context, the idea of imperialism degenerates to meaning the relationship between the dominant world capitalists and the relatively backward capitalists, not the relationship between world capitalism (big and small) and the world working class (now represented in all countries, regardless of the relative degree of economic development). The perspectives of world proletarian revolution disappear into the aspirations for 'A new world economic order' (the current United Nations demand), imperialism becomes 'dependency'.

A group of specialists in problems of national economic development at the Institute of Development Studies (at the University of Sussex), have put together a volume of studies which try to apply the 'core-periphery' distinction to the internal relationships in Europe itself.

The contributors fortunately do not take too seriously the ostensible theme of the book, so that a number of the pieces are useful. But the theoretical fuzziness at the heart of the book means 'core-periphery' comes to mean anything you want it to mean.

Nigel Harris

3 worlds or 2 classes

Under-developed Europe, Studies in Core-Periphery Relations

Institute of Development Studies, edited by Dudley Seers, Bernard Schaffer and Marja-Liisa Kiljunen.

Harvester Press, 1979

That section of the Left popularly known as 'Third Worldists' argue that the real divisions in the world are geographical. The 'first world' of Europe, North America and Japan constitutes the world's ruling class, the 'Third World', the proletariat and peasantry.

It follows that each segment of First and Third Worlds is socially homogeneous—the poor in the First and the rich in the Third are marginal (and often the poor in the First are seen simply as immigrants, *really* from the Third World after all). This notion—'proletarian' States versus 'bourgeois' States—is a distant descendant of Stalinism, based upon the idea of a 'proletarian State' confronting a bourgeois world order. It is quite contrary to the Marxist tradition where proletariat and bourgeoisie confront each other in each segment of space: factory, district or country.

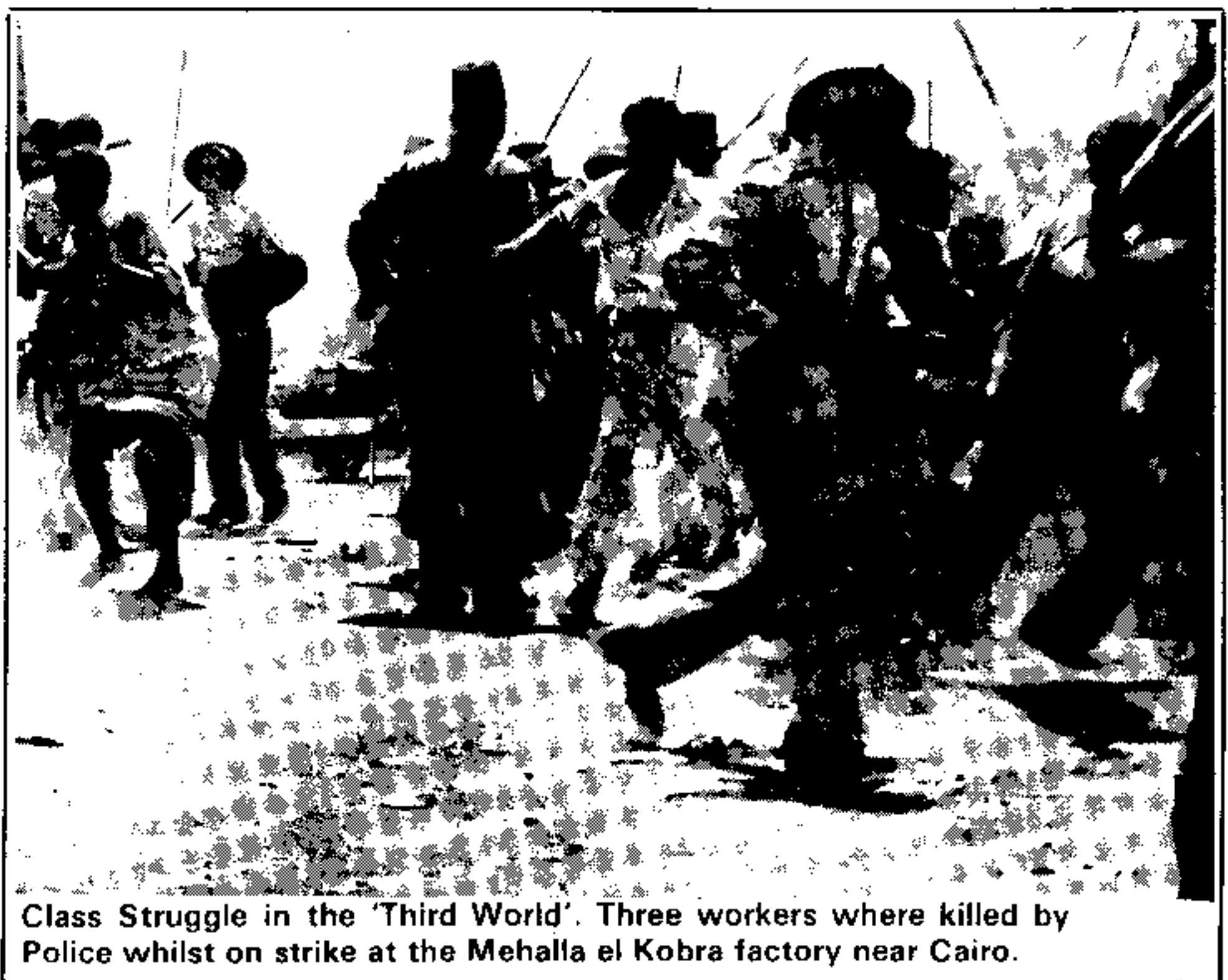
Of course, the idea has a half truth—Europe and the United States are the heartlands of the world bourgeoisie. But they are also the heartlands of the world proletariat as well. In fact, what the Third World argument is about is a conflict within the world ruling class—between the ruling classes of the backward capitalist countries and those of the advanced capitalist countries.

The Third World case is an explicit and extreme form of an assumption held by the ruling classes of the backward countries and by most of those who spend their lives working on these questions in the Economic Development Industry (heavily represented in the aid programmes of advanced capitalist countries, the United Nations, the

World Bank and many others.)

The idea surfaces in a number of concepts, for example that of 'dependency', so popular among the Latin American intelligentsia. It occurs also in the use of a pair of concepts, 'core' and 'periphery'. This proposes that core economic areas—for example, Europe and the United States—necessarily and invariably reduce all other areas to being peripheral, to supplying tribute. Used carefully, the idea can illumine some of the relationships involved in the spatial concentration of production and population, provided it is not used to make the core seem bourgeois and the periphery proletarian.

Both in the world system and each



Class Struggle in the 'Third World'. Three workers were killed by Police whilst on strike at the Mehalla el Kobra factory near Cairo.

Dangerous ideas

Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis
Published by Red Notes and C.S.E. Books
£3.95

Over the last three years, the Italian revolutionary left has staggered from one crisis to another. Lotta Continua, the biggest and most dynamic of the groups took the unprecedented step of passing a motion at its conference to totally disband its organisation. Democrazia Proletaria collapsed after the recent elections where they failed to get their six MPs re-elected.

As a result not only did their increasingly electoralist strategy come to grief but what is more they lost their state financing of nearly £250,000. Within a fortnight, their daily paper failed to come out—closed by enormous debts. The third group to the post 1968 revolutionary left, PdUP, is moving closer and closer to the Italian Communist Party and can no longer be seen as part of the revolutionary left.

As the left split and broke up, tens of thousands of militants and sympathisers turned away in disgust and disillusionment. The mass movements of the spring of 1977, movements of students, women and unemployed workers turned their backs on the discredited groups.

With the break-up of the groups, the natural focus of the movements had disappeared. All sorts of alternatives sprang up. Some went to India to follow the latest guru. Others retreated into domestic 'bliss'. Others turned to heroin. But there was another alternative to be found. A new political movement has arisen, called 'Workers' Autonomy'. It can claim thousands of loosely organised militants, mainly students and unemployed but with some real support in the factories and work-places. It has led some of the most important strikes in Italy over the last few years and can justifiably claim to be the most significant current to the left of the Communist Party.

Workers' Autonomy is very different from the post 1968 groups. First and foremost, it is not a single national organised group; rather it is a series of local groups based in work-places or, more usually, the community. No national structure unites them, indeed in one town you may get two or three collectives defining themselves as Workers' Autonomy but with real political disagreements between them. Instead there are a group of nationally known intellectuals who put out varying analyses which are accepted or rejected by the groups as they see fit.

Around this current there are many more thousands of students, workers, women and unemployed, who, although not formally

connected with Workers' Autonomy are deeply influenced by certain of its theories.



The 'Autonomists' taking the revolution onto the streets

Any book which attempts to explain the political basis of this new current should be of interest and importance to many of the readers of Socialist Review.

The book is divided up into three parts: an examination of the theories of Workers' Autonomy, a set of documents relating to the arrest of the leaders of that group and, finally, a section dealing with the FIAT workers' struggles over the last fifteen years.

We can deal with the strong points of the book easily. The last forty pages dealing with the struggle at FIAT are fantastic!

One small extract should give the flavour of the struggle in the Hot Autumn of 1969:

"The workers' response to this (a lock-out by the bosses) was to call an immediate 8 hour strike. First of all, the workers formed up and tried to get through to where the white collar workers were still working. They smashed up everything in sight—cars were tipped off the line—everything was smashed up. Then they decided they were going to occupy that night, instead of just going home. Then the police arrived in front of the plant—and at that time we had an absolutely mad chief of police in Turin. This man came in and ordered his men to start shooting their tear-gas *inside* the factory. And the workers' answer was that every single car inside the factory was turned off the lines and smashed. You could even hear the noise from outside the factory . . .

The occupation carried on . . . Workers were able to walk around inside the factory and began to know what it looked like . . . It was a great situation. People were sleeping in there: women going in with their blokes, people were fucking inside the factory. The occupation went on to 5 am when the last battalion of workers emerged in the morning fog . . . shouting the slogan: "Lotta Dura Senza Paura!" "We'll fight hard—We have no fear!"

Heady stuff but forty pages of that is hardly worth £4.

The great bulk of the book is devoted to the theory of Workers' Autonomy. And it is here that the book, to my mind, is a failure. It's a failure for two reasons. First, because much of the language used is almost entirely

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incomprehensible. One example will suffice:

'Working class self-valorisation is first and foremost de-structuration of the enemy totality, taken to a point of exclusivity in the self-recognition of the class's collective independence.'

Quite.

Banal in my dictionary means trite and commonplace; and after I had penetrated the fog of words I can assure the editors that there is little danger of the theories presented here becoming commonplace. These theories, for all their sophistication, no longer have any purchase whatsoever on reality. Rather they represent the desperation of a whole sector of the population who have seen their hopes betrayed by a succession of parties claiming to be revolutionary.

The origins of the 'autonomous' current date back to the early 1960's, when a group of intellectuals from the Communist and Socialist parties began the essential task of freeing Marxism from the grip of the traditional organisations of the Italian working class. They rejected the class collaborationist analyses of those parties and instead defined themselves as 'workerists'.

Rejecting the strategy of class alliances, they stressed the primacy of the working class as the instrument of the revolution. The strategy of revolutionaries was to be based not on parliamentary manoeuvres but on the needs of the the working class alone. While this was an essentially healthy break from the reformism within the Italian working class there were some major distortions already in the analysis.

First, they tended to see the role of the unions *only* as being that of an impediment to the working class, rather than an institution which is forced to mediate between two conflicting class forces. Further they tended to glorify the spontaneous actions of the vanguard of the working class as being the conscious strategy of the whole class towards the revolution. However their analysis did appear to have some contact with reality in the enormous wave of class conflict that swept Italy between 1968 and 1974. Thousands of workers were radicalised, revolutionary groups sprang up everywhere and the unions ran around trying to put out the flames.

The picture constructed by the 'autonomous' groups did not stand up so well when the class struggle began to decline. The party inspired by them dissolved. The unions and the Communist Party began to re-establish themselves in many work-places and above all at the polls. Yet a great deal of the 'autonomists' theory would be to regard them as a discredited force among the working class.

The 'Autonomists' reaction was not to analyse the impact of the economic crisis on the working class in the way, for instance, the S.W.P. have tried to do, (see for example International Socialism nos 4, 5 and 6 for the articles by Harman, Jefferys and Cliff). Rather they made an incorrect and dangerous analysis of a change in the role of the state: crudely speaking, the state itself took on many of the functions of the

employer to impose sacrifice on the working class movement. At the same time it became far more repressive and used the mass organisations—the parties, trade unions etc—to impose that attack on the working class. The mass Communist Party with 1¼ million members is seen as a part of that new state, taking the state and its repression into the working class in order to control it.

'We cannot have any truck whatsoever with 'Socialism' and its tradition, and even less so with reformism and Eurocommunism. You could almost say we are a race apart.'

Toni Negri

Once you deny any notion of the CP or the union reflecting aspects of the working class, then a series of very dangerous tactics follow. A short quote from the book provides a clear example of this:

'Some groups of workers, some strata of the working class, remain tied to the dimension of the wage... In as much as they do so they are stealing and expropriating proletarian surplus value—they are participating in the social labour racket on the same terms as their management. These positions—and particularly the trade union practice that fosters them—are to be fought, with violence if necessary. It will not be the first time that a march of the unemployed has entered a large factory so that they can destroy the arrogance of salaried income! (See the accounts in Wal Hannington's book *Unemployed Struggles*). This was what the unemployed were doing in Britain in the 1920's—and quite rightly so.'

I always thought that the unemployed marches were to raise the confidence and fighting ability of the working class over all issues—including their ability to fight for higher wages for themselves. Somebody ought to have told Hannington and MacShane that their role was to destroy the 'arrogance' of those workers who fight for their sectional demands!

This grotesque strategy follows not only from their analysis of the state but also from their understanding of the nature of the working class. The crisis of the early seventies led, for the autonomists, to a 're-structuring' of the working class.

To sum up their theory, capitalism responded to the crisis by dispersing the working class from the big factories of the north to much smaller work-places with a lower tradition of struggle. At the same time, the crisis led to a major rise in the pool

of unemployed and domestic, illegal workers. This, along with the state taking over the functions of capitalism, prompts the theorists to see production moving from the factory to the whole of society.

The working class obviously changes its composition in this process. Apparently it now includes all those involved in the struggle against the state as collective capitalist. Thus the students and unemployed who formed the heart of the 'Movement of 1977' become a part of the working class on the basis that they felt themselves to be so, and are involved in 'social production'.

This idealist and non-marxist view of class leads the 'Autonomist' theorists into a whole range of grotesque claims and strategies. For instance, an absolutely key slogan of the current is 'the refusal to work'; absenteeism, the refusal to take up a job, etc, is seen as the central method of working class attack on the structures of capital. It also leads to immense over-estimation of the forces of the 'autonomous' current. In a remarkable passage, its chief theorist Toni Negri writes:

'We cannot have any truck whatsoever with 'socialism' and its tradition, and even less so with reformism and Eurocommunism. You could almost say we are a race apart... We are here; we are uncrushable; and we are in the majority'.

If this is correct and 'capitalist domination is disintegrating before our eyes' as he continues, all tactics must be allowable to hasten the move towards communism. Thus parts of the 'autonomous movement' engage in 'diffuse violence' against the institutions of the state including the mass reformist parties.

But, reality is different. The autonomists are not the majority; capitalist power is not disintegrating and the majority of Italian workers do not identify with the 'Autonomists'. As a result the state has been able to crack down on them, meeting minimal resistance from the mass of the Italian population.

The theoreticians of the 'Autonomous' movement have been framed on a list of absurd charges including being the brains behind the Red Brigades and organising the assassination of Moro. A witch-hunt has been carried on by the press and political parties with the Communist Party chief among them.

The charges are palpably false and it is the duty of revolutionaries both in Italy and elsewhere to demand their release. But having said that, revolutionaries also have the duty to fight the political ideas the 'autonomist' theorists put forward.

For let there be no mistake. The ideas put forward are very 'dangerous' indeed: dangerous not to the ruling class, as this book claims, but to the workers' movement itself. The under-estimation of the hold of reformism, the glorification of spontaneity whatever its ends, the traditional view of the role of intellectuals as that of dropping theory into the struggle, the romanticisation of violence add up to a diversion from the real tasks confronting revolutionaries in Europe today.

Tim Potter

FILM REVIEWS



Vietnam 1968

Apocalypse Now! Truth Later?

Two Views on Francis Ford Coppola's Film

Apocalypse Now is a film swamped by its own pomposity. You walk out of the cinema feeling conned and cheated, and smothered under a welter of pretentious literary allusion. You can't help but feel this way after watching a grotesquely inflated Marlon Brando swagger about quoting TS Eliot for the last half hour of the film. But, you ask yourself, what about the rest of the film, and as the images come flooding back, you realise the whole thing can't be dismissed so easily.

Unlike *The Deerhunter*, *Apocalypse Now* confronts the Vietnam War head on. The B-52s, the napalm, the dope, above all the Vietnamese as real people, are there. One scene in particular shows it all. Martin Sheen is sent up-river to seek out and destroy Kurtz (Brando), who has apparently gone insane and is waging his own private war just over the Cambodian border.

At the start of his journey he becomes involved in a raid on a Vietnamese village. The commanding officer leads his fleet of helicopters in to 'blast Charlie' because he has heard that there's unbelievable surfing

to be had on those particular beaches. They bombard the village with Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' blaring forth from the helicopters. But, as they make a landing, the village blown to pieces, two Vietnamese women rush out and place grenades in the first helicopter. They in turn are blown to pieces, but the bravery of their action is unbelievably moving. And it is moments like these which survive after your initial annoyance at the pretensions of the film as a whole dies down. It has taken a long time for Hollywood to produce even such a glimmer of the truth.

The reality of the Vietnam War is there in the film, but it is wrapped in a metaphor of nightmare and lunacy which draws heavily on Joseph Conrad's story *Heart of Darkness*.

Ironically, it is the attempt at faithfulness to Conrad's tale which is the downfall of the film. The spaced-out, nightmarish journey of the imagination works as a metaphor for the war in Vietnam, but the attempt to focus the film on the captain's obsessional search for Kurtz does not.

In Conrad's story Marlow is faced with a credible 'choice of nightmares' between on the one hand the bigoted and deluded managers of the imperialist enterprise, and on the other Kurtz, who, faced with himself away from the constraints of 'civilisation', found only the 'horror' within.

But the captain in 'Apocalypse Now' is confronted with no credible alternative. Brando, as the latter day Kurtz, has no substance as a character. He postures, larger than life, muttering bits and pieces from TS Eliot's poems. The whole film collapses because it depends on his credibility: he is supposed to be a man who has gone one step beyond the acceptable lunatic bounds of the war in Vietnam. In these terms his particular brand of insanity is meant to be sympathetic. But it is patently vacuous, as hollow as any of his quotes from the *Hollow Men*.

How long will it take Hollywood to come to terms with Vietnam?

Jane Ure-Smith

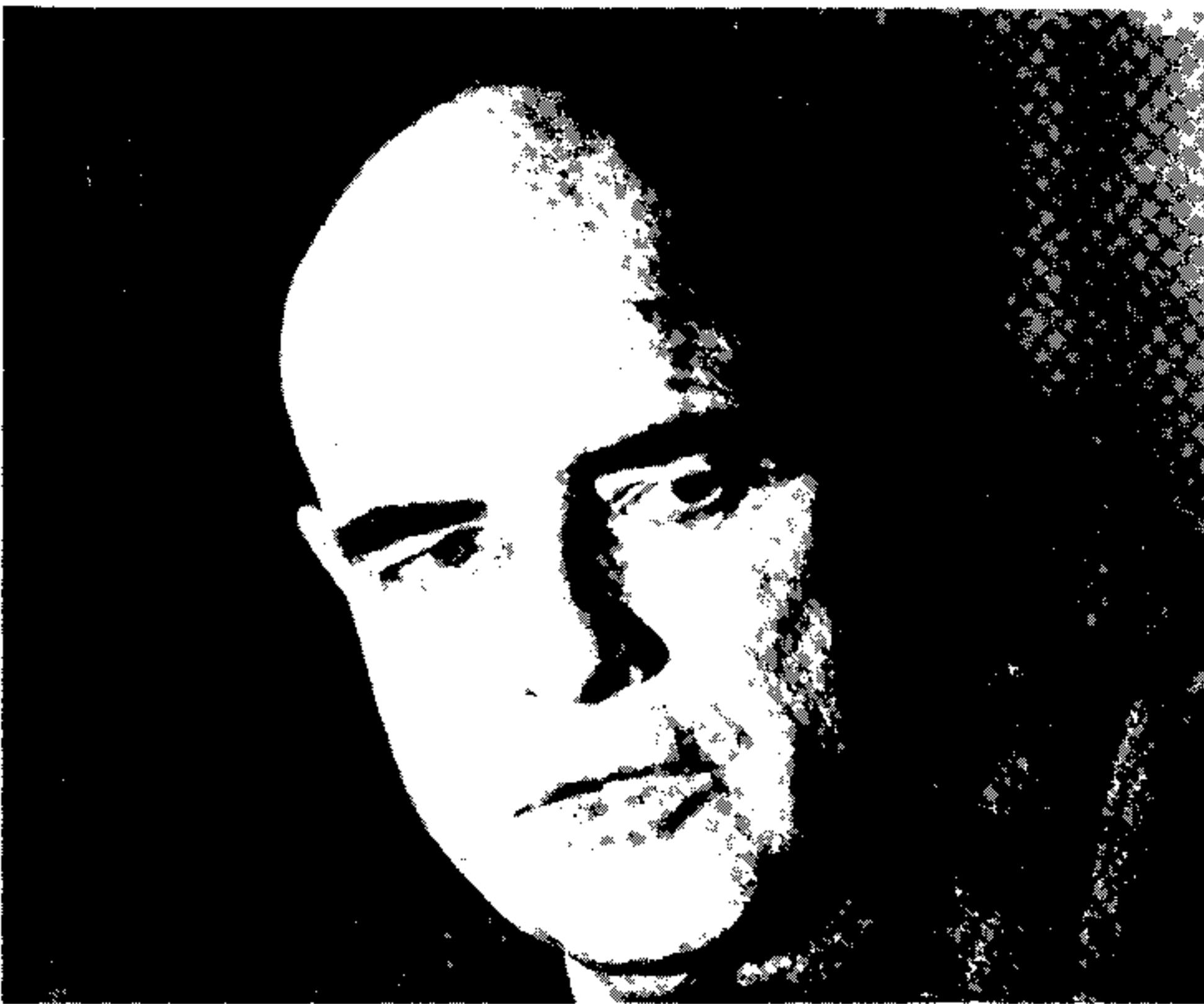
Just another lie.

If you go to see *Apocalypse Now* expecting a film about the Vietnam war, you'll be disappointed. As in *The Deerhunter* before it, the only part the war plays is that of backdrop to a story of obscure and pretentious philosophical content, a story that itself has nothing at all to do with Vietnam.

In both of these films such an emotional effort is put into raising the abstract moral discourse to absurd heights that very little seems to be left to deal seriously with the war: in *The Deerhunter* it was treated primarily as a prolonged orgy of torture committed by communist bandits on GI prisoners and the only actual battle-scene involved a Vietcong soldier blowing up a group of women and children; in *Apocalypse Now*, the battles are long and expensive (it cost 30 million dollars to make) but are performed in a style indistinguishable from the cynical black humour of *Kelly's Heroes*, *Catch 22* and *MASH*. The high point of wit in the film is in the incineration of a fishing village and its inhabitants so that the Americans can go surfing there for a few minutes.

For the directors of these films the war is just a medium in which to explore the knottier aspects of the 'human condition' and the violence is just a tool useful for pushing characters to believable breaking points, to the perimeters of experience. The vile thing is their use of Vietnam, such a monumental tragedy, as a means to indulge in the luxury of tripping through the finer and most irrelevant points of moral philosophy.

And of course the war that appears on the screen is tailored to fit these spiritual problems under scrutiny. In *The Deerhunter*, the limits of commitments between friends are tested with torture and



humiliation, and in this film the limits of duty are tested with insane commands. We don't see the war, only war scenes that are convenient to the story.

The story of *Apocalypse Now* is lifted from Joseph Conrad's short novel *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1902. This was set around a trading company's agent living deep in the African jungle, cut off entirely from outside contact and driven to committing more and more brutal excesses in his quest for commercial success and personal domination over the natives.

This man, Kurtz, is presented by Conrad as a sort of devil and hero rolled into one: an appalling man but one who has broken from the hypocrisy of Western morals. In the film version, Kurtz is an American officer, again out of contact and out of control, cutting deeper and deeper into Cambodia (and away from the war) with an army of tribesmen toting spears as well as guns. His method is to destroy everything and everyone in his way. The search for this man and for his ideas forms the plot of the film: fine if you want to see Stanley chasing a sort of nazi Dr Livingstone, but no film about Vietnam.

The role of the US in Vietnam can be seen as parallel to the trading company in Africa: imperial conquest dressed as civilising mission. The trouble is that you can't pick up a story written by a hardened reactionary like Conrad and not end up with a reactionary film. The politics behind Conrad's story bleed right through the fabric of the film.

The violent excesses of Kurtz in both versions are excesses beyond 'civilised' behaviour—the behaviour of the Western traders in Africa or the American warlords in Vietnam. Kurtz is mad, operating outside the limits of decency. Because they are treated as within those limits, the real butchers of Africa and Vietnam go blameless by default: they are only criticised

for their failings of will and determination.

Kurtz is a diversion and a fiction, both in Africa and Vietnam. *Apocalypse Now* fails to tell us anything about Vietnam because Conrad's story had not the slightest intention of telling anything about the colonisation of Africa: on the contrary, the search for Kurtz is a device to lead the reader or viewer, away from the history of the event and into the mystery of abstract moral dilemma. What else can we say—*Apocalypse Now* is just another insult to Vietnam, just another lie.

Colin Brown

Who Needs Heroes ?

Man of Marble

Bread and Chocolate

News of two lesser publicised recent films that are worth seeing if they come your way. We're not sure what chance they have of getting out of London but they may turn up at independent cinemas or at student film societies, so keep an eye out for them.

Like *The China Syndrome*, *Man of Marble* has as its heroine a journalist, in this case a documentary film maker. Just as Jane Fonda's reporter stumbles on the truth about nuclear power, so the novice in Wajdas film slowly learns the truth about the Man of Marble, a Stakhanovite hero of the Polish reconstruction who was disgraced and disappeared. And as in *The China Syndrome* the investigations are constantly stifled by a mixture of tear, string-pulling and gentle intimidation against which the heroine eventually triumphs—for a while...

But from here on *Man of Marble* probes deeper. For the film itself is an act of rebellion, a significant gesture against the people who ruled—and rule—in Poland, the class which has its scapegoats, changes its leading personalities, but survives the great working class uprisings of 1956-57, 1970-71, 1976...

Wajda's film is not to be missed because of its drama, pace, acting, political insight. But above all because the fact that it has shown to packed houses in Poland, with its overt subversive message about the way workers are manipulated and swindled intact, makes you feel in watching it that you are participating in an act of defiance yourself.

Typically, so of course, British film distributors have so far managed to restrict the film to London's 'arty' Academy Cinema, where it shows to Polish emigres and few others. If you've got an enterprising cinema club or independent cinema near you try and get them to show it. It's the sort of film—like *Harlan County* and *Battle of Chile*—which the SWP should arrange tours of. I wonder what it would do if shown to those Polish workers who fled from 'communism' to the West—to the mines of Northern France, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire and to the steel and car plants of the USA.

Bread and Chocolate, tells the story of an Italian 'guest-worker' in Switzerland, and exposes the system of cheap labour whereby millions of people have to work for years away from their own countries and families, without any union rights and under constant threat of sackings and deportation.

Oddly enough, the film is a comedy and the principal device used to display the inhumanity of 'guest-working' is a seemingly endless series of ridiculous and funny situations in which the hero finds himself as a result of his attempts to avoid deportation but at the same time preserves some dignity.

Initially working as a waiter, he is soon sacked because the Swiss police report him to his boss for pissing against a wall in the street (something you just don't do in Switzerland). In his struggle to remain in the country he successively teams up with all kinds of other expatriates. This includes a rich Italian tax exile: the crushing racism and isolation they both experience unites them briefly, but the enormous gulf of class between them keeps their relationship revolving round a hilarious and tragic set of misunderstandings and lies.

The film digs out every aspect of this unlikely alliance: in the end the suicide of the bankrupted tax exile after he has deposited the hero's life savings in his own (overdrawn) account underscores the point that there is more to social injustice than the battle between Swiss racists and Italians.

This is a film about class, about racism, and about the way individuals try to cope with the mad world created by these things. The comedy and the political punch are folded together without any awkwardness or strain—the jokes and the lessons, contained in the same events, reinforce each other and leave you giggling but angry. Political entertainment at its best.



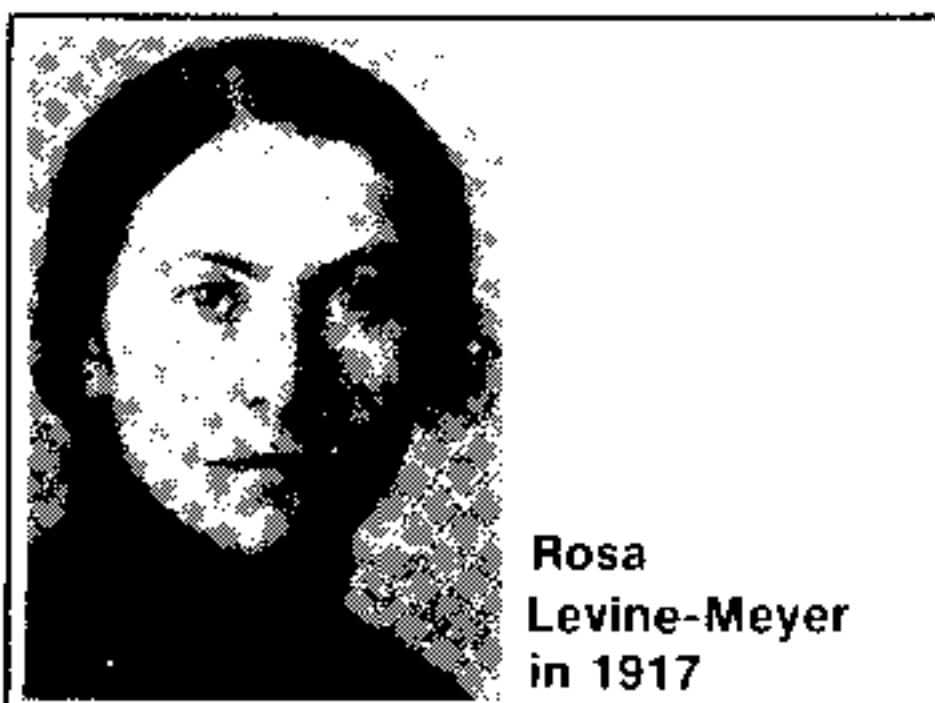
Eugene Levine

Ernst Meyer

The last of a Generation

Rosa Levine-Meyer, who died in November at 89, was hardly a household name, even among radical circles. Her natural fate was that of many European political exiles who have settled in Britain since the time of Marx and Engels: forced separation from her own political reality, the inability to adapt her experiential skills to local needs, the common British disinterest in foreign experience, however relevant.

In Frau Levine-Meyer's case there was also a more peculiar cause for her enduring political isolation. Although she lived in London from 1934 - a refugee from Hitler, and, in a sense, from Stalin - her reference point up to her death was the German Revolution and the Weimar Republic, and her political focus remained somehow frozen between 1918 and 1932.



Rosa Levine-Meyer in 1917

There is also the hard fact that whatever reputation she had rested not on her own political initiative or work, but rather on her successive marriages to two important Communist leaders. Indeed, difficult and unpopular as it may sound, her strength and importance lay in her ability to resurrect these two men as late as the 1970's, when one of them at least would have long been consigned to historical oblivion.

Born in Tsarist Russia, the daughter of a

rabbi, she emigrated in 1910 to Germany where she met the Russian student Eugen Levine. She married him in 1915 and, for the next four years found herself swept along in many ways against her bourgeois grain in the turbulence of the German revolutionary days.

Levine soon became a leading figure in the *Spartakusbund* and, after the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, fled to Munich. It was there in 1919 that he, as head of the Party in Bavaria, led the Soviet Republic for its short-lived weeks until it was crushed by the collusion of *Freikorps* volunteers and the ruling Social Democrats. Levine was tried and executed by firing-squad. At his celebrated trial, he made the now legendary remark: 'We Communists are all dead men on leave.'

Over fifty years later, at the instigation of Isaac Deutscher, Rosa Levine-Meyer told the story of the Munich Soviet in *Levine: the Life of a Revolutionary* (Saxon House). It is one of the minor tragedies of historical documentation that this volume was so appallingly edited and published. For the thrill-packed story it relates is not only politically instructive, but brings to life one of the most dynamic and clear-sighted revolutionary leaders of this century, one who had suffered unjustifiable obscurity up to that point.

In 1920, the widowed Rosa Levine met Ernst Meyer, a leading figure in the German Communist Party, whom she married two years later. Through his position for a time head of the Politburo and then leader of the 'Centre' opposition and also because of her bilingual ability, Frau Levine-Meyer came into close contact with Trotsky, Bukharin, Radek, Meunzenberg, Zetkin, Zinoviev and others. Until the death of Meyer in 1930 she was within earshot and

heartbeat of the notorious rise and fall of the world's second largest Communist Party.

It is in this capacity, more witness than cadre, that Rosa Levine-Meyer makes her enduring impact. Her second book, *Inside German Communism* (Pluto Press), written in her '80's, traces the Stalinisation of the KPD, but admirably without the indulgent bitterness and recrimination of many a similar memoir. Her disillusion with the CP as well as most other Left alternatives, did not cut her optimism or sense of fight even in the most depressing circumstances.

Her strength was anecdotal rather than theoretical, and yet it was precisely this personal aspect of making revolution she attempted to underestimate. Her uncompromising and often unfair attempts to lay down the theoretical law lost her nearly as many friends as she made in Britain. (At one time her guests included Isaac Deutscher, Rudi Dutschke, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Eric Hobsbawm, Erich Fried, and she had correspondence with Marcuse and George Steiner, among others).

An extremely difficult woman, she nonetheless remains a tragic testament to a common fate among left-wing women, shadow-mate to the man of action. Yet her political passions stemmed exactly from this supportive role, and she made a career of it, leaving goods of great value behind her.

The era which she hardened into is still the most apt and powerful model for the left anywhere in Europe today. Through her some of us lived it vicariously and carry it still as adventure and inspiration. In this way her death, like her isolation, is a great loss to the British Left, which isn't aware of it.

David Zane Mairowitz



**I is for
Imperialism
the
British Kind
was
the worst**

Every European, from the Greeks to the British, went in search of the riches of the East. From the seventeenth century onwards there was a steady flow of precious metals and other goods from East to West.

Together with the slave trade profits, this wealth was necessary for the development of capitalism. Marx called the process the "primitive accumulation of capital". The process also required cheap raw materials, and an ever-expanding market, and to ensure these the British colonised the East.

In India the process got under way after Chile's victory at Plessey in 1757. It led to a massive increase in the transfer of wealth from India to Britain. It is estimated that, in the 1760's, capital investment in Britain was about £6 to £7 million a year. The tribute from India was at least £2 million.

India was one of the biggest producers of cotton. Indian weavers, using hand-loom, produced the best textiles in the world. The British began shipping raw cotton from India to England and the cotton mills of Lancashire, which turned it into textiles, were the start of the "industrial revolution".

The unwanted competition of Indian weavers was stopped by chopping off their hands. Hand looms, and other handicraft industry, were systematically destroyed. India became both the biggest provider of raw cotton and the biggest market for British manufactured textiles. In a House of Commons Select Committee report of 1840, Sir Charles Trevelyan said: "We have finished the (Indian) entrepreneurs. Now all they have got left is the agriculture."

But this, too, was transformed. Agricultural land which had provided food for the Indians was increasingly turned over to produce raw materials for the developing

British industry or to the production of opium for sale in China. Tea, cotton, wheat, oil seeds and jute were shipped to Britain at an increasing rate. In 1813, 9 million pounds weight of cotton went to Britain, in 1844, 88 million, in 1914, 963 million. Similarly, in 1849, wheat worth £8 million went to Britain, in 1901, £9.3 million worth, in 1914, £19.3 million.

This transformation of agriculture created massive famines. Between 1850 and 1900 there were 25 famines in India which killed more than 20 million people. Those who were lucky enough to survive faced increasing land taxes which had to be paid in cash rather than products. Many were unable to pay, became bankrupt and were shipped to the West Indies and the Americas as indentured labourers.

A good example of this systematic pillage was Punjab. After the British conquest in 1846, they began to dismantle the existing political and economic systems and to impose their own system of maximum exploitation.

Punjab had a communal land system in which the whole village community owned the land. All the various castes, according to their craft, contributed to producing sufficient food for the whole community. Communally, they paid land taxes in kind to the Sikh rulers.

The British divided the land into small plots and gave it to the farming caste. No other caste was allowed to buy or sell land and thus the caste system was rigidly enforced. To raise cash to pay the massive new land taxes, the farmers had to sell their farm produce on the markets. Thus food became a commodity to be bought and sold rather than fairly shared to feed the

village community. In order to pay taxes in periods of bad weather the farmers began to accumulate, thus depriving the other castes of their share.

But despite this accumulation, farmers still went bankrupt in times of bad weather and were forced to mortgage their lands to rich merchants, who had developed out of the new commodity markets. According to the Famine Commission report of 1860, there were 200,000 court cases each year concerning bankrupt farmers and mortgaged land. Between 1901 and 1909, 25 million acres of land were mortgaged by farmers.

Breaking up the village communities also threw up a layer of corrupt officials and middlemen like merchants, lawyers, court officials, petty civil servants and, of course, policemen. On top of this heap were the despotic Maharajas and Nawabs. The impoverished and bankrupt peasants who were the victims of this process were recruited into the army to fight new wars for the British Empire, from Indo-China to the Second World War.

All efforts by the Indians to win freedom were ruthlessly crushed. In 1857 the first Indian War of Independence - better known in Britain as the "Indian Mutiny" - was crushed with the utmost barbarity. In 1919 the repressive Rowlet Act was passed. This denied the Indians freedom of assembly and allowed imprisonment without trial. In protest against this act 20,000 people gathered in an enclosed park at Amritsar on 13 April 1919. The British troops opened fire on the peaceful and unarmed Indians, killing more than 500 and wounding nearly 2000. This act of cowardly brutality is known as the 'Amritsar Massacre'.

The whole of this process of exploitation and murder was carried out, with bible in one hand and sword in the other, under the guise of "civilising the black hordes". At the same time, the British played the game of "divide and rule", resulting in the division of the country into three parts in 1947 and the death of 100,000 people in the communal riots which followed.

Although direct British rule was ended in 1947, economic imperialism still continues. A large part of the capital investment in India is British owned. Most of the tea plantations, for examples, still have British owners.

Karl Marx wrote: "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling class shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English Yoke altogether."

The Indians have thrown off the English Yoke, but it has been replaced by the corrupt Indian ruling classes. So, to reap the fruits of the new elements of society, the industrial proletariat needs to triumph not only in Britain but also in India itself.

Balwinder Singh Rana