

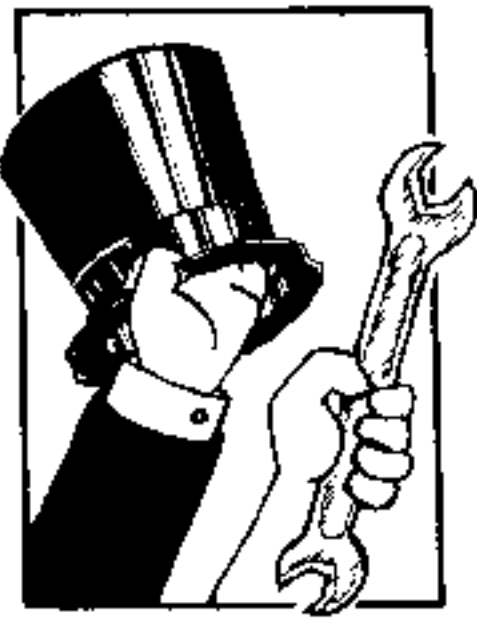
socialist
REVIEW

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Radiation and health
 World recession
 Gorky and Lenin



In this issue:
**Wembley: the
 goal they
 disallowed?**



Class struggle

Public sector workers well and truly Clegged

A major part of the current Tory offensive on pay settlements is the barrage of propaganda saying that, for the last two years, workers in the public sector have been getting much bigger pay rises than workers in private manufacturing industry. And, the story goes, because workers in the private sector are bearing the brunt of the recession, workers in the public sector must make much bigger sacrifices, on both pay and jobs.

Trade union leaders have barely lifted a finger to fight on pay this winter. The most frequently heard remark coming from these brave leaders is that, 'we're more concerned about jobs than pay'. But they haven't done anything about jobs either. And when the union officials who negotiated the 7.5 per cent settlement for the one million local authority workers summed up why they accepted the deal, they said, 'there was nothing else we could do, the members wouldn't fight'.

Legacy of Clegg

What we are seeing now is the real legacy of the sell-out two years ago of the long fight by public sector workers against the Labour government's five per cent incomes policy. Local authority and health service workers moved in their thousands against the government's pay policy but ended with a rotten deal, recommended by their union officials, which left them well and truly Clegged. Bitterness followed, particularly as the public sector union leaders claimed that the Clegg exercise had been a great success. But the timing of the new money meant that no one ever caught up with those they were compared with.

The low paid remained low paid and the local authority union leaders had done nothing to challenge what amounted to the institutionalisation of low pay. The Tories reaped the harvest of Labour's dirty deal. The Clegg operation delayed and defused organisation and militancy. When it came to last year's wage negotiations, most public sector groups got no more than the government's cash limits allowed them to get - 1.3 per cent, well below the rate of inflation.

Firemen

Early this winter, in November 1980, the government announced its plans to turn the screw further on the public sector with its six per cent cash limits for the local authorities. It immediately faced the threat of strike action throughout the fire service, as the FBU was the first union to be affected by the new policy. It had to find a way of letting

the firemen off the six per cent without opening up the flood gates. The TUC came to their rescue. On November 26 the TUC general council said:

'The general council emphasised that whatever the position of unions generally in respect of the government's six per cent cash limit, that was clearly a separate matter from the 1978 agreement between the Fire Brigades' Union and the local authorities, where the issue was simply one of honouring a binding collective agreement and bore no direct relationship to the collective bargaining circumstances of other unions.'



In 1978 Fisher and Basnett claimed there would be no justice without a £60 minimum wage for the low paid. Today even that target has not been met.

In the event, the local authority employers came up with an offer of the 1.8 per cent due to firemen under their 1978 strike-ending pay formula, but staged the deal to give 1.3 per cent from November and five per cent from this April. A confrontation had been avoided on the basis of a special case, endorsed by the TUC.

1978 target still not reached

Local authority workers have had no such luck. Their offer of a flat rate increase of £4.60 on each basic grade rate, worth approximately 7.5 per cent, was recommended by the union negotiators simply on the grounds that it was more than six per cent. It was also half the rate of inflation at the time. There is no small irony in the fact that this latest settlement takes the new minimum basic rate to £59.05 a week. Over two years ago the joint union claim was for

a minimum basic rate of £60 a week. Leaders such as Alan Fisher and David Basnett said there would be no justice until the £60 target was met. The demand led to the strike action known as the winter of discontent. But after three annual pay awards, including the Clegg awards, the basic minimum is still short of the target set for November 1978.

Miners settle below ten per cent

The miners' settlement was discussed widely in the press as a thirteen per cent increase. It was in fact worth 9.8 per cent on the basic rates; the rest was for higher productivity in the pits. If the press had not talked up the value of the deal the ballot might have swung the other way, despite the powerful pressure from Gornley. Union officials throughout the NUM did not mobilise campaigns against the offer, although in Yorkshire, South Wales and Scotland the 'No' vote was very high.

Negotiations are currently taking place in the water, gas, and electricity supply industries where offers have been made that are less than ten per cent, but more than six per cent. The greatest militancy has been shown in the water industry with a majority vote for strike action in support of the union claim. The National Water Council will try to negotiate a way round the militancy, with slightly improved offers that may buy the support of the union officials.

But the 250,000 national health service ancillary workers are in a much weaker position with their latest offer of just six per cent, even less than the deal signed for the local authority workers to whom their pay rates are normally tied.

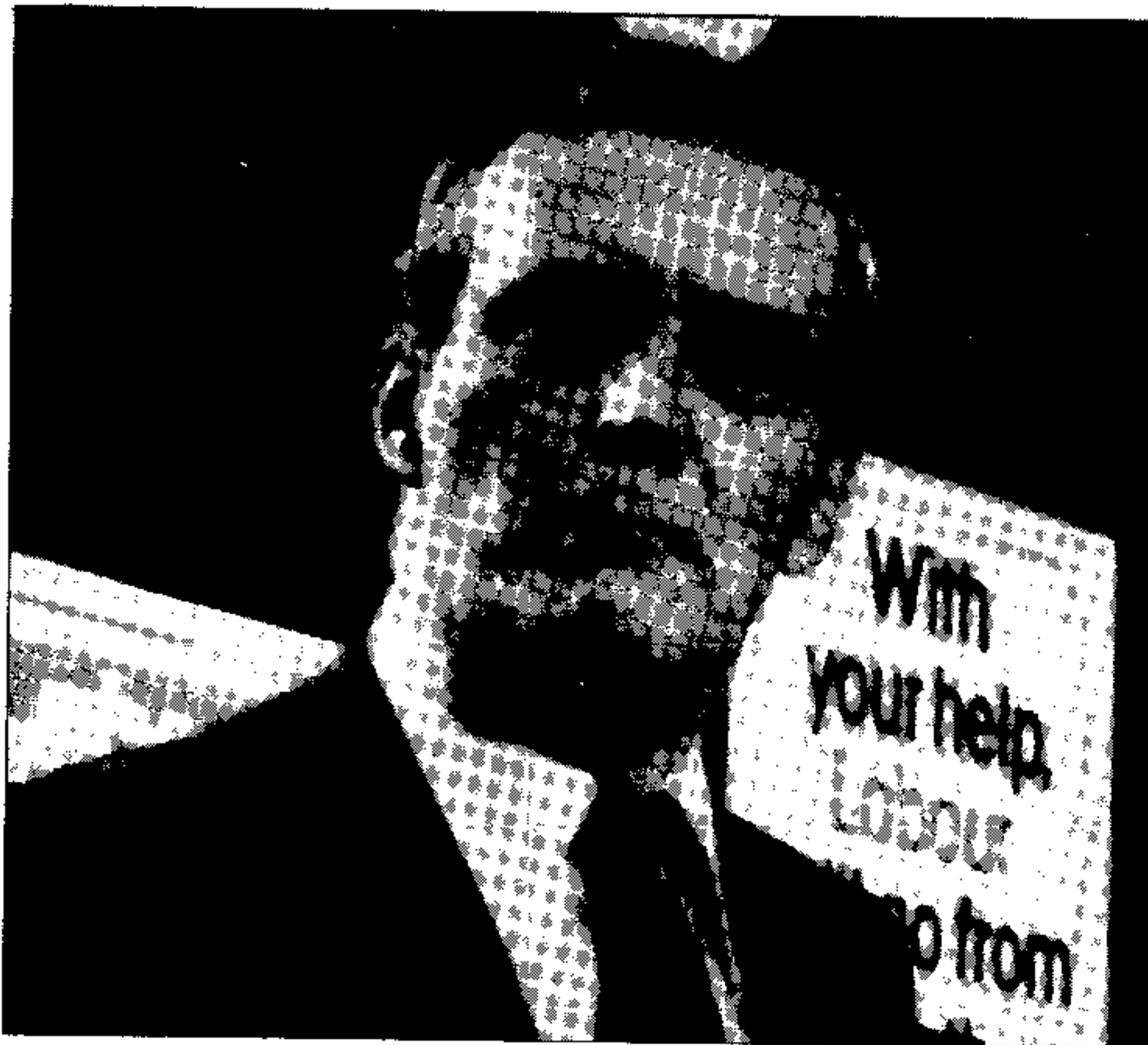
Worst of all

Two public corporations are pushing through pay freezes. British Steel has already won acceptance of its six month pay freeze until July when the rates will be increased by seven per cent. But at British Airways the management's attempt to push through a six month freeze has been resisted, and the current management offer is a three month freeze followed by eight per cent from April 1. So far the shop stewards are mounting a fight back and a one day strike at the end of January by 20,000 engineers and ground staff may well be followed by further action if the deal is not improved.

Less than inflation

Pay increases this winter in both the private and public sectors have mainly been below the rate of inflation and living standards are being seriously eroded, particularly for the lower paid. Defending living standards and defending jobs are part of the same struggle. If union organisation in the workplace is weak when fighting pay then it will be weak on fighting to defend jobs, and vice versa.

Stuart Axe



An illusory victory

Scarborough 1960 went down in history as both a high point and a low point in the history of the Labour left. It won a vital vote at the party conference—only to see the leadership ignore the vote and the position effectively reversed within months as the controlling block votes switched sides. Wembley already looks like being the Scarborough of the 1980s. The left—with virtually the sole exception of the Socialist Workers Party—greeted the conference decision with pure ecstasy. Yet already, the great victory looks like turning into the great defeat.

What really happened at Wembley? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Labour left?

Chris Harman, who observed the conference for us, provides an SWP view on some of these issues. Then, in an interview with Jon Bearman, Nigel Stanley secretary of one of the Labour left organisations, the Labour Coordinating Committee, gives his own contrasting opinions. Finally, we look at the significance of the split of Jenkins, Williams, Owens and Rogers.

I expected the Labour Party conference to be a bit different to the last one I observed. That was, after all, 16 years ago. The party had just won the 1964 election and sycophancy to Harold Wilson was the order of the day. The conference rose to a man (and they were almost all men) to the conquering hero, left and right forgetting all the arguments of previous years. There was not a murmur of disagreement on that occasion.

However, the most notable difference last weekend was not the mood of the delegates—after all, when Foot spoke at the end they rose (with the only exceptions somewhere or other, the cringing figures of Owen and Williams) to applaud him as they had once applauded Wilson. The difference was in the delegates themselves.

The Labour Party Conference has always been two conferences in one—a conference of union delegates, a sort of mini-TUC without certain public sector and white collar unions, and a conference of constituency delegates.

The union delegates at the special conference were what they have always been.

Experienced trade unionists, balding, grey haired, in their fifties or sixties, overwhelmingly male, obviously from the traditional sections of the working class, attending conference as a reward for a life time of service to their union (or at least to their union leader), as interested in the bars as the debates, moving around in groups of a dozen or more under the paternal eye of a general secretary.

It is the constituency delegates who have changed. They were never as proletarian as the union delegations. But they did used to be old. The absence of anything resembling youth and the dearth even of middle age was the most noticeable feature of any conference in the Wilson era. All that seemed to remain in the party was the residue of the 1945 generation, aging year by year, their youthful Bevanite enthusiasm long since forgotten, taking it in turns to attend the conference with the handful of others from their age groups who kept the constituencies just about ticking over.

Now the constituency delegates are much younger—little more than half the average

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age of the union delegates. But they are also much more distinctly middle class. In clothing, in hair style, in speech, they were easily distinguishable from the mass of union delegates. Not that they spoke with the plumb voices of the Jenkins and Owens, the borne-to-lead public school boys (and girl) who throw a tantrum to media applause every time their birth-right is denied them. No, the constituency delegates were more likely to be from Grammar School and provincial university than from Eton and Oxbridge. Theirs is the distinctive dress and style of the middle ranking town hall employee or civil servant, poly lecturer or social worker. At the main Bennite meeting —of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy—in the lunchtime at conference you felt tempted to do a spot check on ASTMS, NALGO and NATFHE membership cards. For the meeting was everything you'd expect of a Broad Left gathering in one of these unions. Not more than one in ten or one in twenty of the several hundred present could have been manual workers.

'Saturday's overwhelming decision by the Labour Party for an electoral college was a major victory for democracy within the labour movement. It was an equally decisive defeat for the party's right wing... It is a momentous decision in the struggle not only for the return of a Labour government at the next election, but also to ensure a Labour government which carries out the policies of the labour movement...'

(Morning Star 26 January 1981)

The point of noting the contrast between the social composition of two parts of the conference is not to shrug off the constituency delegates as irrelevant 'human rubbish'. After all, those without sin should be the first to cast stones, and it's still true that about a third of the membership of the SWP (and about 80 per cent of the editorial team of this *Review*) come from the same milieu as those delegates. The observation is of importance when it comes to looking at the scale of the power the Bennite left really has at its disposal—for the lunchtime meeting was Benn's meeting and the delegates there indicate what is Benn's real *active* base.

It is a power that is very limited within the structures of the Labour party, and even more so outside them.

Much ado about nothing

The vote for the electoral college may have provided Williams, Owens and Rogers with the excuse they have been seeking to dive out of the party. It may also have given the Shores and the Kinnocks a push in the direction of lining up Healey and Foot against Heffer and Benn. But the electoral college—even if not reversed—will *not* increase the power of the left in the party appreciably.

At present the constituencies have about 18 per cent of the votes at conference and choose a quarter of the party's national executive committee. Four fifths of conference votes and three quarters of the executive seats are at the disposal of the unions (the direct union seats and the women's seats).

In the electoral college the constituency delegates will increase their weight a little, to hold 30 per cent of the votes. But this will be more than compensated for by the weight of the Parliamentary Labour Party—of which three quarters are hostile to the Bennite left.

The balance of power is held by the trade union leaders. And this power can increasingly be expected to be swung behind the moderate right.

At the special conference itself, the *majority* of union votes went behind the 'right of centre' compromise which would have given half the seats in the electoral college to the right-wing dominated PLP. It was only confusion among the leaders of USDAW and an obstinate refusal of the leaders of the AUEW to vote for anything other than their own proposal to give four fifths of the votes to the PLP which enabled the left's version of the college to go through.

And it is worth remembering, that for all their complaints about the block vote, the renegades Shirley Williams and Tom Bradley were elected to the executive last October by ... the block union votes.

If the left has a narrow majority on the executive it is because the shift to the right among the trade union leaderships in recent years (particularly in the AUEW) is not yet reflected, for instance in the women's seats elected from conference. But should the issues seem to be important enough to them people like Allen and Basnett can be expected to line up with Chapple, Duffy and Jackson to achieve a majority for the right to impose its nominees. If they haven't done so so far, it is because they have not regarded what the left has been doing as that serious, and so have been prepared to vote for 'left union' nominees on the executive in return for the 'left' unions backing their nominees (eg in TUC elections).

'Wembley was a great victory for Labour's ranks... With the transformation and retransformation of the trade unions they will play an even bigger part within the Labour Party. The block vote of the union delegations at Labour Party conference will become a vital transmission belt for the demands of an aroused and mobilised working class'.

'Michael Foot has called for a mass campaign against the Tories, linking opposition in parliament to mass agitation in the country. An impregnable base for the party must be built in the trade union branches, in the factories, on the housing estates and amongst the youth'.

(Militant 30th January 1981)

In an electoral college choosing the leader or the deputy leader of the party, such 'left-right' trade-offs between union leaders would not play a role, and the majority of block votes will be cast for 'moderate' candidates.

What that means can be judged by assuming that Foot were to drop dead tomorrow. The conference would meet as an electoral college. Assume that Healey stood against Benn. The line up would be:

Benn

25% of PLP equals 7½% of electoral college

75% of constituencies equals 22½% of electoral college

33% of unions equal 13½% of

total vote 43½%

Healey

(by subtraction) 56½%

Healey would win—even though the estimates for Benn are highly optimistic (eg assume he would get TGWU vote)

The argument is even clearer if you take the not quite so hypothetical situation of Benn challenging Healey for the deputy leadership in the coming autumn. For under those circumstances, enormous pressure would be applied (by Foot among others) to get Healey re-elected, so as to preserve 'the unity' of the party. Benn would certainly receive an overwhelmingly defeat. Healey recognises this—which is why straight after the special conference he insisted he would be happy to face a challenge to his position in October. We suspect Benn will think twice before mounting such a challenge.

'The final result was a combination of brilliant tactics on the part of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, pig-headedness on the part of some right wing union leaders and a fair dose of good luck' (Chris Mullin in *Tribune* 30 January 1981)

Such calculations enable one to see why, at the special conference itself, those on both left and right who did not allow their passions to ruin their ability to do simple sums, could insist that the electoral college would *not* produce any great change in the party.

So, Moss Evans moving the NEC's version of the electoral college (which would have given more votes to the constituency left than the successful formula) argued it was 'not revolutionary'. A left delegate from Salford pointed out that 'under the electoral college system, every leader since the war would probably have been the same'. Joe Gormley, opposing the successful version nevertheless added that the system selected 'doesn't make two hoots of a difference'. And Clive Jenkins, privately telling friends of his on the press not to get too worked up reminded them that '60 unions' had voted with the right at the conference.

These estimates of the impact of an electoral college are a far shot from the rantings of Owen and Williams. But they are just as far from the elation which overtook sections of the left at the conference. So Joan Maynard told the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy meeting, 'This conference is about making sure the next Labour government is different to last time.'

To believe that a 40 per cent union say in the choice of Labour Leader would prevent a reversion to some form of social contract under a Foot government is to live in cloud cuckoo land. Who does Joan Maynard think rammed the social contract down people's throats between 1975 and 1978? Was it Williams and Owen? Or was it not rather Jones and Scanlon ably assisting Callaghan and Healey with Foot as the broker? Does Joan Maynard forget the September 1976 TUC where the big unions told the seamen

they would be 'smashed' if they went on strike in defiance of the wage controls? Or the winter of 1977-78, when the general council refused to move a finger while the firemen were left to strike alone?

'A watershed for Labour Party democracy'
(*Tribune* 30 January 1981)

This *Review* is not noted for its high estimate of the abilities of Terry Duffy of the engineering union. But he was capable of making a point at the special conference that the Labour left have forgotten. It was, he pointed out, distaste for the notion of Healey as Labour leader that led some of the big unions to vote for the change to an electoral college at last October's conference.

'I'm convinced', he said, 'That many unions only voted the way they did at the last conference to stop Healey. If they'd known Foot was going to be leader they would have voted the other way'.

Confusion at the special conference meant that decisive right wing block votes were not cast against the left at Wembley. Now, faced with the threat of a gang of four split, 'middle of the road' MPs (including some in the *Tribune* group) and union leaders are working with Foot to ensure that such confusion is not present at the Brighton conference in October, and that a formula is rammed through that will placate the right and the media. We cannot expect the left's exultation to last long.

What a day at Wembley... Wembley was a famous victory for the workers' movement'
(*Socialist Challenge* 29 January 1981)

The real weakness of the left

The fact that the very marginal gains made by the left could so easily be snatched from them points to something of fundamental importance that the Labour left refuses to grasp—genuinely socialist forces continue to be very weak.

There has been an undoubted growth in the number of left activists in the last year. Some of these have been in the Labour party. Many more have been attracted to the big local meetings at which a Benn or a Skinner has spoken. Nevertheless, in terms of enduring organisation the left remains weak, and in terms of power it is weaker still. Honesty forces us to say that the constituency delegates who voted for the left at Wembley represented very little. They do not have organic connections with groups of workers involved in struggle. All they represent, in fact, are small caucuses of 20 or 30 like-minded individuals in the areas from which they come.

Of course, the gang of four and their acolytes are completely hypocritical when they talk about the unrepresentativeness of the constituency delegates. If it is so easy for the constituencies to be grabbed by small, manipulative minorities, why have the gang been so unsuccessful at organising such minorities themselves? The reason, quite simply, is that the ideas they peddle cannot inspire even small numbers to work hard for them

in localities.

But the hypocrisy of the right does not justify self-delusion on the part of the left. Let us repeat: The left is weak. In most areas its active supporters can be measured in their dozens, its passive supporters (those who will go to a Benn meeting once every two or three years) in their hundreds. Yet the organised working class is to be measured in each area in its tens of thousands. And with this organised working class, the constituency left has no real links. Its tie with the class is the same cross on a ballot paper that ties the right wing Labourites or the gang of four with the class.

Of course, there is a left within the unions which *does* have living links within the class. But when you talk of this left, you have to use a different language to that used by the Labour Coordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the *Socialist Organiser* and *Militant*, the followers of Benn and readers of *Tribune*. For the union left is far from exultant and triumphalist at the movement. In its former bastion of strength, the engineering union, it is on the defensive as never before. Other bastions are falling fast (see the report on the CPSA elsewhere in this issue). Bitter struggles are being fought against the right, but they are rearguard struggles.

The weakness of the left within unions like the AUEW is not an accidental thing. It is a reflection of a more fundamental weakness—the inability of a whole layer of industrial militants to respond to the wave of redundancies and closures, to resist the six per cent, to put any flesh and blood on to the empty slogans of 18 months ago about treating the Thatcher government like they did the Heath government.

If socialists militants in industry were leading mass struggles, then they would find it much easier to win the political argument that something different is needed in response to the Tories from the vague waffle of Foot and Healey. But they are not leading such struggles, and all too easily are slipping back into the delusion that a government of Foot and Healey will be different to the governments of Wilson and Callaghan.

Periodically, sections of the Bennite left make genuflections in the direction of the need for rank and file activity in the unions. But these cannot come to anything unless they grasp the first essential fact—the left is weak, and the key to overcoming its weakness is recognising it, recognising that where it really matters, where 'the chains of capitalism are forged' it is still very much on the defensive. To reverse that situation the left has to stop going on about 'reselection' and 'electoral colleges' and to start talking about how you fight redundancies, how you deal with the threat of the recession to shop floor organisation, how you respond to short time working, how you get occupations, how you get blacking, how you organise the unemployed and get support for them from the employed.


'Mr Michael Foot, the Labour leader, last night declared his willingness to challenge at this year's party conference the system for electing the leader agreed last Saturday. He told Labour MPs that the outcome has been unsatisfactory 'for the future health of the party'. Before Mr Foot's formal declaration, 150 MPs had declared their belief that the conference vote should be changed... in a call for unity signed by members of the left wing *Tribune* group as well as moderates...'

'Mr Peter Shore, speaking of what he described as "an appalling week" for the Labour Party, called on the 'great mass of sane and tolerant members to rally behind the leader.'

(*Financial Times* 30 January 1981)

But if sections of the Labour left really want to worry about these sorts of things, then they will need an organisational form and political concerns which will look remarkably like those of the SWP and remarkably unlike the electoral caucuses of the Labour Coordinating Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Party Democracy, or for that matter, the *Militant* group.

Chris Harman



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A view of the Labour Left

Nigel Stanley, of the Labour Coordinating Committee (speaking in a personal capacity) was interviewed on what happens next.

How significant do you think the special Labour Party Conference was for the Labour left?

The special conference was extremely significant, not so much because of the final result about the electoral college, but because it finalised the shift of power away from the exclusive control of the parliamentary party. The reselection of MPs and the electoral college have meant that the rank and file of the party now have a decisive influence at every level of the party.

That doesn't necessarily mean we are going to have a more left wing party. There's no guarantee that trade unions in the future are going to vote for left-wing candidates. But what it does mean is that the leadership of the party is going to be far more responsive to the base of the party.

In the House of Commons recently Reg Race, a leading member of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, said that if attempts to alter the decision of the special conference are made the left would fight it by any means at their disposal. What are the means at your disposal?

My own view is that it will be unlikely that enough unions can be persuaded to re-open the issue to make it worthwhile for the right to launch a counter-attack. I also think that even if the proportions were re-arranged slightly the left will still have won the principle of the thing, which is the shifting of power away from the parliamentary party.

But we would strongly resist giving 50 per cent to the parliamentary party. We would do this openly and not in smoke filled rooms as the press seems to suggest. The moves for reselection were backed by a number of resolutions at union conferences. The TGWU has a very firm mandate on party democracy passed by delegate conference. That's the same reason why the NUM has

always supported reselection. The left has fought within the structure of the unions and that will have to be done more.

UCATT for example, has just shifted to the left and has conference policy on aspects of party democracy which now put it much more in the left camp at the next party conference. So it's really a question of using all the campaigning and lobbying techniques we have at our disposal.

Historically there has always been an obstacle to the left in the Labour Party posed by the trade union bureaucracy. It seems to me that you can pressurise them so far, but then they will start organising to prevent any further advances and use the block vote against as they have done so often in the past. How can you overcome this?

The block vote is both an asset and a problem. The organic link which the Labour Party has with the trade unions is one of its greatest strengths, and marks it out from any other social democratic party in Western Europe. But it also a problem. The left hasn't forgotten the 50s when Deakin just dropped his vote in the box when Gaitskell told him to.

However, I think within the unions there is more concern with democracy. That's not extended to all the unions clearly. But within the TGWU the days of Deakin are clearly over, and their delegation to party conference has religiously followed the policies of that union. Now that of course doesn't get us away from the central problem of the block vote.

There seems to me to be two things the left can do about that.

They can argue that the power of the block vote has become extremely centralised. In the early days of the block vote there were many many more unions and the

membership of the unions was much less than it was today. So the proportion of power held within conference by the constituencies and the unions tended to be more equal. There weren't the very large blocks like we have today. Thus there is a legitimate argument for looking at the structure of conference and switching some of the power within it back to the constituencies.

Indeed the GMWU, not a union noted for its left wing position, made a similar point in its submission to the Commission of Inquiry on the Labour Party last year. It is therefore possible to envisage a shift of power coming in that way.

But of course that doesn't really solve the problem. It's treating a symptom rather than a cause. So I would advocate very strongly going into the trade unions. The proposal to set up workplace branches in the Labour Party is particularly important. It's ridiculous that the Labour Party is the only left-wing party in Britain that doesn't organise at the point of production. If it did it would quickly dwarf the other left parties.

The LCC especially has placed great emphasis on the building up of workplace branches and it's won the support so far of the trade union movement. Now, there's no doubt that many of them see it as a way of getting more footsloggers for the party, better political education, etc. But I think they could play a very crucial role in injecting more politics into the workplace and grass-roots of the trade union movement and in beginning to build a Labour left consciousness which is not really there at the moment.

Although the Labour left organises in some unions as part of the Broad Left and in others there are good informal networks of Labour Party members, the growth of workplace branches could be really significant for changing the trade union movement. One could see it happening in unions like POEU, which has a strong Broad Left and is making Labour Party members become very effective because of that.

You talk about building up workplace branches and extra-parliamentary action. Yet it seems to me that one major difficulty with this is the weakness of the left in terms of activists and its ability to mobilise people. How do you intend to build up an organisation of extra-parliamentary activists?

I think it's important in any strategic response to the crisis to realise just how weak the left is. The left has in fact been getting weaker over the last few years as a whole, whilst paradoxically within the Labour Party the left has been getting stronger. At the same time it is true to say that socialist ideas haven't gained a greater hold among the working class generally. That is precisely why we need to start building up the extra-parliamentary movement.

For too long the Labour Party has been dominated by electoralism and fund-raising. It's quite possible to be a member of some Labour Parties and never discuss politics, though that is changing very rapidly. It was the case for many years. The kind of gut-Labourism that went with working class communities has also broken down.

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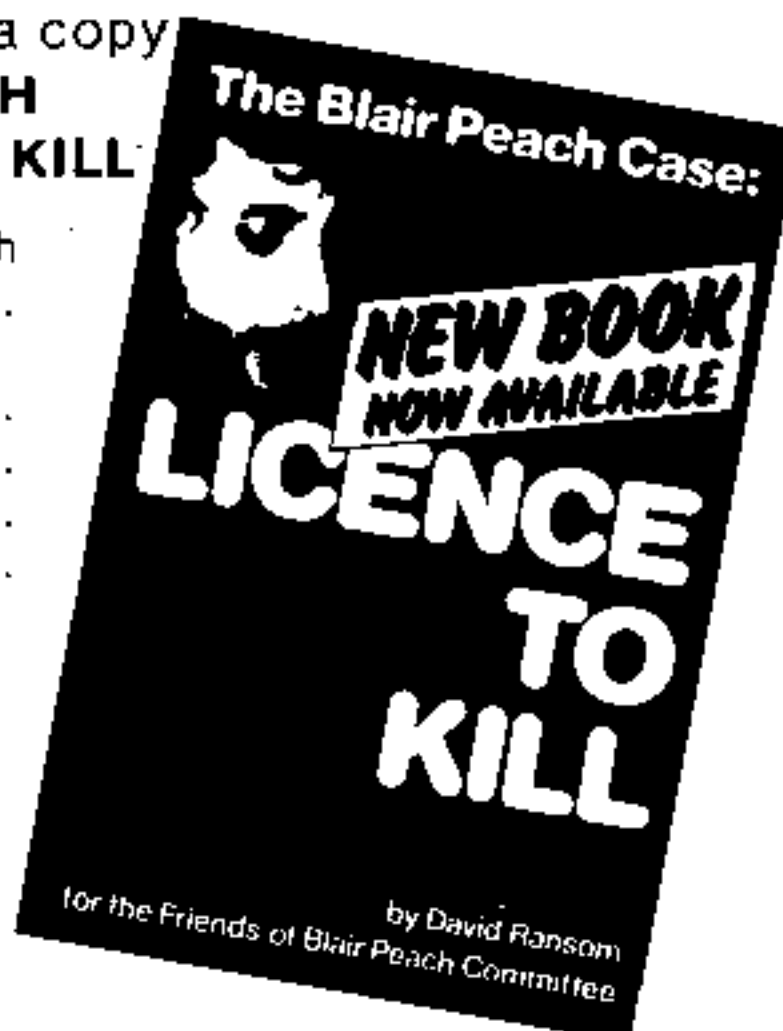
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The Labour Party needs to find new ways of dealing with the changes in class structure in Britain, getting support and winning people to socialist ideas in that way.

I think it is true to say that in terms of organised numbers the Labour Left is not very strong. If you add up all the members of Labour left organisations it not a very large number, though they reach as many members as groups to the left of the Labour Party. They have a bigger built-in audience.

One of the great features of the new Labour left is its ability to relate to movements outside parliament, for example the Anti-Nazi League. And, at the moment, the peace movement. This has brought new people into politics and left wing Labour Party members are going to be there to answer their questions.

The Labour Left is now beginning to break out of 'the only oppression is economic oppression' mould, and is looking at all kinds of campaigns and trying to weld them together into a new movement.

But to pretend that there is an easy road to build a mass Labour Party is an error. It's a long, very slow process. The current disarray of the right will certainly help us. But I think there are very many people around who think that a socialist transformation in Britain is reduced to kicking out the right wing and the leadership, installing lots of young left MPs, and then legislating the Alternative Economic Strategy in one fell-swoop. Gaining the mass support necessary for a real socialist change is increasingly becoming the central agenda item for the Labour left.

One advantage the left does have is mandatory reselection, which potentially could make a lot of change in the complexion of the parliamentary party. But nevertheless there seems to be a lot of pressure on constituencies from the leadership to retain existing MPs. How great do think the change will be?

I think those in the right-wing press who believe that the passing of mandatory reselection will mean an enormous shake-up in the parliamentary party are wrong. In fact, MPs who have spent any time at all in nursing their constituencies will find it fairly easy to be reselected.

The significance of it is not so much in the change of person or leadership, but the change of relationship by the injection of accountability between the member of parliament and the constituency. I've never been in favour of mandating MPs, but those who don't take into account the wishes of their management committee over a sustained period of time are going to find themselves in trouble.

In practice it is going to lead to slow change in the parliamentary party rather than the rapid one which people tend to see.

Finally, how different do you think the next Labour government will be?

It will be different in as much as it will be coming to power at a time of economic crisis far more severe than the last Labour government. The financial crisis, the process of de-industrialisation will be so severe that a Labour government—whoever is leading

it—will have to look for fairly radical solutions to these problems. What policies it will pursue, or who will lead it at that stage is difficult to say. I'm not one who thinks we

will have a fundamental social transformation under the next Labour government. But I think it won't be quite as awful as the last one.

Gang show on the road?

The social democrat gang of four are the Kamikaze pilots of the right. The blow they have struck has sunk any hopes Benn had of steering the party to the left. Foot is working as fast as he can to cement his alliance with the rest of the right around Healey. But the four themselves are probably committing political suicide.

The apparently impressive showing for the centre party in opinion polls is almost certainly not going to be translated into any electoral success.

Just ask the simple question: can Jenkins or Williams stand anywhere against sitting Labour MPs and win seats? The answer must be ten-to-one against success for them.

In any election in the near future, the decisive issue is going to be whether Thatcher is thrown out. However hysterical the press is about the left taking over the Labour Party, the main concern for Labour voters is going to be getting rid of the present government. They will vote for the anti-Tory candidate most likely to win. And that means the official Labour candidate. Under such circumstances, no social democrat candidate, or social democrat-Liberal however well known, is going to get enough votes to win. The best he or she might do is to take the handful of votes away from Labour needed for it to lose some marginal seats to the Tories.

Even the sitting Labour MPs who have been in the Jenkins-Williams camp must be having second thoughts about defecting. An opinion poll by the *Sunday Times* has shown that in two key seats held by the 'social democrats', on Teeside, the majority of voters would vote Labour against the sitting (social democrat) MPs. In other seats, where no opinion poll has yet been taken, the mood is shown by the fact that 'loyal' right wing Labour activists are saying that however much they like the MP, the Labour Party comes first.

The enthusiasm for Jenkins, Williams and Owen in high places is not going to be matched by any enthusiasm for them in localities. For, what they offer politically is an unadulterated continuation of what people have experienced for the last 20 years. As Joe Rogaly of the *Financial Times*, writing from a quite different political perspective to our own, has noted:

'The question remains, what will they offer? Social democracy is not exactly at the peak of its popularity at the moment. In various guises it was practised by Conservative and Labour governments until the mould was broken in 1979. It does not carry the aura of past glory' (21 January 1981).

Indeed, in Labour seats the gang have even less hope than the Liberals—which is why a

lot of Liberals see an alliance with them as anathema. In a number of areas the Liberals have succeeded in doing quite well in council elections and in occasional parliamentary elections by identifying themselves with an apparently radical, demagogic opposition to the local Labour establishment. This is not something the Jenkinsites can do, because they have been all too obviously until recently the centre of the establishment themselves.

The Liberals trade on ambiguity. They get the votes of people who are instinctively anti-Common Market and of people who have doubts about the bomb. Even if the official line is in favour of both the party can put across an 'all things to all people' image. The gang cannot: their founding principles, the very issues that have led them to break from Labour, are fight-to-the-death support for the bomb, for Nato and for the Common Market. Those are not slogans that are going to pull out the tens of thousands of activists and the millions of votes needed to 'break the electoral mould'.

The only hope electorally for the gang will, in fact, be in the Tory seats where grumbles over mortgage levels and commuter fares lead people to switch votes, but not to go as far as Labour. But even there the gang have a problem—it is precisely in those areas that there are existing Liberal candidates who believe they have a chance of success. They are not going to take easily to the notion of standing down for Jenkins or Williams, let alone for any of the has-beens that are gathering around the 'four'.

Copies of the last issue of *Socialist Review* (1981:1) should have contained a correction slip, pointing out that the paragraphs on page 23 were printed in the wrong order—ascribing the views of the Provisional Republicans to Sinn Fein the Workers Party, and the views of the latter to the People's Democracy. To make sense, the paragraph needed to be rearranged. To do that, they had to be numbered 1-26 starting with the half paragraph at the top of the left hand column and then going down. The correct order was then: 1, 2, 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 25, 26.

Our request for correct solutions to the problem met with two replies—from Kevin Murphy and Jan Brooker. Unfortunately, both arrived after the deadline set. Nevertheless, the editors have decided to award Kevin and Jan the booby prize, of being asked to work out which of the footnotes have been printed in the wrong order in Chris Harman's article in the latest issue of IS journal (out this week).

Namibia:

Mining as usual?

With last year's settlement in Zimbabwe, Namibia remains the last outpost of white rule outside South Africa itself. During the war in Zimbabwe, there were attempts to settle the issue which were seen in some quarters as a way of achieving a breakthrough in Zimbabwe. Instead its recent sabotage of the Geneva talks seems to indicate that the South African regime is more intractable than ever on the question of elections in Namibia, which would certainly return a government of the liberation movement, SWAPO.

So what is at stake in Namibia, and what would a SWAPO government mean?

Namibia is a huge, sparsely-populated country, possessing enormous mineral wealth in the form of uranium, diamonds, cadmium, silver, copper, lead and zinc. The world's largest uranium mine is at Rossing, part owned by the British Rio Tinto Zinc which, under a contract originally signed in 1970 by none other than Tony Benn, supplies Britain with half its uranium requirements. American capital is also involved heavily in mining in Namibia through the Tsumeb company, owned by Newmont Mining and Amax. Of course, South African capital dominates, not only in mining, but also in agriculture and fishing.

For the West, all this is at stake: hence the pressure to find some kind of accommodation with SWAPO and to stop the guerrilla war. For South Africa the decision is a more

difficult one: previous experience shows that for big capital it is perfectly possible to continue operations only slightly hampered, if at all, by black governments. But the prospect of being totally surrounded by black-ruled states causes great alarm among South African whites, and even the more far-sighted ones have to consider the effect on black workers inside South Africa of a SWAPO election victory coming on the heels of ZANU's overwhelming one in Zimbabwe.

But, although the guerrilla war being waged by SWAPO is contained by the South Africans, it has incurred major costs. SWAPO attacks on the electricity supply system on the Angola-Namibia border have forced the South African regime to build an otherwise unnecessary supplementary line, reinforcing Namibia's dependence on South Africa's own grid system. Some mines have only been kept going through government subsidies of their electricity costs. SWAPO raids against the white farmers, combined with falling wool and cattle meat prices, have produced the beginning of a slow exodus of white settlers.

The South Africans have spent the last few years trying to achieve an internal settlement along the lines of the old Muzorewa government in Zimbabwe, headed by the DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance), which is supposed to represent each ethnic group in Namibia. This supposedly inde-

pendent grouping is funded and controlled by the South African government. Even compared with Muzorewa, their credibility is nil: despite a boycott by SWAPO of the November South African approved elections, the DTA was thrashed. The DTA is a shambles, without any chance of winning a genuine election against SWAPO.

The advantage left to Botha in having the DTA is that it can provide a political face-saver, a sop to South African white hard-liners. The argument is that the recent Geneva talks were just a propaganda exercise to demonstrate the DTA's independence of South Africa, so that when the compromise comes with SWAPO, Botha can present the decision as having come from the DTA, not as a sell-out of the Namibian whites. Hence Dirk Mudge's (the leader of the DTA) prominence in Geneva and the low profile kept by the South Africans. In reality, Mudge would have to be coerced by the South Africans into accepting elections which he couldn't win.

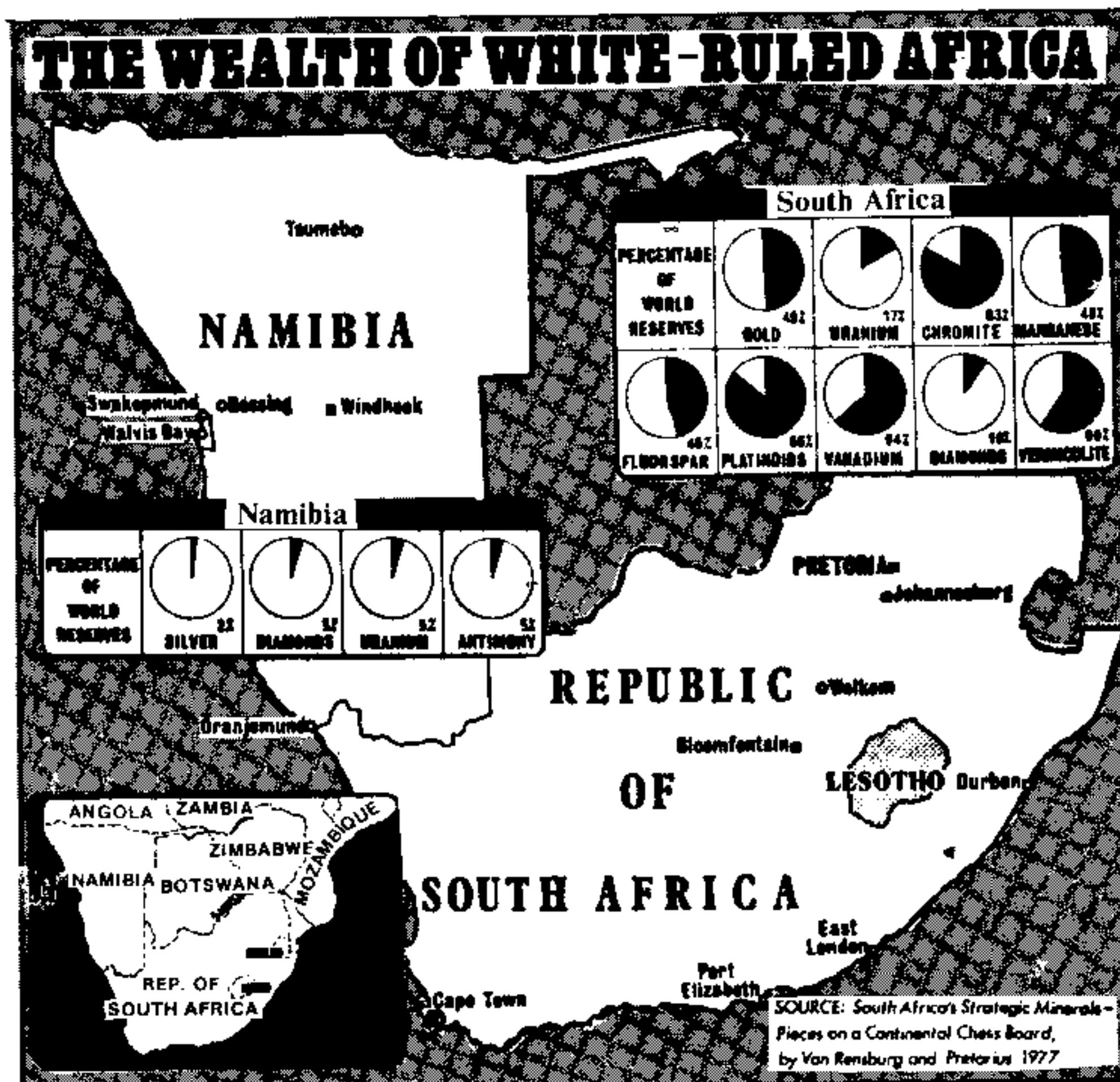
So it seems quite possible that in a couple of months the South Africans will pull out and risk a SWAPO government. The other option seems less likely—banking on Reagan's support for further stalling in the hope that either the DTA or a party which is against both DTA and SWAPO could eventually create the conditions to win.

The major mining corporations—South African and others—have certainly been laying plans for that eventuality of a SWAPO regime. And their belief is that they could live quite happily with such a government. Sam Nujoma, SWAPO's leader, has stated that foreign-owned mining companies would be allowed to continue operations after independence if they had non-racial employment policies, better training for black unskilled workers, and reinvested a substantial portion of profits in Namibia.

De Beers, RTZ, and Tsumeb, amongst others, have already begun to find training and educational schemes, and De Beers and RTZ operate non-racial wage scales and training schemes at their mines. De Beers' subsidiary, Consolidated Diamond Mines, expects SWAPO to demand higher taxes and a say in the marketing of rough diamonds overseas before reconfirming their mining rights. RTZ might expect to see the South African government's share in the Rossing mine pass to SWAPO, and a levy on uranium exports. A SWAPO government would want a stake in new ventures, and the right to reallocate mining and prospecting rights. None of this would bother the large concerns unduly.

Of course, the workers at these mines and many SWAPO rank and file may have other ideas about the way an independent Namibia should be run. There have been several major strikes in the mines in the last couple of years, and in the longer-term the workers of Namibia will certainly be heard from again.

Sue Cockerill



Stay of execution

All show trials are, by definition, rigged. Whether the accused are guilty or innocent of the crimes they're accused of is irrelevant to the government staging the trial—the proceedings are being used to make a political point. And everything in that trial, from the indictments to the behaviour of the defendants, is done to emphasise the points being made.

It does not follow, however, that all defendants are by definition innocent. It is probable, for instance, that Beria and Malenkov were guilty of most of what they were accused of in 1957. The same is true for the defendants in the Gang of Four trial.

Reading through the very limited accounts of the trial made available outside China, the sections that come across as the most credible (and the most horrifying) are those dealing with the Cultural Revolution, of the late 1960s. Credible because they are, in effect, official confirmation of the accounts of the period given by Chinese dissidents.

While only a small part of the truth, the details given show just how bloody and brutal the infighting among the ruling class became. In one session, for instance, a defendant admitted postponing a vital operation on a top CCP leader so he could be interrogated. The former minister of coal, Zhang Linzhi, who was seriously ill, was interrogated 52 times in 33 days, tortured, and forced to wear a cast-iron hat weighing 30 pounds.

At least three members of the top leadership were driven to their deaths by torture and ill-treatment. No less than 88 of the 193 members and alternate members of the central committee of the time were named as 'enemy agents.'

Among ordinary party members the effects were even worse. In one province a purge of 'capitalist-roaders' led to 84,000 people being 'framed' (losing their posts, arrest, torture), of whom 2,900 died as a result of their treatment by Red Guards. In Inner Mongolia during 1968-9 there were 346,000 such cases, over 16,000 of whom died.

Most of the trial concerned the Cultural Revolution and the period of 1974-6 when the Gang of Four seemed possible successors to Mao; the other main accusations concerned a plot by Lin Biao (Lin Piao), and others to kill Mao, and a planned armed uprising in Shanghai after the overthrow of the Gang of Four.

The first count was basically tidying up old unfinished business, the people charged having been in prison for the last nine years, and the evidence offered was the story that the Chinese regime has been putting out for the past six years.

The second was more curious, as it concerned plans laid by the Gang of Four but only put into operation after their arrest in

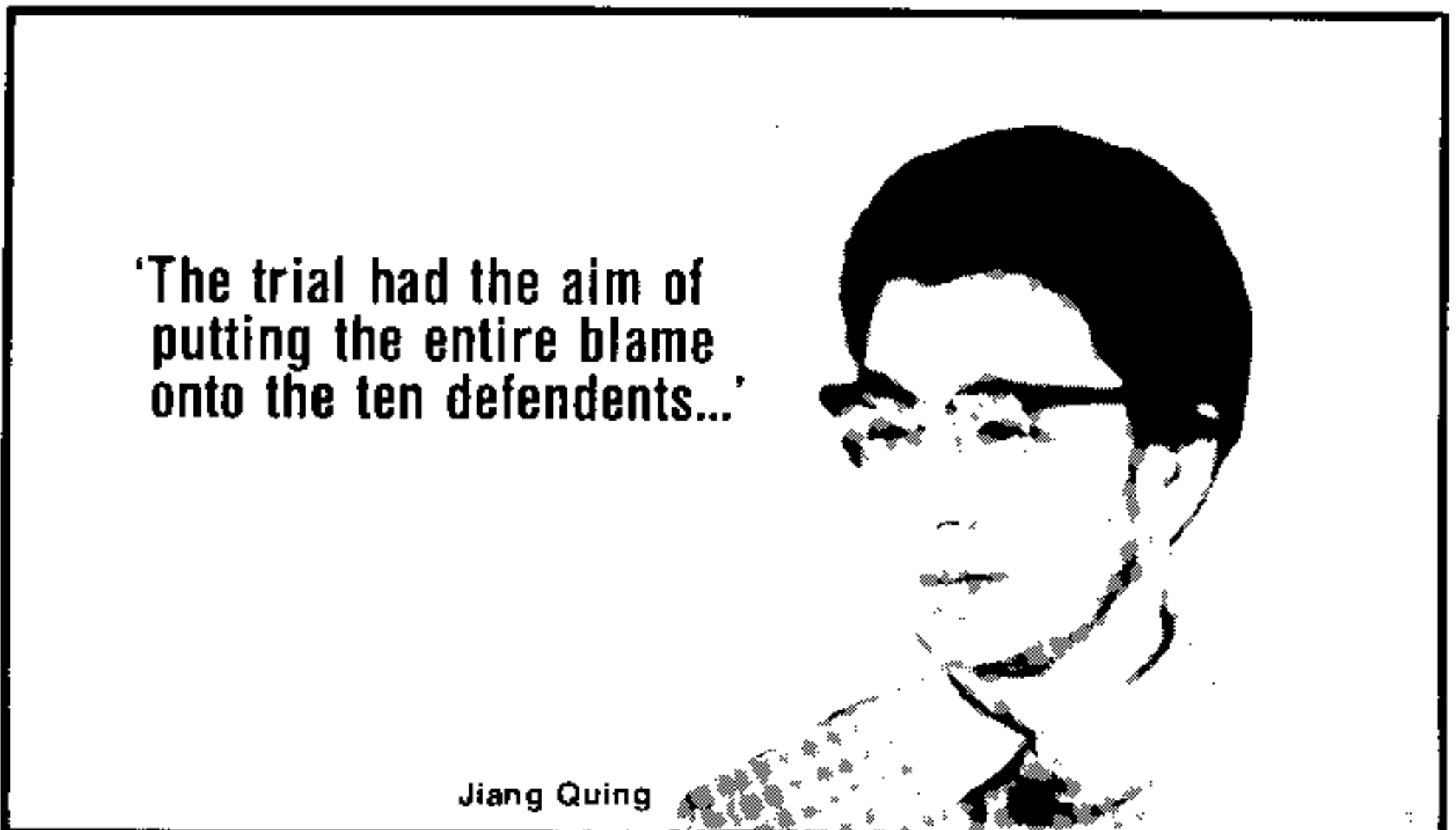
October 1976. Their supporters apparently mobilised 35,000 members of the militia, armed with over 27,000 pieces of artillery and rifles. They had detailed plans for taking over the whole of Shanghai and using it as a base to launch a counter-offensive against the new leadership. Yet the court offered no explanation for why the plan didn't come off.

One of the basic aims of the trial was to demonstrate that the days of endless campaigns are over, stability and legality have been restored, and the new leadership is firmly in control. A public trial (over 60,000 people were brought from all over the coun-

were quite genuinely hated by vast numbers of Chinese.

At every stage, Jiang Qing had been closely identified with the repression. This hatred found a voice in the riots on April 5th, 1976, in Peking and elsewhere, when what began as a commemoration of Zhou Enlai (Chou En Lai) turned into a spontaneous demonstration of anger and hatred against the regime as such. One of the most quoted slogans from that event was 'Down with the Dowager Empress' (A ruler of the last imperial dynasty, noted for cruel and arbitrary despotism, and an obvious reference to Jiang Qing.)

The trial had another, much deeper aim, however substitute: the condemnation of the Cultural Revolution *as such*, putting the entire blame for it onto the ten defendants



Jiang Qing

try to attend the four week hearings, and long excerpts were shown on Chinese TV) makes this point more effectively than a behind-the-scenes coup. And the severity of the sentences is an indication that the accused are out of power for the rest of their lives. The suspended death sentences on Jiang Qing (Mao's widow Chiang Ching) and Zhang Chunqiao are not signs of leniency, but rather a way of avoiding making martyrs of them.

The behaviour of the main defendants at the trial has to be seen as fitting into the aims of the new leadership as well. In the first place, the Gang were split up: Wang Hongwen capitulated completely, Yao Wenyuan admitted most but not all of the charges, Zhang Chunqiao refused to say a word and Jiang Qing was defiant. Now it is not beyond the Chinese secret police to have broken the latter two. If they did not do so, it was for a reason. The most likely is that it makes the point more forcefully that they have been defeated if they are unrepentant—it is a basic rule of Chinese drama, both before and after 1949, that the major villain dies hurling defiance at the audience.

The audience was the Chinese people. It must not be forgotten that the Gang of Four in general, and Jiang Qing in particular,

and the six dead former Party leaders named as their partners.

At the same time, several high-powered theoretical articles in the Chinese press have asserted that there is a fundamental difference between 'mistakes and errors from which no comrade is immune' and 'counter-revolutionary plots and acts', which is what the Gang of Four were accused of. This is a major shift in Stalinist/Maoist metaphysics, which have always insisted that the one must inevitably lead on to the other. Its usefulness is simply that in this way the post-Maoist leadership can demote Mao from an infallible god to a great, if flawed, figurehead (who made mistakes like everyone else does) while blaming everything that went wrong in the past fifteen years onto the Lin Biao clique/Gang of Four.

The crucial problem is whether anyone in China will believe a word of it, as it is perfectly obvious that without Mao's direct support and approval the Gang would never have gone beyond being third-rate nonentities. As Simon Leys put it, 'To attribute to Madame Mao the main responsibility for the senseless violence and cruelty, for the destruction of Chinese culture, and the ruthless cretinisation of the most sophisticated nation on earth—which have all taken place during the last ten years—would be akin to

crediting the ass whose jaw Samson borrowed in battle with the ability to destroy the Philistines.' (*Broken Images*, p77-8)

In recent months the Chinese press has been admitting that a profound cynicism about all politics is felt by large numbers of Chinese youth, and the trial is most likely to heighten that mood.

While the Gang of Four may be finished, China's economic problems are not. An austerity programme has just been launched, as the plans for drastic modernisation have proved to be beyond the capabilities of Chi-

na's economy. The aims are an end to the deficits in China's budget and balance of trade, as well as inflation, by the close of 1981. This has already meant the army's budget being slashed, the cancellation of a 420 million dollar contract for a prestige steel plant project, and will also involve factory closures and sackings running into the millions.

As the problems inherent in the new strategy bite deeper into the Chinese economy, the new leadership will have to look among themselves for scapegoats. We can only

hope that in that process China's working class rediscovers the capacity for independent organisation and activity that they began to show during the Cultural Revolution. There are already unconfirmed reports of demonstrations against unemployment, and even of sporadic Solidarity-style organisations. For revolutionaries, the only good news about the whole sordid business of the trial is that it is unlikely to fool China's workers.

Charlie Hore

Begin, despondency and depression

On 12th January, Menachem Begin's Likud-coalition government collapsed as a result of a cabinet crisis. His Finance Minister, Yigal Murvitz, had failed to win approval for not honouring a pay agreement with Israeli teachers and resigned, withdrawing his three member Rafi faction from the coalition. With his government in tatters, Begin had no real alternative but to seek an election, which will now be held on July 7th. If he loses, as is almost certain, it will signal the end of an important phase in the history of the 32 year old Zionist state.

The three-and-a-half years of Begin's ramshackle right-wing coalition were a watershed for Israel. Behind all the cabinet crises which plagued the government there loomed the most severe economic deterioration the country has ever known. Take industrial investment for example. After high growth for two decades it has begun to slow up during the last two years. In 1980 it was 20 per cent lower than in 1979, and industrial growth in 1979 itself was seven per cent compared with 14 per cent in 1978.

In part this flagging in investment is due to Israel's increasing isolation on the world market. Black Africa, Arab countries and Eastern Europe remain largely closed to trade with Israel because of the Palestinian issue. So Israel has carefully built up special relations with countries like South Africa or those in Latin America. In particular, Israel was heavily dependent on trade with Iran. The loss of the Iranian market when the Shah fell was a savage blow. Israeli metal and electronics factories have been forced to cut-back on output and investment programmes.

Added up, together with the doubling of oil prices, this has meant that the cost of imports has risen dramatically. For a country as dependent on imports as Israel this is another devastating hammer blow.

In tandem with a rising imports bill inflation has rocketed. This is by far the most critical symptom of the economic crisis in Israel today. The average inflation rate for last year was 137 per cent, but for the fourth quarter it topped the 200 mark. The year

before the inflation rate was 111.5 per cent. As a result the economy has become more and more destabilized and the shekel has floated downwards on the money markets accordingly.

Although there is a complex system of indexation, which to some extent protects workers, the strategy the government has adopted to counter inflation has centred on cutting back working class living standards. In character it is not too dissimilar to Thatcher's "monetarist" strategy, concentrating on reductions in public expenditure.

One of the first things Begin's government did was to remove food subsidies. Because workers were unable to buy so much, consumption fell by 30 per cent within two weeks of their removal. Milk sales fell so low that the marketing board banned the import of milk powder and butter. Poultry sales have also slumped, forcing many farmers, especially in the north, out of business. In fact, by depressing the home market Begin has produced a general decline in Israeli agriculture.

Begin has also slashed public services. By June last year the main spending departments—housing, health, transport, education, health and welfare—were claiming they could not cut any further. In turn the consequences for industry have been grave. £35m was subtracted from the housing programme that year. The programme of the aircraft industry, which employ 21,500 workers, has been cutback as well. Meanwhile, the national airline, El Al, has had its projected investment curtailed too.

These cuts in expenditure have made life increasingly difficult for workers in Israel, one third of whom have jobs in industry. Their real net earnings have fallen by 9 per cent across the board. It is further calculated that whilst the price index went up by 147.8 per cent for the poorer sections of the working class, it has only risen by 135.6 for the top tenth. In addition, workers are facing mounting unemployment which at present stands at about seven per cent.

Confronted by this pernicious offensive against their living standards, the Israeli working class have reacted in a fashion that is outstanding. Despite their historic ties of loyalty with the Zionist state, they have refused to passively accept government policies. During the last three years there has been a major upsurge of working class activity as workers have challenged the state's decisions, in a manner that has hitherto been unprecedented.

Of course, this doesn't imply that the workers are about to overthrow the Zionist state in favour of a Palestinian state. But the awakening of the Israeli working class is a point of enormous importance for all socialists. It shows that the old ideological adhesion between the workers and the ruling class is weakening.

The upsurge of working class activity began in the public sector with workers trying to win through against attempts to stop wage rises. In 1978 there was a strike for higher wages by 5,000 El Al workers—the 64th dispute in six years. In the same year merchant marine seamen stayed out for 79 days before they were beaten into submission. Then in the summer of 1978 journalists won a 25 per cent increase. Although they are not public sector workers, they set the pattern for white collar public sector workers that followed—clerks, tax officials, customs workers and postal workers.

More recently, however, the opposition to the Begin government has become increasingly widespread and intense. The Israeli TUC, the Histadrut has been pressurized by the rank and file in to heading a campaign against the government's policies.

The final straw which broke the back of Begin's government was a strike by 33,000 teachers. A public committee, whose findings were to be binding on both sides, called for a 30 per cent increase. It was an awkward situation for the government. To have accepted the recommendations would be an invitation for similar claims. Not to honour it would still further undermine the government's positions. The cabinet was split, with resignation threatened from both sides. There was no way out but an election.

On a political level the Begin government has been a disaster for Zionism. The assaults on the Israeli working class have rent wide open the political consensus that has been so

crucial to Zionism in the past. Paradoxically, the most stridently Zionist government elected in the history of Israel has made Zionism immeasurably weaker. Faith in Israel and the Zionist dream has plummeted to an all time low. For the last three-and-a-half years Israelis have voted against Begin with their feet: the Jewish population of the country is falling for the first time because middle class Jews are finding it more comfortable living in the United States.

Shrewder Zionists than Begin have recognised what is happening. Ezer Weizemann when he resigned as Defence Minister, wrote to Begin, telling him, "Since its independence the nation of Israel has known times of peak and depths, of high tides and low. But never, I believe, has there been such despondency and depression as in the last few years".

Neither Weizemann nor Dayan, however, are likely to have the opportunity to try and

correct some of the mistakes that Begin has made. Without doubt the next government in Israel will be the Israeli Labour Party, led by Shimon Peres.

But the Israeli Labour Party will be unable to put the clock back to the golden age of Zionism, before the election of Begin, when they held power for 29 years consecutively. The extent of the world crisis means that they will inevitably have to subject the Israeli working class to more sacrifices to rescue Israel.

Yet even if they do check the upswing in working class activity, they will not be able to repair the political strength of Zionism. The period of questioning and disillusionment will continue. But perhaps most important of all, they will not be able to erase from the memories of Israeli workers the fact that they have brought down a government by their own independent action.

Jon Bearman.

unwanted isolation. The continual attacks on workers' living standards and the slowness of some reforms has obviously demoralized many workers. Those who favour a social democratic alternative are better off with the Socialist Party. Both the Workers Commissions and the CP have lost members in the last few years. The Catalan Communists, according to the socialists, have lost nearly half of their membership. The leadership saw a shift to the left, at least at a rhetorical level, as being a way to keep their base. However at the level of the daily class struggle their policy has not shifted significantly away from their traditional reformism.

Santiago Carrillo now has real problems. The near hysterical reaction of the CP leadership (and the Italian CP for that matter) since the Catalan congress reflects this. They have publicly attacked the Catalans' rejection of Eurocommunism, claiming it will cost them their electoral base and lead to the growth of cold war-style anti-Communism. In the words of one Eurocommunist MP, Josep Benet, the new orientation could 'divide the country again'.

Ironically the 'Leninists' who the CP have practically accused of being Soviet agents, have gained support through their criticisms of the CP's undemocratic behaviour and interference in the semi-autonomous affairs of the Catalan Party. Some militants were particularly incensed at Carrillo's attempt to use the intellectual based 'white flag' group to control the Catalans.

The CP itself is faced with other divisions as well as the anti and pro Eurocommunists, eg calls for a more federal based structure, and tensions between intellectuals and workers. In the trade union field the recent national election of workplace delegates found the Workers Commissions representation reduced from 34.5% in 1978 to 30.7 while the socialists won 29.5% of those elected compared with 21.7% before.

More significantly in Catalonia 'unofficial', ie non-Eurocommunist, Workers Commission lists won many elections against 'official' lists.

Dissatisfaction with Carrillo's leadership is not confined to Catalonia

At the forthcoming 10th Spanish CP congress this June, it is expected that the dissidents will try to remove Carrillo from the post of general secretary.

Despite the general downturn in the class struggle and working class organisation in the last few years, recent months have been marked by a number of bitter and militant disputes, often involving revolutionaries in the leadership. The main unions have tended to oppose such struggles, though rank and file Socialists and Communists have often been involved. The apparent left-ward shift of the Catalan party reflects the frustration of many workers and must open up new possibilities for joint activity at the base level between its members and revolutionaries.

Andy Durgan

Eurocommunism: PSUC it!

In early January the 5th congress of the Catalan Communist Party (PSUC) voted by 424 to 359 to explicitly reject Eurocommunism. Following the French CP's turn away from Eurocommunism, it comes as a serious blow to the Spanish CP (PCE), in particular to its general secretary Santiago Carrillo.

The Catalan CP is by far the most important section of the Spanish Communist Party. It enjoys a prestige and mass support in Catalonia akin to the Italian and French parties. Catalonia was the only region of Spain which saw the CP dominated Workers Commissions win an outright victory in the recent trade union elections over their rivals, the socialist union federation, the UGT. Eight of the 23 Communist MPs in Madrid are members of the Catalan party.

The rejection of Eurocommunism has been portrayed as a simple case of a pro-Soviet take-over. However the reality is a little more complicated. The Catalan CP is divided into four tendencies: the 'Leninists', Eurocommunists, pro-Soviet or 'Afghans' and the social democrats or 'white flag'. (So called because their leaders are former members of the Maoist organisation Red Flag.)

Since the last Spanish CP congress in March 1978, the 'Leninists' have been dominant in the Catalan party. Mainly based on the bureaucracy of the Workers' Commissions, their name derives from their opposition to the Spanish party dropping the word 'Leninism' from their statutes in 1978. The most dramatic change in the last two years has been the growth of the pro-Soviet tendency and the corresponding demise of the Eurocommunists, who until this congress held key positions in the Catalan leadership. The latter found themselves reduced to around 10% of the new 110-strong central committee.

The congress itself was dominated by ideological and international debates rather than the pressing problems of economic crisis, rising unemployment and the national question. Explicit condemnations of the invasion of Afghanistan were omitted, though not replaced, as the pro-Soviets might have hoped, with support. In straight contradiction to national CP policy the Catalans voted to 'mobilize against NATO', to fight for a referendum over entering the EEC and to reject nuclear power. The Catalan Party also decided to continue to describe itself as 'secular' despite Eurocommunist attempts to delete this in order not to alienate Catholics. The congress also voted, for the first time, to support the gay movement.

The reasons why this seemingly dramatic change has come about, are not as some CP leaders claim, because of 'Soviet interference', but through the failures of Eurocommunism. Despite having spent the last four years in an attempt to form a Spanish version of the 'historic compromise' the CP has found itself continually out in the cold. The Centre Democrat government has preferred to do deals with the Socialist Party, as have the employers. The CP have been left in



Spanish CP leader, Santiago Carrillo



Heseltine's cut-rate job

With angry ratepayers burning their rate demands in Lambeth streets, and rumours of 44 per cent rate increases in Sheffield, capital of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire', time seems to be running out for the strategy of 'fighting cuts' by rate increases. This is precisely the intention of Michael Heseltine's new system of subsidies to local government, which, beneath a labyrinth of technical confusion, aims to leave local councils with no effective freedom to defy government policy and stay within the law.

In the past, rate support grant was made up of two elements. The 'resources element' aimed to even out the differences in rateable value between rich and poor areas (the principle for which the Poplar councillors went to jail). The 'needs element' was meant to take account of the differences in need between areas.

This was calculated by a complex system of 'regression analysis' which no one appears to understand, but which did have the effect of giving a larger share of the available funds to run-down inner city areas than to the Tory shires. The old system also meant that each authority's share of the available cash was fixed by a nationally-determined formula.

The new system by contrast works by fixing for each council a figure which the government thinks it ought to be spending to provide what the government thinks is an 'adequate' level of service. The government then fixes what it thinks is the level of rates which the council needs to levy to provide that service, taking into account the differences in rateable value between areas.

The government will pay its share of spending up to the total it has fixed (this year, it has fixed its share at 59 per cent). But any spending above that level has to fall 100 per cent on the rates. And if a council spends more than 10 per cent above what the government regards as proper, it will find itself losing some of the grant it has already been paid.

The result has been to escalate the

effects of 'overspending' on the level of rates, in the evident hope that exasperated ratepayers will do the government's work through the ballot box and save it the bother of putting in commissioners. And the 'authority-by-authority' method behind the new system gives the Department of the Environment greatly increased and finely tuned powers to punish individual authorities according to the colour of their eyes or their politics.

The Damping Formula

It does seem that the new formula has not so far been applied with naked party bias as between individual authorities. But there has been a shift between groups of authorities - in particular, London has lost some 14 per cent of its grant as against last year, and 25 per cent in Inner London, as against an 8.2 per cent national average.

This relative loss will continue in future years as the government does away with London's previous relative advantage, as a pay-off to the Tory shire counties for their help in breaking the local authorities united front of resistance to the new scheme, and thus helping it to get through the House of Lords within the parliamentary timetable.

The change from the old to the new system is to be cushioned by a 'damping formula' which will ensure that an authority due to gain grant under the new system will not gain more than the equivalent of a 6p rate in any one year. But authorities due to lose grant under the new system can lose up to the product of a 13p rate in any one year until they reach their new levels.

Some London authorities, such as Camden and the Inner London Education Authority, face such massive losses in grant that there is little incentive in even attempting to keep to the government's spending targets, since any but the most massive cuts would still leave them so much above the target spending level as to lose them all their grant entitlement in any case.

Before going into the political consequences, we should remind ourselves

that what we are discussing here is the formula for deciding each council's share of whatever subsidy the government is giving to councils. Cuts in the level of that grant are quite a different matter. And measuring the extent of this is also confused by technicalities designed to disguise the extent of the cuts.

The government has decided that authorities must plan in 1981/82 to spend 3.1 per cent below what they were told to spend this year. But this represents a much bigger cut, since last year's targets have been met by few authorities, and were based on unreal 'cash limit' forecasts of inflation. Even to stay within the 1980/81 limits, authorities would have to make further cuts of 4.3 per cent, or levy average rate increases of 15 per cent.

In addition, the figure of 3.1 per cent is itself based on further low official allowances for inflation in 1981/82 - 11 per cent for prices and 6 per cent for wages. The real figure is even lower as the 11 per cent includes the cost of next November's pension increases, and is therefore only 9 per cent in reality.

So the government figures for cuts in council spending are cooked to the point of being overdone. In addition, the 1980/81 Rate Support Grant is cut by 1 per cent, and will therefore aim to meet only 59 per cent of this artificial total, as against 60 per cent last year.

Hence the rumours of 70 per cent rate increases in Lambeth. Against this background, there is a sick and hollow sound to the arguments of some, such as Camden councillor Ken Livingstone, that rates are a progressive tax which redistribute wealth between the classes.

It is true that 60 per cent of all rate income is paid by businesses. And workers pay a good deal less than the remaining 40 per cent, when rates on the homes of the rich, and the effect of rebates are taken into account.

But though this may be the national total, it looks different on the ground in Tower Hamlets or Lambeth. Even Camden, with a lot of valuable office property in central London, and the leafy acres of fashionable Hampstead, will have to impose combined rate and rent increases of up to £12 or £14 on some of its tenants if it makes no massive cuts and puts the burden on the rates.

Any element of 'redistribution' in the rates includes a massive amount of redistribution within the working class, which is divisive and plays into the hands of the Tories. Whatever the arguments and the figures, rates are just getting to be more than most people can afford.

All of which puts a different light on the argument that for councils to defy the government and the law could lead to isolation and defeat. Of course it could - but the road of rate increases leads to the same end as a certainty - and with any credibility and base that town hall Labour groups still retain destroyed into the bargain as the old dream of 'Municipal socialism' ends up as a cover for collecting payments for the City of London and the Tories.

Stephen Marks

March action in May

The hullabaloo inside the Labour Party is in danger of making some people on the left forget what is in some ways a more significant development — the organisation of a series of protests against unemployment by the official trade union and labour movement. The Labour Party demonstration in Liverpool in November showed the degree of popular support these could enjoy. We talked to John Deason, secretary of the Right to Work Campaign — which began organising against unemployment five years ago under the Labour government — about what the reaction of socialists should be to this new, official campaign.

John began by outlining the major demonstrations that are taking place in the weeks ahead.

First there is the call by the Labour Party and the Scottish TUC for a demonstration in Glasgow on 21 February. They are attempting to get a repeat performance of the Liverpool demonstration, and they have announced their intention of doing the same thing in Newcastle, Leeds, Cardiff, sometime in the future. They will be massive demonstrations, there is no question about that.

The other protest that has the possibility of catching people's imagination is the march from Liverpool to London from 1 May to 29 May. The organisers — the NW TUC, with the assistance of the Midland and SE TUCs are calling for 29 May, when the marchers reach London, to be a day of action, including they say, strike action. All this is a major shift by official bodies.

For five years the Right to Work Campaign was practically the only body organising seriously against unemployment. Now these much larger bodies are getting involved, and that is more than welcome. For us there can be no question of making a virtue of the fact that we were on our own doing that activity all those years. It was a reflection of how bad the state of the rest of the movement was. Under a Labour government, official bodies were reluctant to get involved in this kind of work because of the TUC's links with the government.

Now, with the Tories, they're much more willing to get involved. We have to welcome that with open arms. It provides the possibility of generating unemployed activity that is part of the trade union movement, on a much bigger scale than we are capable by ourselves.

One of the weaknesses of the march as conceived by the NW TUC is that they are calling it a 'People's March' whereas originally they were calling it an un-



Illustration: Lynda Ayres

employed crusade. I fear this might indicate a change in style, to a march with people just coming in for a few days, rather than a solid unemployed march that seeks support from the employed. They are also saying that marchers have to be officially sponsored by trade union bodies, we are not against that. But there is the danger that the vast majority of the unemployed — particularly youngsters — don't know how to go about getting sponsorships. So we'll say to the Right to Work trade union bodies, it's our duty to make sure that the unemployed, especially school leavers, aren't squeezed out of this initiative.

We've got to take the opportunity in each area of the march to get as broad-based as possible a grouping working together to organise a good reception for the marchers. The NW TUC correctly conceive of the reception in each town the march goes through as being a local demonstration. Every single workplace in such a town has got to be visited, asking them to come out to join the demonstration for a couple of hours, backing a rally in the evening and so on.

You can use the inspiration of the unemployed march as a lever to get things moving among the employed everywhere the march goes.

The third thing we will be calling on our people for is finance. We know from our own experience that you cannot organise any sort of unemployed initiative without raising considerable sums of money. And that money has got to come out of the trade union movement. Politically it is very important that is where the money comes from.

The organisers want the march to culminate in a day of action, including strike action. One of the problems with 14 May last year, which was called by the TUC and then thrown back to the rank and file, is that the momentum you need to get a one day stoppage off the ground is not that easy to maintain. It will be up to Right to Work activists

to do the detailed work in localities that alone can offer any possibility of success for the call for strike action.

John went on from talking about the problems of building around the march to the more long term problem of organising the unemployed.

Precisely because there is a bit of a movement inside the trade unions, the question of organising the unemployed is no longer something that can just be shelved. We have got a little campaign of resolutions, directed at this year's TUC, calling for a national unemployed workers' union. It's meeting with some resonance. People are quite in agreement with what we are pushing for, saying that the TUC has got to take the responsibility for organising a national unemployed workers' union.

There needs to be a meaningful debate in the whole of the labour movement about what we mean by organising the unemployed.

There are two strands of argument at present. There is the strand we represent, which says we want an organisation of the unemployed that is allied to the employed trade union movement as part of the struggle for jobs and against the Tory government.

The other emphasis is a sort of social working attitude, setting up local drop-in centres, where the unemployed can go during the day, get cheap coffee and facilities. We shouldn't sneer at that approach. The people involved are



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quite sincere. And we are certainly not against unemployed centres. But there is a danger that the style of organising develops where you keep the unemployed out on the fringes of the movement, keeping them in their unemployed centre with a professional full time social worker in charge. To all intents and purposes you end up no different to the plethora of advice centres and youth clubs that already exist.

What the Right to Work Campaign has got to say is that of course there is a lot of claimants' work, with individual rights cases, that has to be taken up among the unemployed. But it has to be part of building an unemployed workers union that is seen as a national operation not just a local easing of conscience by sections of the trade union movement

But if that is the perspective what role has the Right to Work Campaign got to play now? John explained.

In the ideal world there would be a national, official TUC organisation of the unemployed and the role of the Right to Work Campaign would be as the militant grouping within that union. I don't think we should dream about us independently trying to build an unemployed workers organisation. Quite crudely, we haven't got the resources to do it. So we have got to see the Right to Work Campaign as an attempt to group together those unemployed and those employed trade unionists who see the solution to unemployment in a militant industrial struggle against the Tories. That is the key point of differentiation. There will be a lot of people interested in organising the unemployed, but who won't necessarily recognise even that you need strike action to bring down the Tories.

We want those people to be involved. I would like to work alongside someone who believes the way you are going to get rid of the Tories is just by waiting until the next general election and you automatically get a Labour government. We have to struggle alongside such people, while arguing that at the end of the day the only way to guarantee getting rid of the Tories is through industrial action. The Right to Work Campaign will be necessary as long as that debate goes on within the movement.

One possible shift in the last couple of months have been signs of slightly greater resistance to redundancies and closures among employed workers.

The vast majority of employed trade unionists are still intimidated by mass unemployment. The struggle against the cuts, redundancies and closures is still very hard. But, nevertheless, since Gardners and the mass demonstration in Liverpool there have been numbers of occupations here and there. There was the successful occupation in Norwich at Lawrence Scotts. There's an occupation

going on at the moment at Plessey's in Swindon, mainly women workers. There's the British Printing Corporation occupation in London, there's the *Camden Journal*, very exciting with secondary picketing. And then there have been a number of occupations of ships by the seamen.

Now that does not make anything like the movement of occupations and the spirit of resistance to closures that existed after UCS in 1971-3. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction. One of the reasons why we have to keep the Right to Work Campaign going is that when it comes to these particular struggles, we are the only ones around who have anything to say in terms of help and advice. We can link the question of the unemployed to that of the employed in a concrete way. The fact that unemployed up and down the country raised money for Gardners was more than a money-raising operation — it was also propaganda. Every time you raised money you also raised the question, 'Is it possible to have a go in this area?'

Finally, John talked about another phenomenon in a number of unions — the growth of new Broad Lefts, often in reaction to the general drift of union leaderships to the right.

Traditionally, whenever socialists have talked about how they relate to Broad Lefts, they have thought in terms of the model of what happened in the AUEW in the 1960s — the rise of Scanlon and the Broad Left that was built around him.

But there are significant differences with the new Broad Lefts that are being built now. The engineering Broad Left was built at a time of rising militancy, of a large number of strikes predominantly in engineering,

The difference with the new Broad Lefts in the Communications Union (the old UPW) and the Post Office Engineering Union is that the main organising force behind them is not the Communist Party. It is the left of the Labour Party. That does make some difference. It means there is even less of an industrial orientation than with the CP was ten years ago. A number of key activists in the AUEW Broad Left, although electorally oriented, were very good wage militants, did lead unofficial strikes and so on. But many of the key figures in these new Broad Lefts have never led an unofficial action, and conceive of the Broad Left only in terms of forming electoral blocs against the right wing.

They are also very much concerned with trying to intervene in the present arguments inside the Labour Party. How the unions vote within the Labour Party now becomes a central part of their platform.

What is confusing for our own supporters is that these new Broad Lefts are often being built in unions where there

was no Broad Left before. So it was possible to build small rank-and-file groups or caucuses in them, around the notion of what a rank and file movement should be like, without running into any competition from any alternative strategy of the Broad Left sort. Now these new Broad Lefts have been formed, pulling into them all sorts of new people who are prepared to go in and work with anyone against the right wing. The danger is that if we don't relate to them properly, they will not come across any other ideas than those of a purely electoral opposition to the right.

Tactically, we have to give a lot of thought to what we are doing. For we are in favour of as much united front activity as possible against the government and the employers. But we have to be very specific about what we mean by united front activity.

For instance can we get in the POEU more people who are prepared to campaign round us over the question of the shorter working week and new technology? Or is it a question in the CPSA of the attitude to the present pay claim? Or in the National Union of Seamen the attitude to the Broad Left's *Seamen's Charter* and to the lack of control over officials?

You have to seek that united front activity all the time. But in seeking that united front activity we cannot keep quiet about our different approach. We do not believe that the Broad Left strategy is the answer to the right wing in the unions.

It doesn't matter if it is the CPSA or the National Union of Seamen or whatever it is, things will end up exactly the same as in the AUEW if you group a whole number of people around who are correctly motivated against the right wing around a purely electoral strategy inside the union. Eventually you'll get beaten, and beaten at your own game, because the right will always be better than you at electoral manoeuvres inside the machine. And worse than that, you neglect the job that has to be done at a rank-and-file level.

Where we don't have forces of any significance, then we have no choice but to work within what Broad Left there is as a critical voice. But the moment you start diluting political criticism of Broad Left strategies, far from influencing them, they can start influencing you. Precisely when the level of struggle is low it is easy to get sucked into electoral activity.

In a sense we have got to restate what we have always stood for as a rank and file movement.

People inside the unions are saying, 'What has gone wrong?' We have to say what has gone wrong is precisely this Broad Left strategy, ten to 15 years of leading big campaigns behind Jones and Scanlon and other apparently left figures, not worrying what is on the ground in terms of organisation.

Victimisation diary

On November 21st Longbridge erupted. Two weeks later, 11 men were sacked for their role in the demonstration that Friday. The following article by Sheila McGregor is an attempt to explain the eruption, why BL management used it to further break union organisation, and why it seems yet another round has been lost to Edwardes at a time when a degree of confidence was re-emerging on the shop floor.

In the CAB I area, the centre of the eruption, matters had been building up for weeks. The new Metro lines had been manned up with workers from the old Mini lines as well as with new labour. The stewards and the men from the old Mini lines were used to module systems for lay offs, overtime rotas and various other practices. (A module system means the shop stewards control the lay off on a fair basis for the work force instead of management having the prerogative to bring in their 'blue eyed boys').

On the new Metro lines, management made it very clear from the outset that all the old agreements were null and void, having been superseded by the 92 page document they had pushed through. There were a whole number of problems in the new shop including inadequate tea facilities which meant a worker's tea break was over by the time he or she had got a cup of tea; no personal lockers; problems with the industrial engineers, rest areas and the like; as well as the questions of lay offs and overtime working. The stewards asked repeatedly for meetings with the local industrial relations men, Clive Bartley and Bernard Monaghan, to resolve these matters. They were consistently refused.

Management were told by the stewards that if a meeting was not set up to discuss the question of lay offs and overtime, then there would be an explosion. Meanwhile, a dispute was raging in the seat build area over manning levels.

At the heart of the 92 page document is the question of mutuality on manning levels. Each time there were insufficient seats for the Metro, the workers in the CAB finishing area were laid off without warning and without pay, at any time of day and night and without regard to how workers would get home at 11.30pm.

Two areas were in practice presenting a challenge to the implementation of the 92 page document, just as the work force was regaining some confidence in their job security. Had management given way at this point, it would have been a green light to militants throughout the plant to 'have a go' and claw back concessions forced over the past six months.

Initially, management clearly hoped the continual laying off of the CAB areas over the seat build question would lead workers to put pressure on the Works Committee and the seat build area to accept either outsourcing of the work or management's manning levels. The reverse happened. The men in the finishing areas knew that 5-6000 Metros were lying around the plant needing rectification. That was their work. They were also totally choked off with numerous other things and in fact blamed management fairly and squarely. Their demonstration failed to turn into an anti-union riot. Instead it went wild against management. Potentially it was very dangerous, because it could have led to a real fight over the 92 pages, which management might have lost.

This was not to be. Days later, the Works Committee secured a return to work without having resolved the problems in the CAB areas, and the anger was dissipated. This left the door open to management to go for the shop stewards in the CAB area and break the union properly.

Fortunately the night shift in the CAB finishing area had anticipated this and passed a resolution of support for anyone who

was victimised. Two weeks later, on Friday December 5th twelve men were taken to a disciplinary hearing and sacked for causing the riot, leading the riot and causing damage to the factory.

The following Monday the night shift in CAB I walked out on strike. In the meantime, the Works Committee got a date for an appeal two weeks later to allow time for the unions to amass their evidence in support of the men. On the strength of the appeal the night shift were persuaded to return to work.

On December 19th, the appeal started and the results were known on December 22nd. Ten men were still sacked. The night shift (which had been on days two weeks previously) walked out on strike (unexpectedly as it was considered to be the weaker shift) followed by the day shift the following day.

On December 23rd the TGWU regional committee met. Everyone expected the strike to be made official. They were within quarter of an hour of doing so, when ACAS phoned and offered to intercede. Its involvement came to nought and on December 24th the strike was finally made official, after the Christmas break had started.

Over the Christmas period, several things happened. The TGWU demanded a totally independent enquiry into the sackings. The AUEW said it would not support a strike and would instruct its members to go to work. Duffy proposed a joint management/union enquiry team be set up with an independent chairman. Edwardes announced that if the strikers did not return to work on January 5th, they would be considered to have sacked themselves, and fresh labour would be recruited from the dole queues. Duffy said his members would not condone that kind of scabbing and pleaded for an enquiry. The TGWU said nothing about the sackings, scabbing and whatever. A mass meeting of the strikers was set for January 4th. Edwardes made it known that he could not possibly apply to the government for the millions of pounds required to keep BL going.

January 4th, the TGWU decided it would recommend nothing to the members about the strike, but would accept an independent chairman from ACAS to a union/management enquiry. At 10am a Joint Shop Stewards committee took place at which the TGWU announced this position and, the AUEW made clear they would not support a continuation of the strike. The platform refused to allow any discussion or resolutions to be taken.

At 10.30am the mass meeting of the strikers took place. They voted to suspend the strike pending the outcome of the latest form of enquiry.

January 5th. Resumption of work and start of enquiry. The terms of the enquiry



After the Robbo sacking, yet another round lost to Edwardes

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were to establish whether there was any 'reasonable doubt' in relation to the charges against the eight sacked men. (Two decided not to go through with this lot but to accept the sack).

Three weeks passed. Witnesses reported that the worst person in the enquiry team was Doug Fairburn from the TGWU. 'Whose side is he on?' they demanded to know.

Friday January 30th. The enquiry team issued a joint statement signed by both the TGWU and AUEW which stated that in the case of one worker, an EEPTU member, there was 'reasonable doubt', in the case of a second AUEW member, there was 'no reasonable doubt' but his misdemeanours did not amount to gross industrial misconduct in the view of the unions. Management then announced that the EEPTU member would be reinstated, the AUEW member would be suspended for 10 days without pay and then reinstated, and the TGWU members would all remain sacked.

Monday February 2nd. Management reproduced the joint statement signed by both the TGWU and the AUEW for the shop floor and stated that the matter was quite clear after such an 'independent enquiry' which has been accepted by both unions. Privately it emerged that the AUEW representative turned green when management announced their decision, since both the TGWU and AUEW had anticipated that management would be more lenient in their treatment of the six.

Tuesday February 3rd. The joint shop stewards committee overturned the Works Committee recommendation to go back to the CAB area for industrial action and voted to go to a mass meeting of the entire plant for industrial action. Both the TV and radio reported that the Joint shop stewards voted against industrial action!

Friday, February 6th. Mass meeting in the park. Vote against action. There seems to be generalised support for the men, despite everything, but not the mood for an all out fight.

There are several points at which the victimisations could have been stopped. Firstly, they could have been prevented if the original eruption over lay offs had been developed into a proper fight over the 92 pages, against Edwardes and Thatcher. That was the point at which confidence was strong, and feelings were running high. The fact that this was not at least attempted allowed management to go for victimisations.

The second point at which the fight should have taken place was on December 22nd, when the appeal failed and the two shifts walked out on strike. At that point, any kind of enquiry should have been ruled out as means of gaining reinstatement.

The fact that the TGWU vacillated and then accepted an enquiry without recommending a fight over the question of the

threat to sack the strikers and organise scabbing won the day for management. There was no alternative leadership in the plant which was both capable of organising an

all-out strike of the membership regardless of what the AUEW and TGWU did at national level and generalising such a strike into a fight against Edwardes and Thatcher.

Civil Service set-back

The left received a set-back at the special conference on pay at the end of January of the largest civil service union, the CPSA which represents 125,000 clerical grades. And much of the responsibility for the set-back lies with the Broad Left (which was displaced from its dominating position on the union executive by the right wing last year).

The conference was held against the background of the government's suspension of the National Pay Agreement, its refusal to release the findings of the Pay Research Unit and its restriction of increases to six per cent.

The left has waged a consistent battle in the union to get rid of the National Pay Agreement since its inception. The agreement is based upon comparability with outside workers. It can never be more than a catching up exercise and the workers we are compared with often have little or no industrial muscle. This system ensures there is no membership involvement in pay negotiations and gives us no opportunity to decide on our own pay claims. What is more, successive rounds of pay restraint have meant that in reality the agreement has only been operated once in the last seven years.

At the annual conference last year the *Militant* tendency within the Broad Left opposed arguments for immediately voting out pay research and instead put up a successful motion calling for a massive campaign among the membership culminating in a special one day conference to consider alternatives to it. In the event such a campaign never materialised. The right wing dominated National Executive Committee released a document supporting the Pay Research Unit system, claiming there is no realistic alternative.

The Broad Left and to an extent *Redder Tape*, the rank and file group in the union, were over-confident about our ability to defeat pay research. The right wing were clearly able to convince people that if the government is suppressing the results of pay research, the system must be worth fighting for. The right know that if it were scrapped, the CPSA would be in a position to put forward pay claims that could offer a lead to other unions—an altogether frightening prospect. The motion to withdraw from the National Pay Agreement was lost by less than 5000 votes.

The union president, the arch-right winger Kate Losinska, used her position in the chair to ensure that the most militant motions were not heard. In this she was aided by the Broad-Left dominated standing orders committee.

In the section of the conference on this year's pay claim, they made sure that the lowest claims were heard first. The claim moved jointly by *Redder Tape* supporters and the better elements in the Broad Left—for 20 per cent with a £20 minimum rise—was down to be discussed last. A reference back was moved, but Losinska chose to interpret a very close vote as a defeat for it.

The Broad Left's own claim of 15 per cent with a minimum of £10—first on the agenda and less than that recommended by the Civil Service Executive Committee of the union—was carried. The Broad Left also supported that executive's motion calling for 'consultative exercises to test the membership's willingness to take action', rather than pressing directly for all out action.

One thing that emerged from the conference was the total capitulation of the Broad Left to the controlling bureaucracy of full-time officials. The influence the Broad Left has, which was greatly exaggerated by the bloc vote system that operated until last year, is clearly on the wane. Discouraged by the surrender of powerful groups of workers such as the miners, they have not had the confidence to argue for militant action among the membership.

The SCPS, the union that represents managerial and executive grades, held its special conference the day before the CPSA, and agreed to a claim of 19 per cent and concerted selective strike action. But the activists in the union could face a problem when it comes to generating activity from the ordinary members. And we could find ourselves in the ludicrous position of CPSA members being instructed to cross SCPS picket lines in order to attend branch consultation meetings!

The union for tax officers, the Inland Revenue Staff Federation are for the first time in their history preparing for widespread strike action, with the proposed closure of revenue collecting computer centres.

The government do not have a great deal of room for manoeuvre. They have ruled out any question of a staged increase. It therefore seems likely that they will attempt to use the loss of jobs and the introduction of new technology to back up a pay settlement of more than six per cent. Judging by the record of the CPSA National Executive Committee, there is a real danger that this would be accepted.

However depressing the picture may be, there will be a large minority prepared to fight. In the absence of any leadership from above, we must immediately begin to build action ourselves. This means that *Redder*

Tape, working closely with the Broad Left wherever possible, must set up local strike committees to coordinate action around the country. We must make sure that one-day stoppages are backed up by mass demonstrations, and that there are coaches and mini buses take people to picket lines in other localities. The key to winning the campaign is the maximum involvement of the membership.

Sally Bild and Caroline Conway

Fight for the right to write

In a year when it's reckoned that 15 per cent of jobs have disappeared in publishing, when the spectacular failure of the journalists and printing unions to do anything about the closure of the London *Evening News* sent sighs of despair through the ranks of all union activists, and when the union pussyfooting over the hard-nosed tactics of Lord Thomson at *The Times* has led only to its new owner, Rupert 'Porno' Murdoch baying for more blood to flow from the offices and machine rooms of Gray's Inn Road, two fights against redundancy in the printing industry stand out like beacons on a bleak landscape.

These are the stands that members of the National Union of Journalists have taken against the closure of the *Camden Journal* in North London, and against redundancy in the giant book publishing multinational, BPC, just a few streets away from the City of London.

Both managements have taken their cue from the tough minded tactics of other employers in the printing industry, in engineering and in steel. They're trying to get away with as much as they can while testing the strength of the union organisations, but both have miscalculated. BPC bared its teeth in November by announcing its intention to make a number of union members' jobs redundant in its Macdonald Futura book publishing offices (the non-union members were left alone, as they were in a previous round of redundancies a few months earlier) and farming the workload out to freelancers. The union responded by organising its 65 members in the different London chapels and occupying one suite of offices, using this as the strike HQ from which pickets are sent out daily to other offices around the city. All 65 were sacked on 8 December and since then six management 'deadlines' have come and gone and the occupation is as strong as ever.

The *Camden Journal* owners, Midlands-based Heart of England Newspapers, used similar dirty tricks by telling the journalists on the day of their Christmas party that the paper was to close and nine union members were to go down the road. Like BPC they are out to smash the chapel, the best organised and most militant in the group. The owners

say that the paper is losing money, which is true, but the chapel points out that the loss is minute and the group could stand it if they wanted to keep the paper going. All local newspapers are suffering from a drop in advertising revenue and the *Camden Journal* has been deliberately deprived of advertising and circulation to squeeze out the staff.

Basically the owners don't like the line of the paper and they don't like the way it is organised. The paper is popular. It has supported local disputes and campaigned against the cuts and rent and rate increases. It has advised its readers to vote Labour. In short it is a rare piece of local journalism, and opposed to everything its owners cherish.

Editor Eric Gordon and deputy editor Howard Hannah are well known left wingers and NUJ activists. They are both on the redundancy list. Deputy Father of the Chapel (shop steward), Paul Todd, who works half time on the *Camden Journal* and half time on another of the group's publications, the *Hornsey Journal*, is on the redundancy list. All of the other six for the chop are active union members.

The group chapel in London was one of the few which, during the 1979 Newspaper Society strike, managed to stop printing.

The 24 NUJ members who came out in support of the nine sacked journalists have all now been given their notices. The two other London papers in the group, *Hornsey Journal* and *Islington Gazette*, are being produced by editors, a few NUJ scabs and six members of the 'anti' union, the Institute of Journalists.

Both disputes have been plagued, as usual, by union officials who allow their backbones to turn to jelly at the first signs of action. NUJ General Secretary Ken Ashton wrote to the print unions involved in the BPC dispute asking for blacking only ten weeks after the sackings took place. He allowed himself to be pulled into secret negotiations with the management over the head of the chapel officials, and at a subsequent meeting between the BPC chapel and the employer demanded that he be the chief negotiator. The chapel held him to get on his bike!

In the *Camden Journal* dispute printers at Nuneaton have kept crossing the picket lines, which they refused to cross in 1979, because the National Graphical Association

has issued them with no instructions. In the last week of January, however, fourteen out of the sixty printers refused to scab, even without union instructions. The other print union, SOGAT, blacked the papers for two days and the two scab titles were stopped, but on the same day as the TUC Printing Industry Committee declared that they would rather go to jail than operate the Tory Employment Act, the Newspaper Society threatened SOGAT with a writ against the blacking and General Secretary Bill Keyes called it all off.

But what is also common to both disputes is the high level of rank and file activity and support. BPC members have been touring other London chapels drumming up financial support and organised a 200 strong picket from the magazine branch of the union outside the BPC head office one Friday afternoon.

In Camden a *Save the Journal* strike paper is being produced every week. Thousands of copies are sold on the streets, in the pubs and by local newsagents. The local NALGO branch takes 300 a week and NUPE takes several hundred. But the paper avoids the trap that other 'alternative' papers, like the *Nottingham News*, have fallen into. It is a paper about the struggle. A local building workers' strike is to the fore in every issue. The rates and rent increases lead the front pages. It is a paper that the people of Camden can relate to during the strike, and it is a paper that organises support.

The paper and the strike are run by editorial and defence committees of local trade unionists. Pickets are organised each week on the press days of the other two scab papers. Each Thursday a coach is run to the printworks in Nuneaton and the support from the Midlands Right to Work Campaign and local trades councils and union branches is well advertised in the pages of the strike paper.

London local newspaper journalists struck for a half day on Friday 23 January and again for a day on Thursday 29 January. The one-day strikes are to go on until the jobs are saved and the paper is reopened. BPC and the *Camden Journal* now both have intensive campaigns underway to have supplies and products blacked. The mood has changed since the closure of the *Evening News*.

Murray Armstrong



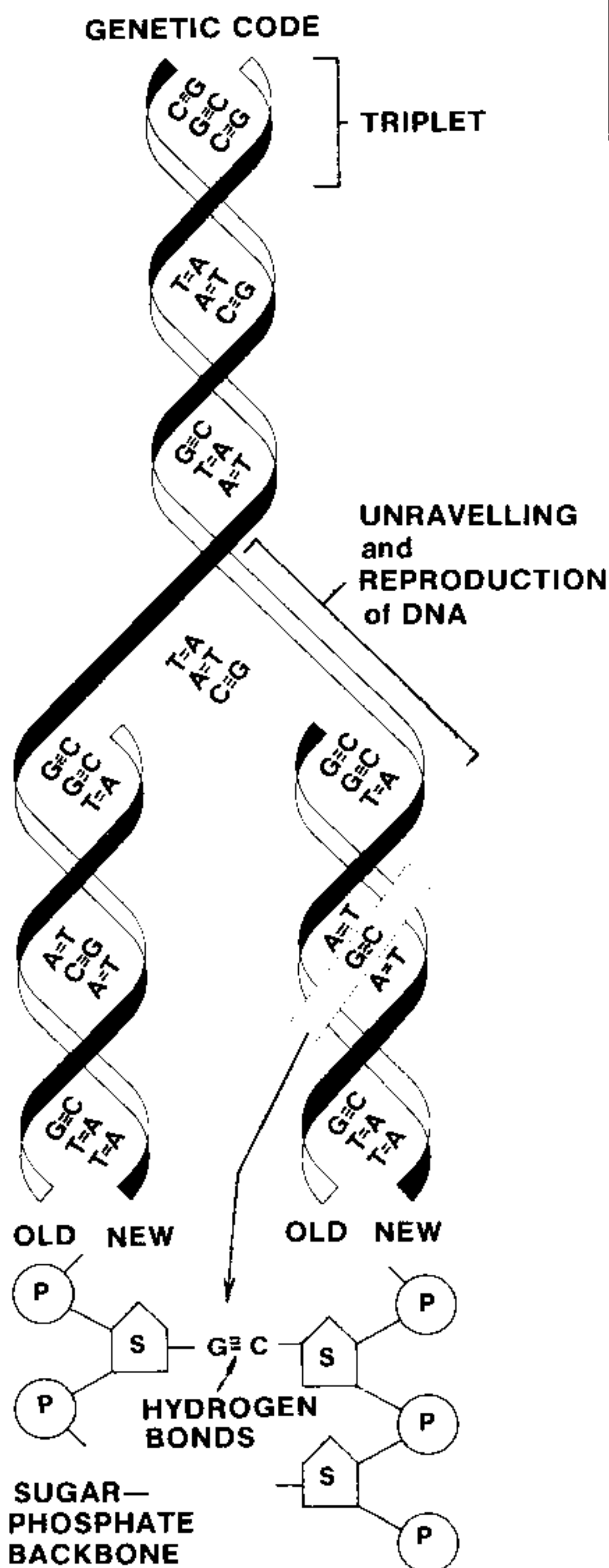
John Sturrock (Report)

Will our genes be fit for our grandchildren to wear

The human effects of low dose atomic radiation

Fig 1
DNA—the core of the chromosome

Molecular changes in the structure of A, T, C, or G can change the information on the genetic code, and thereby affect the functioning of the cell



As concern about nuclear war escalates, it is easy to overlook the current health dangers of the nuclear industry. The insidious effects of low dose atomic radiation seem minor when compared to the swift devastation of nuclear war. But low dose radiation is a genetic time bomb that threatens to destroy all human life as surely as global nuclear war. In the past 20 years alone, the number of children born with defects has more than doubled around the world.

While scientists have been studying this problem since the 1940s, most people have been kept ignorant of the growing danger. What has been learned about the harmful effects of low dose radiation is largely buried in scientific journals that are difficult for the ordinary person to read and understand.

But the survival of our species is much too important to be left to experts who serve only the needs of capital accumulation. It is essential workers learn about the dangers of low dose radiation, learn what is at stake, learn what will be required to ensure a future for ourselves and our children's children.

Atomic radiation is bursts of energy (in the form of particles or waves) that are spontaneously released from unstable high energy atoms. For example, the high energy atom Uranium 235 spontaneously releases or radiates its energy until it has reached its stable, non-radioactive form, an atom of lead.

Low dose atomic radiation cannot be seen, smelled, tasted or felt. It can only be detected by things like geiger counters and radiation badges which measure the bursts of energy coming from the radioactive material.

If you speed up the release of atomic energy in a nuclear reactor, you can generate enough heat to boil water to produce steam to turn electric generators. If you speed it up even faster, you can create the blinding flash and tremendous heat and destruction of an atomic bomb explosion.

Many radioactive atoms like Uranium 235, Potassium 40 and Iodine 131 are naturally found on earth. These materials contribute about half of the natural background radiation that we all have to live with. The other half comes from space and is called cosmic radiation. These two kinds of radiation have been present on earth since before human life began.

Medical and dental X-rays provide as much radiation again as background radiation. Nuclear fallout that occurred prior to 1968 has also contributed as much radiation as background radiation. So if we combine medical and dental X-rays plus nuclear fallout since 1968, we are all getting twice the natural background radiation that our pre-atomic ancestors had to live with. That is before we even begin to discuss radiation from the nuclear industry, including bomb explosions since 1968.

Cells and genes

In order to understand what all this radiation is doing to our health, we need to look at how radiation affects our body cells.

Cells are the basic unit of human life. Every one of us began our lives as a single cell, a fertilized egg. Within the nucleus of that cell was a tiny package of information that ensured we would develop as human beings and not as kittens or fish or plants. That package of information is our genetic material and it consists of 46 chromosomes, 23 inherited from our mothers and the other 23 inherited from our fathers.

At the core of each chromosome is a long molecule called DNA. Each DNA molecule is composed of thousands of tiny information units called genes. Our genes determine our sex, the colour of our skin, hair and eyes and many other physical characteristics.

As we developed in our mother's womb, our genetic material duplicated with every division of our body cells. As a result, almost every cell in our bodies carries an exact duplicate of the original information package we inherited from our parents. The marvel of cloning is possible only because the basic information for the entire organism exists in almost every cell.

While all the genetic material is present in each cell, less than ten per cent of it is active at any one time. The active genes direct the day-to-day repair and replacement of sick or dead cells. They also direct the production of all the substances that carry out the function of the cells. For example, under the direction of the genes, our white blood cells produce antibodies to fight off germs.

Genes also control whether or not a cell will divide and reproduce itself, how often it will divide and when it will stop dividing. For example, blood, skin and gut cells are constantly replacing themselves while muscle cells reproduce very slowly and nerve cells hardly divide at all.

But if you take any cell, put it in a laboratory dish with a nutrient solution and keep this solution fresh, the cell will continue to divide and reproduce. If you do not refresh the solution, cell division stops. This experiment indicates that the cell is manufacturing and ex-

creting its own controlling substances.

The major difference between normal cells and cancer cells is that cancer cells do not regulate their own growth. In a cancer cell (which could be any cell in the body), the genes controlling growth and division have been impaired. One cancer cell can grow and proliferate to compete with normal cells for food and space, causing chaos in the entire body.

Our genetic material is amazingly complex and extremely important. All of the life-sustaining processes that occur within our cells are controlled directly or indirectly by the genes. While there are many toxic substances that can damage our genes, low dose radiation is one of the most effective. To understand how radiation does this we need to look more closely at the structure of DNA and the genes.

DNA is a long, double-stranded molecule that winds around itself like a winding staircase (see figure 1). The 'backbone' of each strand of the DNA is composed of sugar and phosphate molecules. The two strands are held together by the hydrogen bonds of two matched pairs of molecules, A-T and G-C, arranged in different sequences. The genetic code is formed by the specific arrangement of the paired molecules along the DNA.

Each set of three molecules (a triplet) along the DNA forms a code 'word' that controls the production of one unit of a protein or a start or stop signal. Some diseases like haemophilia and sickle cell anaemia are caused by just one change in one triplet of the gene code that has resulted in a defective protein. The average gene consists of about five hundred of these triplets and there are thousands of genes on each molecule of DNA.

Radiation and cancer

Previously, I described radiation as bursts of energy in the form of particles or waves. These bursts of energy can cause parts of molecules to fly apart. Because water makes up eighty per cent of all living material, a burst of radioactive energy is most likely to hit water molecules (H₂O) in the cell, splitting them into particles.

Water particles can recombine with each other to form, among other things, the acid hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) which is highly toxic to cells. The particles can also attempt to combine with parts of the DNA. When this happens, it can result in a break or a change in the structure of the DNA.

As the dose of radiation increases, the number of breaks in the DNA also increases. And no matter how low the dose of radiation is, you can still detect breaks in the DNA. That means there is no safe dose of radiation. Even the tiniest dose will cause some damage.

DNA is most sensitive to radiation damage when the cell is dividing (see figure 1). In order to duplicate itself,

the double strand of DNA must unravel. This process exposes the weak hydrogen bonds that hold the two strands together, as well as other vulnerable parts of the gene code (figure 2 shows one chromosome going through normal cell division and what can happen when there are breaks in the DNA).

The more often a cell divides, the more sensitive it is to radiation damage. Cancer of the white blood cells, leukemia, is one of the most common cancers because white blood cells divide frequently. Likewise, children are more sensitive to radiation damage than adults because they are still growing.

In the United States, Dr Alice Stewart studied 750,000 children whose mothers had received medical X-rays while they were pregnant. She found these children were twice as likely to die from leukemia and other cancers in the first ten years of life compared with children whose mothers didn't get X-rays. The average dose of radiation was two rems.*

From this study and studies of other victims of radiation (including the victims of the atom bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945), scientists have calculated the increase in cancers for each additional rem of radiation.

For adults, each additional rem results in a two per cent increase in cancer in the population and a two per cent increased probability of each person getting cancer. For children, each additional rem results in a ten to twenty per cent increase in cancer. For the foetus older than thirteen weeks, each rem increases the number of

cancers by one third. And for the foetus less than thirteen weeks old, each rem of radiation triples the likelihood of getting cancer. The younger the child, the greater the number of cells in division and therefore, the greater the possible damage to the organism as a whole.

Low dose time bomb

But cancer is not the only effect of radiation on a cell. Radiation can kill the cell or damage it in such a way that its normal lifespan is shortened.

Experiments with mice have shown that their lifespan decreases as the radiation received increases. And no matter how low the dose gets, you can still measure a decrease in lifespan.

In 1965, a US study showed that the median age at death for doctors working with X-rays was five years less than it was for doctors who didn't work with X-rays. Low dose radiation causes widespread injury that accelerates the aging of cells and tissues according to the dose received.

Radiation damage can also alter the normal functions of the cell so that it doesn't do what it should or it does things that it shouldn't. Damaged genes can cause white blood cells to produce defective antibodies that can't fight off infection as well as they normally would. It can also result in cataracts, where the clear cells of the lens of the eye become cloudy as a result of improper information being passed on by damaged genes as the cells divide.

Where higher doses of radiation will

*A rem is the measure of the biological effect of radiation. The dose in rems is the radiation dose absorbed, multiplied by a factor, the Relative Biological Effect (RBE) to allow for

the different kinds of radiation i.e. radiation from plutonium is ten times more harmful than X-rays so if the RBE of X-rays is one, the RBE of plutonium is ten.

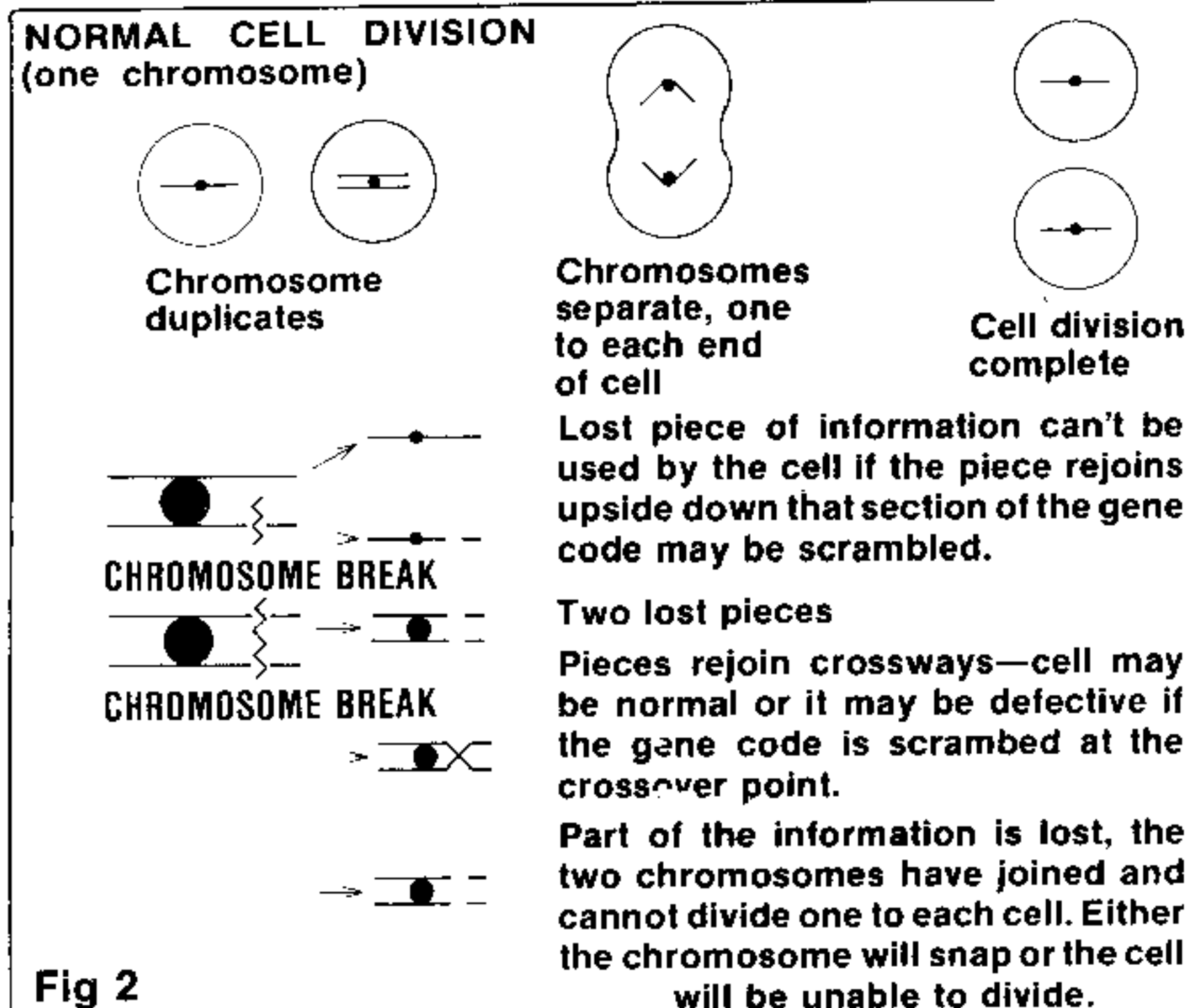


Fig 2

RADIATION AND HEALTH

kill a cell, lower doses can damage the genes so that the damage is passed on when the cell divides and reproduces. In this way, damage can be accumulated until the cell can no longer survive. If the cell is a sex cell (sperm or egg) radiation damage is passed on to our children and is accumulated from generation to generation.

The death of sex cells results in decreased fertility. The malfunction of sex cells can result in miscarriage, stillbirth, deformities and debilities. While deformities are fairly easy to detect, debilities may not be apparent. Radiation damaged children may have a shorter lifespan, a decrease in fertility, and increase in mental and physical disease and a decrease in intelligence and vitality.

Every increase in radiation increases the amount of damage sustained by the genes of the global population. There is only one pool of human genes for us to draw on. If these become too severely damaged, the human species will no longer be able to reproduce itself. It is for this reason that low dose radiation is a genetic time bomb.

I mentioned earlier how the number of children born with detectable defects has more than doubled in one generation. In New York, an infertility clinic recently noted a significant decline in the quality of sperm samples taken between the early 1960s and 1970s. Because it takes thirty to fifty generations for half of all mutations to show up, we are just beginning to see what we are in for. Even if no new radiation damage occurs, the scale of the problem is already terrifying.

Criminal negligence

Never fear, our governments have set down Maximum Permissible Dose (MPD) levels to limit (not prevent) radiation damage.

For individuals, the MPD is 0.5 rem per year. For atomic workers, the MPD is 5 rem per year. Atomic workers are expected to tolerate ten times as much radiation as other people every year. This amount of radiation is known to increase the probability of cancer by ten per cent for each year of maximum exposure.

According to government documents, this is OK because atomic workers get special medical care. Unfortunately, special medical care has not prevented uranium miners from getting lung cancer two to five times as often as other people. And there is, at present, no way of reversing the damaging effects of radiation.

Safety standards in the nuclear industry are notoriously lax compared to other industries. During the investigation into the sudden death (murder?) of atomic worker and union militant Karen Silkwood, it was revealed that the average worker in the Kerr-McGee

nuclear plant in the US had worked fourteen months before completing the minimal health and safety course required by law. And when workers exceed their Maximum Permissible Dose level, they can be laid off.

Isn't it comforting to know that we are being so well looked after?

While atomic workers bear the brunt of radiation damage, the rest of us are not far behind. The headlong dash to accumulate weapons grade material for atomic bombs has resulted in massive nuclear pollution of the land, water and air. This radioactive garbage will be poisonous for a million years and is slowly finding its way into our drinking water, our food and our bodies. Here are just a few examples of what is happening around the world:

The Canadian nuclear reactor in Pickering, Ontario, produces every year eight thousand times as much radioactive garbage as was released by the Hiroshima bomb. This reactor regularly leaks radioactive material into Lake Ontario which serves as drinking water for millions of people.

The French atomic energy commission dumped forty thousand tons of radioactive waste into just one spot in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of France. Ocean dumping remains a cheap way to dispose of nuclear wastes.

By the year 2000, the US alone will have accumulated one billion cubic feet of radioactive waste, enough to cover a four lane highway, coast to coast, one foot deep. Since 1959, half a million gallons of highly radioactive liquid wastes have leaked from the largest nuclear waste storage depot in the US at Hanford, Washington and are seeping into the ground water and finding their way into the Columbia River system.

Since 1958, radioactive salt cakes at the Hanford waste depot have been eaten by mice and rabbits which in turn have been eaten by coyotes, bobcats, eagles, hawks and owls. In 1972, ten year old rabbit pellets found on the site were still highly radioactive.

The gross criminal negligence of those in power is only matched by their contempt for our growing concern over nuclear pollution.

Alternatives

In 1958 the World Health Organisation published its findings on the *Mental Health Aspects of the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy*. According to them, our fears about nuclear pollution are unjustified and exaggerated. They attributed our fears about contaminated food and nuclear wastes to 'childhood obsessions with eating and defecating'. In conclusion, they recommended the raising of a new generation 'which has learned to live on terms with ignorance and uncertainty'.

To a large extent, we have learned to live on those terms. We've learned to

live with the threat of nuclear war hanging over our heads. We see increasing numbers of people getting cancer. We live with the growing knowledge that our world is massively polluted and that nothing is being done to stop or correct this.

We are scared, but more importantly, we are not in control of what is happening to our lives and to our world. If we were it would be a different story altogether.

It is possible to repair and replace damaged genes. The basic science required to do this already exists. But most cell research around the world is funded by the military and directed towards finding more effective ways to damage and kill people.

It is possible to clean our air, water and land, to gather the poisonous wastes and send them into the sun. There are enough hands to do this, hands that are forced to lie idle because capitalism cannot find a way to employ them for profit.

It is possible to end the international competition of capital that requires a nuclear industry to produce the bombs that threaten the continued existence of life on earth.

Turning these possibilities into realities means we have to completely redirect human energy and resources. It means smashing international capitalism and steering an entirely new course into the future based on international workers' power.

We cannot wait and hope that capitalism will reform itself. The destruction we are now facing is the logical and inevitable result of a world organised around the accumulation of profit and military competition between states. We are being forced into the position of having to take control of and rebuild our world down to our very own genes.

Fortunately, the anti-nuclear and anti-war movements are growing. But they must do more than oppose a nuclear reactor here or a missile there. They must link up with all the diverse struggles against capitalism and strengthen the movement for workers' power.

Most importantly, our movement must be rooted in the workplace where workers have the collective power to shut down capitalism and lay the basis for workers' control. It is also on the job that workers can most effectively oppose any level of radiation exposure. There is no safe dose!

Surely the right to survive isn't too much to ask. Surely the workers of the world couldn't do a worse job of running things than the capitalists have.

There is no time to lose. Capitalism can offer us only two choices, quick death or slow death. But if we fight for our lives, for international socialism, we have a world and a future to win.

Susan Tyburn

International Socialists (Canada)

The dead hand gang

'1981 is a crucial year for the movement against nuclear weapons. It will be a year of decision.'

Those are the words of *Sanity*, the magazine of CND. We agree. But as the new movement moves on from its first enormously successful year there are great dangers of much of the potential being thrown away. And a lot of the responsibility for that falls on the quite extraordinary behaviour of the CND leadership.

Since the 26 October demonstration, the movement has continued to spread outwards. Every week there are new well attended showings of *The War Game*, meetings and new CND groups set up. Individual applications to join CND are still flooding into the national office at several hundred a week.

But where groups have been in existence several months the picture is by no means one of continuous growth. In some cases it is simply a case of a slight falling off in attendance from the first heady days. In other cases a CND group was formed and then virtually disappeared from sight. This has been particularly so in colleges and in a few cases we know of a CND group that has already had to be re-launched. And in probably yet more areas the local CND group has settled down with a stable attendance and routine but run by a comfortable clique who are not very open to new initiatives or, indeed, newcomers.

At one level these are mere teething troubles of a new and massive movement. And, despite them, where bold initiatives have been tried they have got very impressive results. For example in January a demonstration through Newcastle mobilised 2,500—including many young working class people. And University of London CND was able to mobilise 1,000 students at short notice to march on the American embassy on the evening of Reagan's inauguration.

But at another level natural birth pains are being greatly worsened by the CND leadership. Their deadening influence takes at least three forms.

Firstly there is the question of a national mobilisation. After the success of 26 October the most automatic thing in the world would have been to have an Easter march from, say, Greenham Common or Aldermaston culminating in a massive demonstration which could have mobilised double the number of October 26. It would have drawn in many new activists, increased morale and forced the question of nuclear disarmament firmly into centre of national politics.

The CND leadership however set themselves firmly against such a national mobilisation, with mutterings about 'peaking the movement too soon'.

The result is that Easter CND activities will be an as yet not completely finalised

patchwork, whose mobilising capacity even in total will inevitably be weaker. These are some of the most prominent of them:

A trans-Pennine march from Leeds to Manchester.

A march from Wolverhampton to Rugby coupled with Easter Saturday demonstrations in a number of Midlands towns.

An Easter Monday festival near Greenham Common coupled with Easter Saturday demonstrations in a number of nearby towns.

Five marches in London to Sub-Regional Controls.

Marches in the South West and East Anglia.

The only link between these disparate activities is the brainchild of European Nuclear Disarmament (END)—sending 15 coachloads from the different regions to an Easter demonstration in Brussels. While this may appeal to some of the activists, its effect will simply be to take them away from the far larger numbers they have the opportunity of drawing in over Easter.

Bureaucracy rules OK?

The second damper the CND leadership have put on the movement is their obsession with having every activity neatly under the control of CND. This is best evidenced by the story of the extremely important Labour Movement Conference Against the Missiles to be held in Manchester on 28 March.

This excellent initiative came from Manchester Against the Missiles, and the CND conference in November mandated the CND leadership to support it. Some of us present at a sponsors' meeting just before Christmas were amazed to find the national CND representatives insisting that they have 8 out of the 10 places on the organising committee and were even more amazed when the initiators meekly accepted this. The result is that the leaflet produced for the conference is a paean of praise to Michael Foot and the conference itself will not have workshops and will be dominated by speeches from labour movement worthies. 28 March in Manchester will still be an extremely important date, but it will be a far less effective conference than it could have been without the bear hug from the CND leadership.

It is difficult to escape the impression that on the question of the labour movement conference the CND leadership have stepped in to control something they could not stop but would really have liked not to happen. Four distinctly uninspiring paragraphs in the latest *Sanity* (as compared with a

whole page on 'the incognito Jesus') do not indicate a great commitment to the project.

But probably the most damaging thing the CND leadership are doing is the general approach to building the movement that they are propagating—what they would call the 'broad' approach. It is a superficially attractive approach—don't squeeze anyone out. All fronts are of equal importance, the trade unions and the Churches ... and don't forget the Liberal Party!

The effect in practice is exactly the opposite. As one member of a London CND group complained despairingly to me, 'Our next public meeting has a platform consisting of two vicars and a quaker, and they think that is broad!!' In fact it is a quite illusory search for respectability which cuts off the most lively potential among youth and the most powerful among trade unionists.

It is a search for respectability that is also fostering some very dangerous political illusions. *Sanity*, for example, tells us that 'Michael Foot has reaffirmed his statement ... that any future government he might form would be committed to "unilateral" nuclear disarmament.' No mention of his appointing a 'defence' spokesman who is explicitly opposed to this.

The deadening hand of the CND leadership is not, however, an unstoppable force. If socialists are there challenging its conventional wisdom they get a rapid response.

A few critical remarks in a previous *Review*, brought the following response from Les Kay in Manchester.

'If the SWP expects anyone in the campaigns to take any notice of its criticism then it will first of all have to convince its members to get their hands dirty building the campaign where it counts.'

He is absolutely right. If the, in reality, very weak CND bureaucracy continues to get its way we will have only ourselves to blame.
Pete Goodwin.

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM
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The world economy

Another decade of crisis ahead

The official forecast on the latest world recession is that it will be less severe than in 1974-5 and that a moderate recovery will begin in late 1981 (*OECD Economic Outlook*, December 1980). Whilst a few countries, including inevitably Britain, will suffer a sharp fall in output, for much of the world there will be a small amount of growth (an estimated 1% on average).

That may be so, although it is worth noting that the latest estimates for key economies (such as the US and West Germany) have had to be revised downwards. But even when the tide of recession draws back, it will leave behind 25 million or so unemployed in the industrialised West alone. Whatever recovery occurs will scarcely dent that figure, let alone lead to a restoration of the boom conditions of the 1960s.

As Trotsky once said 'so long as capitalism remains alive it continues to inhale and exhale', continues to move through cycles of boom and slump. However, while in an epoch of expansion that breathing is regular and vigorous, in an epoch of crisis, for a dying system, it becomes spasmodic and painful. The upswings, as in the late 1970s, become fitful and weak, the downswings deeper and more prolonged. It is not just speculation to suggest that the epoch of crisis which began in the early 1970s will persist through the coming decade. The fundamental problems which generated it are no nearer solution.

The picture is complex. In 1974-5 the shock of the oil-price leap on top of a highly unstable inflationary boom provoked a sharp and synchronised slump. In the following years the pattern of recovery was uneven and volatile. Bits of the system, certain countries such as Japan and the Newly Industrialised Countries (usually called

NICs) such as Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan, and certain industries such as microelectronics and telecommunications, grew rapidly. Other countries such as Britain and most of Africa, and core industries such as steel and shipbuilding remained in a state of chronic stagnation.

Yet no part of the system has proved immune to the current slump. In Eastern Europe Poland's crisis is now more acute than any in the West, and Russia's latest five-year plan announced a further slowdown in its rate of growth. The NICs such as Brazil have accumulated massive debts (see below) and are being forced to cutback. Japan's 5% growth in 1980 (still only half that of the 1960s) is unlikely to be sustained as its exports are hit by slump elsewhere and by mounting pressure for trade restrictions.

To understand what is happening it is necessary to distinguish between the immediate causes of the slump and the deeper contradictions generating the crisis. Two immediate causes stand out as decisive.

The American Recession

The US economy accounts for 38% of the total for the OECD area (embracing all the major industrial countries of the West). It is still true that when America sneezes the rest of the world catches cold. Yet low rates of investment and productivity growth in the postwar period have steadily undermined the competitive strength of American capital. That weakness was dramatically exposed in the course of the 1977-78 recovery.

In those years the economy grew at rates of over 4%. But with profit-rates at an all-time low investment responded slowly, and the expansion was largely fueled by state spending, especially on defence. Inflation

climbed into double figures. Imports especially from Japan, poured in, the dollar's value against other foreign currencies began to fall.

For a while the Carter government tried to ignore this fall. It had the advantage of lowering the value of the vast mass of dollar claims held outside the US and making imports more expensive. But the foreign holders of dollars began to take fright and in 1978 the fall accelerated. A wholesale switch out of dollars into other currencies would (and still could) have thrown the entire international system into chaos. By 1979 the Carter regime was in full retreat.

As in Britain public spending was cut, a monetary squeeze was imposed, and interest rates rose to record levels. By the second quarter of 1980 output was falling at the rate of 9.5% a year. Too late for the election Carter launched a recovery programme which stopped the rot. But the auto industry still lost \$3.6 bn in the first nine months of 1980, as sales fell by 19% and the share of imports rose from 22% to 27%. Chrysler is barely alive, thanks to another £400m worth of state-guaranteed loans. Even Ford is looking precarious with its \$28 bn investment programme under threat. In Detroit unemployment is over 17%.

The recovery heralded in the autumn could well prove short-lived. Inflation is still at 12.5% and interest rates hit a new peak of 20% in December. Real wages have fallen by 10% since 1978 (*Business Week* 19/1/81) further cutting demand. Despite grim warnings about Thatcherisation, the Reagan regime looks set to cut taxes and slash public spending (on welfare and services, of course, not defence). The tax cuts are unlikely to stimulate investment in such a climate, while the other fall in public spending will just add to the slump.

Abroad the effect of the US recession has been twofold. Firstly, it has cut the volume of imports into the US substantially, with repercussions throughout the system. Secondly, high interest-rates in the US have tended to force up rates everywhere else (even Germany has had to raise its rates to prevent an outflow of funds from the mark to the dollar). That in turn adds to the debt-burden of all those firms and countries borrowing money. The effect is to intensify the strains caused by the rise in oil-prices, the second factor precipitating the slump.

Oil

The price of oil rose by 150% in the 18 months to mid-1980. That needs to be put into perspective. It compares with a 400% rise in 1973-4, after which the real price of oil dropped by 10% up 1979. With demand for oil falling because of the slump OPEC's declared intention of limiting further rises to the world rate of inflation is likely to be fulfilled.

Inside the system

Other countries, like Russia for example, they have a vicious system of censorship in press and broadcasting. Here things are much better: we have freedom of the BBC. This independent body may do what it likes without fear of attack. Recently, the staid and respectable *Panorama* current affairs team made a film about the British secret service. Fair enough, they have done a lot of hatchet jobs on the KGB. The programme was backed up by Dick Francis, the editor of news and current affairs (and a former head of BBC news in Northern Ireland).

But the director-general Ian Trethowan (former unsuccessful Tory Parliamentary candidate) thought otherwise and scrapped the film.

Then the BBC arts programme *Omnibus* decided to put out a programme on freedom of expression. This included a brief section on the disputed *Panorama* programme. Enter BBC head of publicity Michael Bunce and head of arts Humphrey Burton. They insisted on the removal of this item. The fearless and independent BBC would make no comment.

led. Moreover in itself such a rise need only mean a once and for all transfer of some 1% of the world's real resources to the oil-producers. If the effects appear to have been calamitous a deeper explanation is required.

One problem has been the response of governments in the major 'deficit' countries of Europe. Even more than in 1974 they've all reacted with deflationary measures, effectively pushing their already weak economies into recession. The objective, universally proclaimed and endorsed by such august bodies as the IMF, has supposedly been to keep down inflation. What that really means is ensuring that the burden of adjustment, the shift of resources to OPEC, is borne by the working-class. Wages must fall, it is argued, because profits are too precarious and are needed to sustain investment.

In France the 'austerity' programme of the Barre government has since 1978 involved lifting price controls, holding back wages, and cutting public spending all in the name of fighting inflation which still ran at 12.3% in 1980. Yet levels of private investment have failed to rise and unemployment is now over 7%.

The other major problem has been what to do with the OPEC surpluses—the 'recycling' question. After 1974 it was resolved partly by a huge increase in imports by the OPEC countries, partly by oil funds being lent via the international banks—largely to the faster-growing countries in the third world. This time round things are more difficult. The total surplus estimated at \$115 bn for 1980 is much larger. The capacity of several OPEC countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to import more is limited. Above all the whole process of international lending has become much more precarious.

Twelve developing countries alone borrowed the bulk of the \$400bn outstanding debt. It was their exceptional growth which, along with that of the US, sustained the recovery of the world economy after 1975. But in 1980 interest payments alone amounted to 16% of export earnings. Brazil with the largest debt of \$57bn is now having to

use 60% of its export earnings to pay its oil bill. If the banks go on lending the problem will only get worse and a major default will become inevitable. If they refuse to lend, the countries concerned will be forced to cut their imports and thus their rates of growth in brutal fashion. Turkey's recent coup indicates what that means. Meanwhile the OPEC cash surplus will pile up in the banks, the failure to spend it prolonging the slump.

The deep roots of stagflation

One variant or another of 'monetarism' or 'austerity policy' has been adopted by every major Western government, precipitating a slump that has tended to far exceed what was expected. Yet such policies are not simply irrational, as suggested for example in the latest *Review* of the Cambridge Economic Policy Group. Their belief is that coordination between governments, with a system of protection favouring the weaker or less developed countries, could both handle the OPEC surpluses and permit a return to Keynesian policies of sustained expansion.

In one respect they are right. There is an alternative: a single world socialist 'state' would end the crisis. It would be able to coordinate the run-down of some industries and the expansion of others, the transfer of resources to the third world, and the use of new technology to transform and reduce the burden of backbreaking and mind-destroying work. It could only do that, however, over the dead carcass of capitalism—with an end to competition for profit as the mainspring of the system. In the meantime the Cambridge group are left formulating their blueprints in a spirit of growing pessimism, not understanding the deep roots of the crisis.

On the one hand they overestimate the ability of states to control their own internal economies. A steady decline in profitability since the 1960s has lowered rates of private investment, and lies at the heart of the crisis. In such a context the American example of 1977-78 illustrates what happens when state

spending is used to fuel expansion. Inflation tends to accelerate, imports flood in and investment in key industries fails to rise. Hence stagflation. What investment does occur is oriented towards cutting costs and labour rather than expanding capacity (even in Germany the proportion of investment devoted to expansion fell from 55% in 1970 to 17% in 1978, *Economist* 8.11.80).

On the other hand the Cambridge group underestimate the intensification of competition on a world scale. The fall of the dollar since 1977 has symbolised the inability of the US to lead the world out of recession on its own or handle the threat from its rivals in Germany and Japan. As yet there has been no resort to the wholesale protectionism which caused world trade to fall by over half in the 1930s. But the signs are there with the chorus of complaints about Japan, with the steel war between the US and the EEC, and with a host of 'informal' restrictions in most countries.

Resolving the crisis requires at a minimum a massive restructuring, political as well as economic, of the whole system. It requires that the over-capacity in ageing industries be purged and the weak and inefficient be driven to the wall. Not least it requires forcing down wages and letting unemployment rise. That is the logic of monetarism—the crisis must get worse before things can get better.

Yet no state wants its country to bear too big a share of that burden. Each seeks to shift the losses onto others by cutting imports and boosting exports. Most, especially but not solely in weaker economies, are propping up their key capital-goods industries such as steel and ship-building and helping out ailing multinationals such as Chrysler and Massey Ferguson. In the long run such actions are simply prolonging the agony. Yet the alternative is a slump so deep that it would threaten the political stability, and in a case like Britain's, the viability as an economic entity of the country concerned. No way out of that contradiction is in sight.

Pete Green



A dying industrial town—an increasingly familiar site

Bound for the golden medina

The introduction of the Nationality Bill has focused attention on the question of immigration controls. In this article, Lin James looks at the campaign of racist agitation that produced the first controls on immigration—those directed against Jewish immigrants at the beginning of this century.

After Jack the Ripper had claimed his third victim in September 1888, the East London Observer noted:

'The crowds who assembled in the streets began to assume a very threatening attitude towards the Hebrew population of the district. It was repeatedly asserted that no Englishman could have perpetrated such a horrible crime ... it must have been done by a JEW—and forthwith the crowd began to threaten and abuse such of the unfortunate Hebrews as they found on the streets.'

In the years of political crisis and economic depression at the turn of the century the Jews provided the perfect scapegoat for everything from the Ripper murders to unemployment to war. Anti-semitic pogroms intensified in Russia after the assassination of Tsar Alexander in 1881. Refugees from persecution fanned out across Europe, greeted everywhere by laws opposing their entry and by (relatively) more restrained forms of anti-semitism like the Dreyfus affair in France. Many gravitated towards Britain which had abolished all forms of legal discrimination against Jews in the 1850s: which had a reputation as a refuge from tyranny; and which was a convenient half-way house to the real golden medina, America.

Their arrival was greeted with consternation by the established Jewish community. The newcomers were unmistakably foreign as well as unmistakably Jewish; they were a challenge to toleration. Jewish Tory MPs Harry Simon Samuel and Harry Marks, who represented Limehouse and St Georges, were among the most fervent and the earliest anti-alienists.

Anti-alien feelings united all sectors of society. Ben Tillet, the dockers' leader, spoke on the same platforms as Tory MPs to rant about white slavery and the 'sweating master' Jews. Society writer Saki expressed the fears of the Upper Crust that 'they' might be buying their way into the highest circles. The would-be Marxists of the Social Democratic Federation explained that through the force of historical circumstance the Jews had come 'to be the living incarnation of the sweating system' (of home and small workshop petty production) and were thus forced to reproduce 'a race of degenerate human beings'.

There were no reliable statistics on immigration, so journalists playing the numbers game in the gutter could let their imaginations run riot. The depression of the late

1880s was 'explained' by a rising chorus of complaints against the 'tidal waves' of pauper aliens. Journalists created a heady brew of race, sex and industrial politics by focusing on the alleged connections between Jewish immigrants, home workshops and the white slave trade. 'Hideous Foreign Vampires' were said to be preying on English women in the streets, while Jewish prostitutes surprised their decent English customers with nameless depravities imported from the continent. But these myths were taken over and given weight by 'objective' social scientists like Charles Booth, who wrote 'some foreign Jews may add nihilism and the bitterest kinds of socialistic theories to their very filthy foreign habits'.

The Russian pogroms certainly provoked a tidal wave of gutter journalism in this country; and this, combined with mounting fears about unemployment, contributed to the TUC call for a halt to immigration in 1892. As new technology and work practices created new industries and threw craftsmen out of work, blame was focused on the newcomers. A government commission was set up to investigate the problem, but neither of the main parties was prepared at this point to commit themselves to legislation. It was doubtful whether there were many votes in it outside the areas directly affected by

**'Yes you are our brothers,
and we will do our duty
by you. But we wish you had
not come.'**

Ben Tillet

immigration. And even if the Jews were foreign, did eat nasty foreign things like fried fish in addition to other nasty foreign habits, they were undoubtedly here as refugees from the most barbaric—and foreign!—forms of persecution: and Britain did still have some sort of reputation to preserve. The consensus, especially after the resumption of full employment in the 1890s, was to echo the words of dockers' leader Ben Tillet: 'Yes, you are our brothers, and we will do our duty by you. But we wish you had not come.'

The consensus was a fragile one, easily shattered when the end of the South African war brought a return to high unemployment. Popular reporting of the war itself encouraged anti-semitism. John Ward of the Navvies Union expressed the view fed to millions when he said that 'practically £1 million of the taxpayers' money has been spent in trying to secure the goldfields for cosmopolitan Jews'. The actual level of immigration, if anything, seems to have

been waning, but this was irrelevant to the anti-alienists. The old chorus was taken up; increasingly, the arguments reflected loss of confidence in Britain's capacity to expand her economy indefinitely, and to carry on ruling the waves. No longer the workshop of the world. British industry was being undermined by cheap imports and her own workers thrown out of employment, at just the same time as she proved unable to inflict a convincing defeat on a bunch of South African farmers who fought dirty.

In this climate there was little opposition to the Aliens Act passed by the Tories in 1905, which gave immigration officials the power to class as an undesirable alien—and hence refuse admission to—anyone who could not prove their ability to secure a job or who was infirm. As a retrospective measure, the Home Secretary was able to expel any foreigner suffering from poverty, living in insanitary conditions or found guilty of any crime. The Act was condemned as hypocritical by the TUC president James Sexton and opposed by Labour MPs as a step towards ending free trade! But for real opposition to the wave of racism which culminated in the Act of 1905, we have to look elsewhere, to some of the working class struggles of the periods.

Two strikes sum up in microcosm the possibilities and the failures of the movement of the unskilled and sweated workers which coincided with the influx of Jewish workers. The opportunities for solidarity work among the very poor were limited, but Jewish families took in the children of dockers whose fathers were on strike in 1889—and more importantly, they followed the strikers' example. In Leeds Jewish tailors struck against their Jewish employers in the small back street workshops: the employers promptly spread the story that they were striking against the employment of Christian women. The Socialist League (formed from a split in the SDF mentioned above) was able to report in its paper *Commonweal* that joint meetings of Jewish tailors and the women had been organised which had exposed the employers' lies: the women had come out in support of their fellow workers. In Liverpool, English tailoresses went on strike after a Jewish tailors strike 'to show that what foreign Jews could do, English women could do better'. The Social Democratic Federation, intervened in the strike but did little to counteract the anti-alien feeling among the women—no joint meetings were organised, and certainly no solidarity action. When the Royal Commission on Labour invited views on legislative reforms a few years later, the Liverpool women were among the very few trade unionists who called for a halt to immigration.

The arguments used against the Jewish refugees were almost identical to those used today, by racists and reformists alike. The experience of socialists then shows us that there were real possibilities for those who combined practical action with political argument—and that to separate them out could have fatal consequences. Let's not repeat old mistakes!

The Vitry affair:

Parti Communiste racialisiste

The ransacking of a hostel by a 'commando group' led by the CP mayor of Vitry to stop 300 immigrant workers moving in has had very wide coverage in the media. However it hasn't created a comparable interest among the French population at large and in particular among the working class. In fact, workers are in general relatively indifferent to questions concerning immigrant workers even if they don't all have a racist attitude. In workplaces where militants of the revolutionary left have tried to raise the Vitry Affair the majority of workers have tended to feel that the mayor was right in what he did. Among immigrants the affair has tended to produce demoralisation rather than anger: 'What can you say, it's their country' is a common reaction, or: 'If we have to leave, we'll leave. People are talking about us too much, that's bad for us.'

So it has been with the more politicised layers of the left and the far left that the Vitry events have caused indignation, although the indignation of the Socialist Party and the CFDT (the union close to the SP) are very hypocritical as these organisations also call for immigration controls and only object to the *methods* the CP used. A certain number of CP militants are uneasy and some disapprove of the methods used. For example, the leaflet calling for a demonstration in support of the mayor of Vitry wasn't handed out in a number of workplaces. CP militants often prefer to avoid discussing the affair. However the right wing campaign against the CP and the declarations by members of the government like Stoleru—the minister responsible for the anti immigration laws—have certainly helped the CP to close ranks. Militants who may be hesitating support the party or prefer to keep silent when faced with attacks from the right.

What lies behind the attitude of the

French CP in throwing its full support behind the mayor at Vitry?

The CP councils come up against a number of different problems in their role of administrators of many local councils in working class areas. Immigrants make up the most disadvantaged section of the working class, the ones who are the most affected by unemployment and who as a result have the most difficulty in paying the rent. They also pay the least in rates and consume least in the local shops. Since they don't have the vote they are not a very attractive proposition as far as the local councils are concerned.

The attitude of the CP is thus only a logical consequence of its policy of running the capitalist system.

Immigration controls have been a part of the CP's politics for many years (in contrast with the CP of the 1920's which stood for the free movement of workers). What is new, however, is the emphasis which it is putting on the question in the run-up to the presidential elections next April. Only a year ago it denounced the anti-immigration laws introduced by Stoleru, whereas it now criticises Stoleru and the government for not properly stopping immigration.

How far will the CP go along this road? For the moment, in the workplaces, neither the CP nor the CP controlled CGT union, have put forward the slogan: 'French workers first'. But with their present line it is to be feared that this may come.

The Vitry affair and the CPF press

The Vitry affair is far from being an isolated incident carried out by some sort of maverick figure, but is the local follow up of a political line held by the CP for many years. A look at the local and national CP press

coverage of the affair is extremely instructive.

In the first few days after the incident the mayor made a pitiful attempt to deny responsibility for the damage and to pass it off as a spontaneous demonstration of outraged citizens. In fact the 'commando group' was apparently made up of local CP council workers who just happen to spontaneously bring along with them a bulldozer to smash up the entrance

Since then, however, the CP has thrown the whole weight of its machine in support of what happened. *Humanité*, the CP daily, proudly records the mayor's words to the immigrants just before the place was smashed up: 'You have no right to take young French workers' accommodation. You must return to Saint Maur to be rehoused.'

Not content with this, on 9th January *Humanité* produced a disgusting special edition handed out free with the headline 'No to immigrant ghettos' and on the front page alongside another heading 'A frank look at the problems posed by immigration', a large photo of a dole queue with the single caption: 'In France there are almost two million unemployed, French and immigrants.' And if that was not clear enough, on page three amid a series of arguments attacking racism and the responsibility of imperialism we find the scandalous headline: 'Immigration must be stopped so as not to worsen unemployment.' There follows a paragraph on the danger of more workers being thrown on the dole if immigration is not stopped.

The hypocrisy of the right wing newspapers is clear when they splash headlines across the front page over Vitry yet hardly find an inch of space for the hundreds of evictions and beatings up of immigrants by the police. However, for those who would believe that the whole affair is nothing but a fabrication by the right wing press the attitude of the Communist Parties of Guadeloupe and Martinique is more than interesting.

In the 27 November issue of their weekly paper the Martinique CP reproduce a letter to a woman who was refused accommodation from the CP council of Natterre, a suburb of Paris. The council say they limit the amount of accommodation given to people from overseas territories because 'The concentration of these people in our blocks of flats creates a certain number of problems. On the one hand with regard to the Housing Department, frequent damage and serious overcrowding of the flats. On the other hand with regard to other tenants because of their way of life: frequent gatherings late at night, noise from people talking and loud music (sic)'. The French CP thus drags out all the old prejudices in an attempt to curry favour with the electors.

The Guadeloupe PC in an article entitled 'Against French Chauvinism', also vigorously attacked the French CP for blaming immigrants for problems in housing and education

John Bennett
Paris



The hostel that was wrecked—and an anti-immigrant headline in *Humanité*.

Daydreaming about 'our' Britain

Control Imports Now!

TGWU Research booklet (based on a Special Discussion Conference of the Transport and General Workers Union, April 1980), TGWU, London, August 1980, 52 pp., 50p.

Textiles and Clothing, the fight for survival.

Transport and General Workers' Union, London, June 1980, 16 pp.

Import Controls Now!

A policy statement by TASS, the union which fights for British engineering, TASS, London, n.d., m 50p.

'A "restoration of industry", of which the utopians of capitalism dream, is impossible. The only escape is for the lower links of the system, the basic productive power of capitalist society, the working class, to take a dominating position in the organisation of social labour. In other words: only the building of communism is the precondition for a rebirth of society.'

(N. Bukharin, *Economics of the Transformation Period*, Moscow, 1920)

The trade union campaign for the introduction of import controls has produced three pamphlets to outline the case. All three are well produced and well documented. They will no doubt supply the ammunition for arguments throughout the labour movement — or at least, at those rare points where there is argument on such questions. For generally, the case for import controls wins by default. The gale of unemployment seems so fierce, people clutch at any straw if it seems to offer hope.

It would be useful to outline the arguments presented in the three pamphlets. But on the main issue, there is none. The main TGWU contribution does not seek to prove that the cause of decline of some British manufacturing is increased imports. It assumes it, and offers by way of illustration impressive sets of figures on industrial decline and increasing imports. But where is the causal connection?

The argument about import controls is not settled by gut reactions. It is in part a question of science. We need a fuller picture of British capitalism if we are to discover what is wrong. We need, at least, to see whether there are industries which have not declined despite increasing imports, and industries which have declined but without any increase in imports. After all, there are still some seven million people in Britain employed in manufacturing, and British capitalism is still among the top half dozen exporting countries of the world (out of over 150 countries). Indeed, 1980 saw a startling surplus on the balance of trade, caused largely by declining imports! The TGWU case

makes it sound as though there is scarcely any manufacturing left, and Britain is down with Tanzania or Bolivia in the world capitalist pecking order.

All three pamphlets present a cast of curious characters — 'our export performance', 'our industry', 'our rate of growth', 'our main competitors', 'our balance of payments', etc. Perhaps some of the readers will wonder who this 'our' refers to. The case is not argued in any of the pamphlets, but it seems to suggest that British capitalism belongs to the British people, not to British capital. Indeed, the employers are somehow marginal to it all.

The TGWU goes further, arguing that it has a better perception of the interests of British capitalism than the capitalists themselves. It quotes with approval the appeal of the TGWU general secretary, Moss Evans, to the employers, the CBI:

'The CBI ought to end its silence and represent the interests of its members properly...If they do not respond, and if it becomes necessary for an initiative to come from the unions, for us to forge direct links with employers' associations against the government, then we will do it.'

Both of the main pamphlets admit something other than imports may be wrong with manufacturing. But in tackling this other factor, they are gravely jeopardising the possibility of the alliance with the CBI. The TGWU speaks of the need to expand the economy and 'to adopt tough socialist economic policies aimed at planning the massive companies who control our industry and trading activities, and the financial overlords whose grip on the economy remains as supreme as ever'. Fighting talk, but the point disappears after one mention; there is no elaboration in the headlong rush to indict the rotten foreigners and their rotten exports to Britain.

TASS is much more sophisticated. It half recognises that import controls on their own mean nothing except propping up the profits of the most backward sectors of British capitalism. It admits investment has been inadequate and that import controls if anything but temporary, would dangerously protect the inefficient. So import controls are only a temporary respite for manufacturing while the government vastly expands the public sector to expand the economy to full employment, bullies and bribes businessmen to increase investment, and clips the wings of the multinationals. Expansion, TASS agrees, would entail an increase in imports (the TGWU must blanch at this admission), and this would make it possible to protect third world exporters to Britain and not to hit other exporters to Britain too hard,

so warding off the possibility that they would retaliate by closing their markets to British exports.

On the face of it, it seems a plausible case: the restoration of British capitalism without a revolution. Doubt begins with bits of the case which are clearly specious. For example, the expansion of the public sector is possible without increasing taxation because expansion would 'pay for itself' — that is, the revenue the state would employ to expand would come as the result of expansion! Or again, the United States and the rest would not retaliate against British import controls because 'they' (i.e. the rest of the world) export more to Britain than Britain exports to them; but since Britain's share in, for example, US total imports is small, the US could retaliate with impunity, if for no other reason than to warn all the others not to copy Britain (in 1980 there were some important examples of actual or threatened retaliations — with Indonesia, Australia and the US). Or again, prices would not rise with import controls — TASS quotes the Cambridge Economic Policy Group in support — because industry would expand, there would be increasing returns to scale and costs would fall; this is as charming a bit of nonsense as you might find, for prices are not governed by costs but by competition, and if you exclude foreign competition (imports) then you give British capitalists the advantage of a local monopoly and of monopoly prices.

These oddities apart, it is most strange that neither pamphlet discusses the burning issue of the hour — world-wide slump. It is thus possible to discuss British problems as if they were fairly unique, and to suggest that this bit of a world system could expand in isolation, independently of the rest.

Lessons from the past

There are fairly few examples of the independent expansion of a national bit in a slump; three come to mind — in the 1930s, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and currently a handful of backward countries. They are awkward examples. The Soviet Union expanded on the basis of a relatively backward economy with fully nationalised means of production — an example to alarm poor Moss Evans. Germany did it by robbing Eastern Europe and subordinating all to the drive to war. TASS wants to cut defence spending. And the contemporary 'Newly Industrialising Countries' have done it so far with a relatively very small industrial base and very low wages — again not a set of ideas the trade union leaders can be seen to embrace publicly.

However, the lack of a concrete example of independent capitalist expansion in the midst of world slump does not invalidate the case. But it highlights another important evasion: capitalism itself. Everyone knows capitalism responds to different profit rates. At the moment, as the TGWU rushes to offer support to capital, large lumps of it are fleeing the country. This is not



South Korean textile workers: enemies or sisters?

merely the mysterious evil, multinational capital; it includes thousands of little British capitalists, moving finance into US or Japanese bonds. It is not because the British food or climate is poor, nor because British workers are stropy – would that they were – nor because they are paid too much (British wages are now the lowest per hour of any advanced industrial country), nor because capital is irrational. The TGWU – like the National Front – is fond of presenting the British as kindly dodos, and foreigners as sharp crooks.

It is because the profit rate is – and in the past has been – lower than many other places in the world. A cumulative failure to invest is the result so lowering the capital per worker, lowering productivity and creating poorly produced goods at relatively higher prices. The whole problem is now made extreme by world slump, much fiercer resulting competition, and an oil-buoyant pound sterling.

So anyone concerned to restore British capitalism must direct their attention not to imports which are merely the result of this process, but to the causes of low profit rates. Indeed, people who identify imports as the problem are not merely looking at the *consequences* rather than the causes, they are positively diverting attention from the real causes and thereby *protecting* the position of capital.

And if we look to the question of how profit rates are to be increased – so that investment increases, so that productivity here can be used to smash foreign manufacturing with cheap British goods – an unprejudiced observer cannot fail to be impressed with the efforts of Mrs Thatcher! Here she is, slashing the labour force, cutting public expenditure, keeping the pound high to hammer British capitalists into efficiency, all so that in the end capital will stay put here or be attracted in by higher relative profits. Of course, you might rightly doubt whether her gamble will in the end succeed, but for capital it is certainly the best option currently on offer.

By comparison, the import controllers appear as utopian daydreamers. For there is no 'British' capital, no 'British' manufacturing. There is capital, some of which has a relationship with this island which entails that, if profits are tolerable, it will stay. Manufacturing is an international creature, linking production in many different countries – so-called 'British' exports are merely the processed results of 'British' imports, themselves partly the result of earlier 'British' exports, and so on.

Again, this is not just the internal transactions of multinationals, 'selling Britain short'. Every little Birmingham widget maker depends on imports to manufacture, and sends widgets to Germany or elsewhere for further manufacture. That is why, as imports rise, so do exports – they are both merely part of a continuous production line spanning countries. In modern advanced capitalism, only reactionaries dream of tearing one part of a continuous line out of the process and proclaiming it 'Britain'. They hold only the bleeding limb of a body that remains 'abroad'.

This is why the main source of increasing imports is not the foolish addiction of British consumers to foreign-made goods, but British manufacturers searching to lower their costs by finding the cheapest inputs. The TGWU want workers to inspect all factory inputs to start a witch-hunt against foreign goods (themselves involving British exports at an earlier stage!)

'The TGWU must take the initiative, through the collective bargaining machinery, and look at raw materials, equipment, components. The employer must be made to sit down and talk about finding substitutes for imports.'

But this is daydreaming. It is the price and quality of the input which is decisive, not the last country of origin. British Steel Corporation wants to cut its losses – by using Australian coal which is far cheaper than British.

British Leyland wants to cut car prices and must do so to survive, so it needs to import 'foreign' steel. Meanwhile, the National Coal Board invests in South Australian coal mines. Rhetoric – even an earnest shop steward with a glint in the eyes – is not going to prevent capital trying to prevent its bankruptcy.

Reformist Nationalism

All three pamphlets thus dodge the central issue. Import controls, on most reasonable grounds, will *increase* unemployment and cut real wages. The 'alternative economic case' escapes the problem by conjuring up 'economic expansion' in the midst of world slump. But if capitalism can be manipulated into boom by the activity of socialists, why the socialists are so powerful they might as well abolish it.

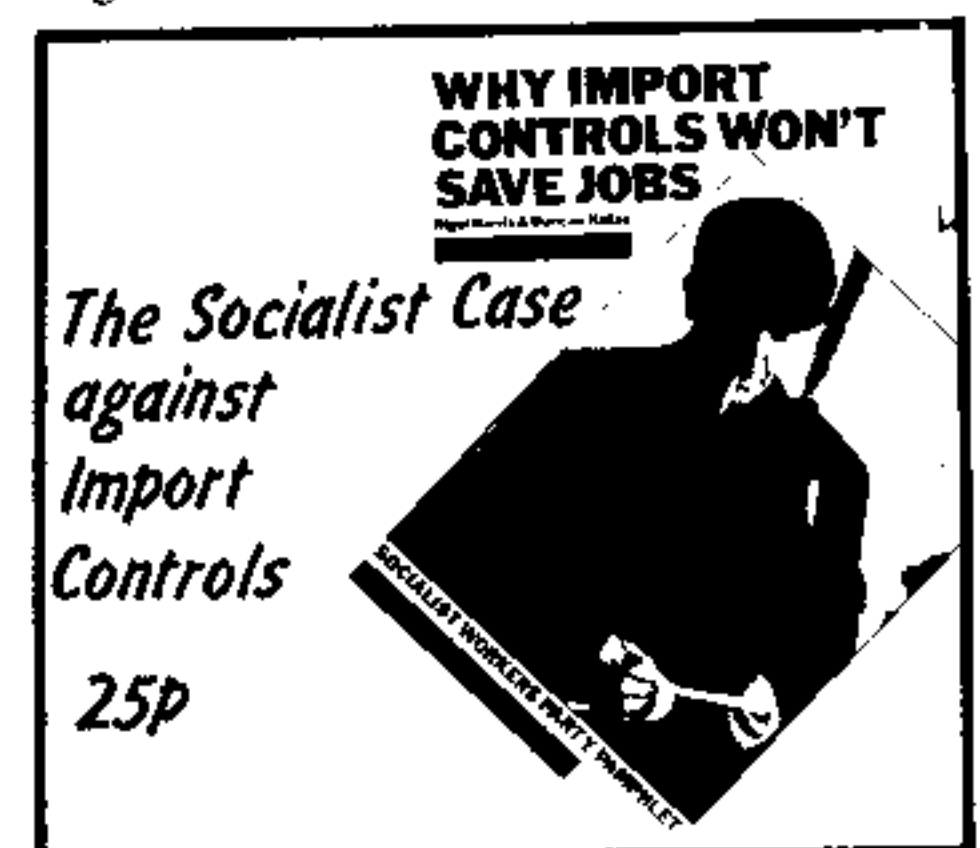
If the perspective is so unrealistic, surely it doesn't matter? It matters not because the economic strategy can work

it cannot – but because it increases loyalty to the existing ruling class; it encourages chauvinism and class collaboration. Mrs Thatcher needs British nationalism as the sedative to keep workers quiet so that capital can be as international as it likes. She needs nationalism, but not the catastrophe of full blooded import controls. The trade union response ought to be, not a retreat into the British slit-trench, mouthing the reactionary slogans of the last decaying segments of the most backward British capital; but pursuing capital wherever it goes, building an international workers challenge from which it cannot escape.

That is part of revolutionary politics, not reformist nationalism. If that were the position, Moss Evans would have to stop muttering darkly about 'greater social control' – using socialist rhetoric as a threat to improve a weak bargaining position – and start talking boldly about the expropriation of capital. But then that would upturn the applecart, make impossible the tact and politeness required for an *alliance* with capital.

Neither Moss Evans nor Ken Gill (who introduces the TASS pamphlet) want a revolution. They want only stable and prosperous trade unions within a stable and prosperous capitalism. They want things to stay as they are and workers to be content – or, as Moss Evans puts it, 'social harmony'. Socialists however ought never to want things to stay as they are.

Nigel Harris



The lamb primed for sacrifice

Storytellers have always been very special and important. No matter whether their stories are spoken or written, they capture the histories, the humour and even the fantasies of ordinary people who love their storytellers in return.

What then of a storyteller who breathed the very air of the Russian revolution; who was a personal friend and a political opponent of Lenin, and who was as popular in Russia at the turn of the century as a Hollywood star is today?

This was Alexei Maximovich Peshkov, who because of his own suffering and because of the world about him wrote under the name of Gorky meaning *The Bitter One*.

Maxim Gorky said that his pain at the world began as he witnessed the death of his father when he was four, and despite later fame and even relative prosperity at times, he never really lost an air of tragedy gained so young.

When Maxim was eleven his mother died and his grandfather threw him out to fend for himself. He began fourteen years of travels throughout Tsarist Russia.

He did two major things during these years: he taught himself to write and also found the material for his stories in his encounters. There were vagabonds, convicts and even destitute gentry with whom he tramped. There were sullen and cruel peasants and dangerous but exciting tribesmen, from whom he fled. There were people who were generous, like the girl prostitute; or those Volga rivermen who taught him a pleasure in an exhausting bout of work. Finally, there were the scum of police spies, and rogues like the town merchants who disgusted him with a guzzling party that ended in a sex orgy with prostitutes. And there were people of mystery who inspired him young revolutionists.

In 1892 his first short story appeared in a local newspaper. Six years later his book *Stories and Sketches* sold a unique 100,000 copies on publication. Maxim Gorky was a national craze. His picture appeared everywhere; on adverts, postcards and cigarette boxes. He appealed to all classes but especially to workers and peasants who could read.

What was Maxim Gorky writing about that created such popularity? What was in his writings that led to his arrest and exile?

We can find answers in one of Gorky's best short stories. It is an adaptation of one of his grandmother's folktales though it relates to the real people he met on the road. The tale also reveals Maxim Gorky's political strengths and weaknesses together with the source of his later fights with Lenin.

Gorky describes a brave and cheerful

tribe, forced by other warring tribes deep into a dark and swampy forest. The people became desperate and were on the verge of giving themselves up to their enemies as slaves when Danko appeared.

He told them:

'Stones are not to be removed by thinking. He who does naught will come to naught. Why should we exhaust our energies thinking and brooding? Arise, and let us go through the forest until we come out at the other end; after all, it must have an end everything has an end. Come let us go forth!'

But the path was very hard. The people began to murmur against Danko. During a great storm they turned on him; said that he was evil and that he must die. Danko looked on the people and saw no humanity in their eyes and knew he could expect no mercy. Yet he was still filled with a yearning to lead the tribe to safety.

'Suddenly he ripped open his breast and tore out his heart and held it high above his head. It shone like the sun, even brighter than the sun, and the raging forest was subdued and lighted by this torch, the torch of a great love for the people.'

By the light of his burning heart, Danko led the tribe through the forest to sunlight. The tribe was so full of joy that they did not notice Danko's death.

This weird and beautiful tale sums up much of Gorky's philosophy. In it we can find his contempt for those who submit to suffering together with his burning desire that people may cooperate together for the achievement of liberty. Gorky felt the need to stress that a path to freedom was difficult and dangerous, and he feared that the people would not match up to the demands of the struggle. He saw them simply slipping back into their traditional cruelty. And in the midst of all this was the glowing example of the self-sacrificing leader of great integrity... a figure of pure romance.

There's a legend about Lenin's first meeting with Gorky. In 1907, Lenin is said to have visited Gorky in his hotel room during the London conference of the Social-Democratic Labour Party. Barely stopping to shake hands, Lenin is supposed to have rushed over to Gorky's bed and to have thrust his hand into the bedclothes. 'In London', he said, 'the climate is raw and we must see to it that the bedding isn't damp. And we must be particularly careful in your case since you have just written *Mother*, a thing



useful for the Russian working man which summons him to battle against the Tsar.'

Gorky was said to have been offended that he was being considered as an instrument of the revolution, and the character of their relationship was set.

There is little evidence that Lenin liked much of Gorky's writings. He was, however, enormously impressed by Gorky's reputation, and he respected the writer's appeal to ordinary workers and peasants. Even when asking him to write for Bolshevik papers, he urged him not to interfere with anything 'big' he might be doing.

For Gorky, it was the strength of Lenin's personality that mattered. Gorky never joined the Bolsheviks, or any other party. He appears to have related to politicians more through their characters than through their politics.

Gorky's political standpoint meant that he could not write a political novel of any quality. In fact, it is significant that all his novels are nowhere near as good as his short stories — the greater demands of the novel requiring a clear world-view which Gorky lacked.

Mother, the famous 'proletarian' novel, is full of empty stereotypes. The theme of the book — workers' struggle and political organisation — was alien to Gorky. The book's hero, Pavel, suffers



arrest after attempting to lead a strike over the unlikely issue of workers being made to pay for the draining of a swamp! Needless to say, the workers are not particularly grateful for the sacrifices Pavel makes, while his mother is an unbelievable saint-like creature who accepts as inevitable her son's sufferings.

The book was written in New York in 1906, after Gorky fled Russia following the defeat of the revolution. Looking back, in 1927, on the writing of the book, Gorky mirrored Lenin's view that he was in a state of despair at the time: 'Mother is really a bad book, written under the spell of bad temper and irritation after the events of 1906.'

In 1907, Gorky wrote a much better political novel, *The Life of a Useless Man*. This was, significantly, a story of personal and political defeat. The book was also semi-autobiographical, which gave it a much more solid basis than *Mother*. Instead of trying to escape his despair, Gorky allowed himself to express it. At home with the theme and material, Gorky drew some fine scenes and characters; he also revealed with wonderful clarity the motives and actions of the characters of the story.

Maxim Gorky bitterly opposed the Bolshevik October Revolution in 1917. He wrote in *New Life*, the paper he

edited, 'Rumours are spreading that on October 20 a "Bolshevik attack" will begin...All the dark instincts of the mob will be roused to a fury by the deadly destructive lies and filth of politics...(and in a later article) Lenin and Trotsky and those who follow them are already poisoned by the corrupting poison of power...(and again later)... We must recognise that Lenin is not an omnipotent magician, but a cold-blooded trickster, who spares neither the honour nor lives of the proletariat.'

The romantic who feared the cruelty of the mob could not face the character of a revolution.

In 1922, Maxim Gorky left Russia for eventual exile in Italy. He finally returned to Russia in 1928, after Stalin renamed Gorky's home town after him. To his horror he found himself working for the glory of Stalin. Pathetically, he even had to 'forget' the date of his first meeting with Lenin as part of a Stalinist

re-writing of history. But he never wrote the eulogy that Stalin wanted, and it was probably for this that he died on June 19, 1936. By the end of the year, all who attended his funeral were also dead.

The regime searched his home after his death and found papers critical of Stalin. This prompted the head of the secret police to say of him, 'no matter how well you feed the wolf, he still dreams of the woods'.

And it would be nice to leave it there; to remember Gorky by this comment and also through his wonderful stories as a great writer.

But Gorky was also involved in politics. Many things might have been very different if this involvement had truly been as a wolf and not as it was in reality — the lamb primed for sacrifice like the hero of his favourite story.

Steve Faith

LETTERS

Too pessimistic

Congratulations to Ian Birchall for the quality of his articles on France in recent issues of 'Socialist Review'. He is right (*S.R. 1980:11*) to emphasise the weakness of the French reformist and revolutionary left, and the 'shift to the right' in French politics.

Birchall's well-informed article argues from such evidence that the left has few prospects, and has lost the initiative, thereby creating the possibility of an (undefined) 'Italian-type' situation. This may be true, but I believe his pessimism is dangerous, and—perhaps—exaggerated.

France is unique among bourgeois democracies in having had right-wing governments continuously since 1958. The breakdown of the Union of the Left in 1978, and the subsequent bickering between the CP and Socialists, indeed make probable another seven-year mandate for Giscard. Despite this disarray, recent polls suggest that the election will be a lot closer than predicted. France remains divided almost 50:50 in electoral terms (Giscard won the last election by less than 1 per cent of the popular vote).

In addition, the mutual hostility of the party leaderships is not shared by the electorate. In a recent mini-election—seven parliamentary by-elections held on the same day—not only did Giscard's party lose no less than three seats, but Communist voters gave massive support to Socialists in the second round. In one case electors—and even one CP branch—ignored a CP call for abstention, and actually voted in increased numbers to elect a Left Radical (a sort of Liberal).

Thus, despite its best efforts, the left could yet defeat Giscard. A Mitterand presidency, while not to be welcomed in itself as a victory for French workers, would open up a new and challenging period for the left.

As for the unions, Birchall's analysis is again one-sided. In-fighting between the CP-controlled CGT and the Socialist-

leaning CFTD is unfortunately not new. Such sectarianism breeds pessimism and resignation, and the forces working for rank-and-file unity in struggle are weak—but isn't it on such a militant minority that the SWP in Britain bases its 'rank-and-file' strategy?

Union membership, as Birchall says, is lower than in Britain, and declining. But this may be misleading. First, because most union members belong to the politicised minority—class consciousness and militancy extend much wider. Strikes frequently involve non-unionists (in 1968 they were the majority), who also often look to elected union reps (non-members have the right to vote) for support in day-to-day disputes. A number of indications show that support for the unions is an important factor in France—and a troubling one for the employers. One could quote the results of the nationwide elections for workers' representatives on industrial tribunals—a major victory for bona fide workers' organisations (CGT, CFTD, FO) over the fake unions sponsored by the bosses and the extreme right. Or the recent elections in key plants of Renault and Peugeot, which strengthened the CP-dominated CGT.

To argue from membership statistics alone would be very dangerous. Can one say that in Britain—where most workers hold a union card—class consciousness is higher than in France? Or that anti-union attitudes are weaker? If anything, the reverse is true. Birchall does not make this mistake, but his article could lead to a false pessimism. The French working class may be discouraged by the squabbles of its leaders, but it is far from a spent force—witness the Manufrance workers who symbolically occupied the dome of Sacré Coeur (during a Mass!), or the dustcart drivers who blocked all the roads leading to the Elysée Palace, or the strike committees operating illegal pirate radios.

To come finally to the revolutionary left—or at least the two groups which fit closely our idea of what a revolutionary

LETTERS

organisation should be, the LCR (a bigger version of the IMG) and I.O.

Lutte Ouvriere have a certain credit with the left-wing, mainly CP influenced, electorate: a well-known candidate, Arlette Laguiller; a paper and style of propaganda which is much more readable and acceptable to workers than anything produced by the LCR; a serious approach to the industrial work. Yet their line on the election seems to be that it doesn't really matter who wins the elections (imagine saying that in Britain after 22 years of Tory rule!), or that it is lost in advance. Militancy plus propaganda for revolutionary socialism, without a medium-term strategy, or even concrete suggestions for activity here and now—LO's formula is more than a little tired.

The LCR are right to think the election is important. But they give the impression of gambling everything on a left-wing victory—presumably that of Mitterand—opening up a '1936-type' situation (in 1936 the Popular Front victory at the polls triggered off a massive strike wave). This is the sense of their candidate, Alain Krivine's slogan: 'The key to all change is to beat Giscard'. What perspective could the LCR offer in the case of a defeat? A further campaign to persuade the CP and Socialists to work together for the 1983 elections?

And what would be the consequences of a Mitterand victory? For the LCR there is only one scenario: the working class sooner or later takes to the streets and occupies the factories in order to force a reformist government to satisfy its demands. And what if Mitterand, exploiting the illusions of large sections of the class, adopts a policy of managing the crisis at the expense of workers—and gets away with it (and from their past record there is no guarantee that the CP would oppose such a policy)?

The only way to avoid the latter possibility, and prevent Mitterand doing a Wilson, Schmidt or Soares is to build a strong, independent, revolutionary workers' party. And this is where our real criticism of the LCR comes in. Not, as Birchall says, that 'many workers will follow the logic and vote for Mitterand in the first round'.

The electoral system in Britain, where every vote for a revolutionary candidate takes one away from the Labour Party—thereby increasing the chances of a Tory victory—makes it very difficult for the SWP to mount a credible election campaign. But in France the electors have two bites at the cherry and are perfectly capable of leaving their anti-Giscard vote to the second round, in order to express a preference for a revolutionary candidate in the first.

The problem with the LCR is that a perfectly correct tactical position, calling on the reformist leaders to adopt a unity pact for the second round, has become almost the only plank of their election programme.

If the revolutionary left fails to grow—and the 1981 Presidential election is one opportunity for it to do so—the outlook will indeed be bleak. If not, the 'Italian road'—please define, Ian Birchall—is one possible

scenario. Presumably not the only one. Let the debate continue—and hopefully with our French comrades.

Colin Falconer
Paris.

Sex and socialism

I would like to add one or two comments of my own to the points raised by Barbara Finch's letter on paedophilia in *SR* 1981: 1. She says that "... children, as a group, are dependant on adults, as a group, for food, shelter and education/socialisation that enables them to achieve an intellectual and behavioural status with which to cope with society's demands and obligations." She says that this will be true under any society.

Surely, our starting point must be to examine the effects that *capitalist society* has on people's relationships. Under capitalism, people are prevented, as a rule, enjoying or understanding their own sexuality. Moreover, the capitalist system quite clearly benefits from this 'sexual alienation.' The inhibitions, the fears, the guilt that is associated with sexual desire very early on (right from the first time a mother takes the child's hand away from its genitals with the words "don't do that, it's dirty!") all make it harder for people to respond *rationally* to their situation later on in life.

As the Marxist psychologist Wilhelm Reich pointed out "... every social order creates those character forms which it needs for its preservation. In class society, the ruling class secures its position with the aid of education and the institution of the family, by making its ideology the ruling ideology of all members of society." And so I would argue that through their dependance on adults, far from helping children "to cope with society's demands and obligations" in a rational, class-conscious way, it does exactly the opposite.

Barbara Finch also says "... there is no way that society can or should check up on individual relationships." That is simply not true—society is doing it all the time, through the family, through the media, through the awful way sex education is taught in schools etc.

Surely, as revolutionaries, we must make it clear that we are *in principle* in support of sexual freedom for adults and children—but that of course this freedom can only be recognised in a socialist society, and that in the here and now we should be fighting for free abortion on demand, freely available contraception, for gay rights, against the age of consent etc. and against the reactionary moralistic show trials like the one mentioned in Dave Evans original article.

Keith Copley
Dunstable

Take the trouble

Anti-gay prejudice is disgusting and reactionary, and any sign of it in a revolutionary organisation should be firmly stamped on. But before the Manchester

SWP Gay Group (*SR* 1981:1) start keeping files on comrades' alleged lapses, they should take the trouble to read what was actually written.

(i) They claim that in *Socialist Worker* 711 I linked 'sodomy (and therefore homosexuality) with French capitalism.' I linked nothing. I *quoted* a remark by Coluche, a clown who is running for the French presidency. I don't in fact believe Coluche's remark was anti-gay (anal intercourse may be homosexual or heterosexual), but in any case I felt it was quite legitimate to give a quotation—clearly labelled as such—of a typical comment from Coluche. After all, *SW* in the past has quoted Thatcher and Martin Webster.

(ii) It is claimed that in my article on Simon Raven (*SR* 1980:19) I 'equated' homosexuality with self-indulgence. I did nothing of the sort. I stated that Raven was gay and self-indulgent. (Anyone who reads *The English Gentleman* or the semi-autobiographical *Fielding Gray* can check the truth of this.) If I had said Idi Amin was a brutal black dictator would I be accused of generalising about all blacks? What I tried to argue in the article was that although Raven portrays his gay characters in a sympathetic light, their homosexuality is never allowed to challenge the structures of the existing order.

(iii) They have totally misinterpreted a passing—and perhaps too flippant—comment in my piece on Stalinism. (*SR* 1980:11) It was certainly never my intention to criticise masturbation as such. (If I had referred to people hanging pictures of Stalin on their walls, would Manchester SWP Art-Lovers Group have written to complain I was against painting?) Nor do I have any desire to censure anybody's fantasies. But do the letter's writers really believe that all fantasies are equally good? Surely we condemn fantasies about, say, the Yorkshire Ripper—and the porn merchants and millionaire publishers who get rich encouraging such fantasies. And Stalin killed far more people than the Ripper. All I was seeking to criticise was the distortion of sexuality that was one—small—component of the fascination of Stalin for a generation of the left. The comment was not anti-gay—Stalin had as many female fans as male. And it was not ageist: it's simply a fact that the generation that loved Stalin are now getting on in years—they were worse when they were younger.

There are a lot of questions about sexual politics that the SWP still needs to work on. The current debate on paedophilia in *Socialist Review*, for example, has scarcely scratched the surface of the problem. But the kind of discussion we need will not be helped by misquotation and unfounded accusation.

Ian Birchall
North London.

Soggy chips

The Microelectronics Revolution

Ed Tom Forrester.

Blackwell.

Microelectronics

A Labour Party Discussion Document 80p.

The growth of the microelectronics industry over the last decade has only recently been matched by a similar growth in literature about the 'micro-chip revolution'. Currently we are being engulfed by a flood of books, pamphlets, conferences and media programmes. The 'chip' has become so commonplace that it even features in the worst jokes of TV comedians. Yet to most workers both the microprocessor itself and the social implications of its use are at best a mystery and at worst an irrelevance. The new anthology of writings by ex-*New Society* industrial correspondent and Labour Party member Tom Forrester, sets out to counter this confusion and apathy.

In three parts, the first section of this collection looks at the 'chip' itself, the industry which it has spawned and the many uses of microprocessors, with articles ranging from the original 1975 piece by Bylinsky in the American *Fortune* magazine, which set off the media stampede, to Forrester's own entertaining report on the Silicon Valley people of California, home of an electronics industry allegedly as 'perfectly competitive as any industry could get' as it thrives on lucrative defence/space contracts.

The second section deals with the economic and social implications of the chip, the area of most interest to workers. An article on Pedigree Petfoods' automated factory in Melton Mowbray, a non-union company, demonstrates how one workforce were duped by a clever management into accepting job losses and increased work measure.

Hazel Downing's piece on the 'Revolution in the Office' is one of only two articles in the book which take an explicitly Marxist approach. She argues that the rapid automation of the office is a direct outcome of the current economic climate, which has challenged capital's traditional sphere of accumulation. Capital now seeks to extend its control over hitherto peripheral areas of the labour process such as the administrative tasks, in an effort to cut costs and increase efficiency. As Downing says, new technology is not part of some 'inexorable law of technological progress' but 'part of capital's strategy to continually realise itself.' Her article refers at length to Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, a classic text on technical change from a Marxist perspective, and it seems strange that no part of his work is included in this book.

The articles on industrial relations implications include a piece by Barry Sherman of ASTMS, an APFEX pamphlet extract and

surprisingly, in a book supported by the Department of Industry, an extract from Chris Harman's SWP pamphlet, *Is a machine after your job?* The official union response, as reiterated in each union pamphlet on the subject is rather like a victim laying his head on the block in the belief that it will cure a headache. New technology is welcomed as the saviour of Britain's ailing economy and, linked to the usual demands for import controls, is seen as the means to rebuild British capitalism.

Of course the unions want safeguards, such as no enforced redundancies or at least redundancy pay or improved pay for the survivors, or consultation, etc. The main thrust is for new technology agreements, the latest trendy topic for industrial relations commentators (following planning agreements, alternative plans, health and safety agreements, participation plans, etc) which in effect are an old friends, in disguise—the productivity agreement. However the number of such deals is wildly over-estimated—they are chiefly a white collar strategy, and rarely is there such an agreement covering manuals.



Illustration: Sophie Grillet

The last part of this book discusses the sci-fi 'Information Society' of the future, with the prospect of a technocratic elite ruling a world of de-skilled unemployed. Daniel Bell's view is that all will be hunky-dory while Weizenbaum asks the important question, 'who is the beneficiary of our much advertised technological progress and who are its victims?' Forrester's book does not answer this question, nor any others. As a compendium of views on technology the book is a useful distillation of the arguments but the editor's brief introduction offers no answers, only questions, nor any strategy for workers actually facing the threat.

The views of Forrester's own Labour Party are laid down in a new pamphlet on microelectronics produced by a working party of MPs, trade union research officers,

etc. The main theme of this is that the major problem facing Britain is the relatively slow adoption of new technology. This is due to the failure of the private sector to invest adequately in new plant. Their answer is a major programme of public investment and public research and development to encourage the growth of a home-based chip industry.

Under a Labour government the regeneration of British industry will take place behind a wall of import controls and with state control over the movement of capital. Moreover this state controlled new technology explosion will be in the interest of working people. Heard this somewhere before? Wisely the pamphlet does not look at previous examples of attempts by Labour administrations to foster technological change nor the effects on employees. What happened after technological change in the steel industry? What will be the long term effects on miners' jobs of the NCB's Mimos automated pit project? What plans does British Rail have for using new technology to cut railwaymen's jobs? Is the public sector any more humane in its use of microprocessors?

The real answers for workers lie in the type of strategy outlined in Harman's SWP pamphlet, in workers' own imposed controls over change, and in the innate lethargy of British capitalism to adapt to change. (As Nigel Harris has quipped, the best protection against new technology at the moment is the dearth of investment funds for new plant).

Most important is the realisation that technical change is nothing new—workers have been on the receiving end of management attempts to de-skill, work measure, automate, etc for over two centuries. Indeed it was those changes which helped form a working class with its own organisations and ideology. Workers have consistently adjusted to every move to increase control over their working lives by creating new forms of struggle. Despite the much publicised use of robots at Longbridge and Hailwood, BL and Ford still have drastic problems of control over their workers.

Moreover the new skills being created by new technology will give some workers immense power over production. A good example of this was the experience of Whitbread, who built a new brewery on a green field site in rural Wales with the express intention of avoiding labour troubles. However, once built they they had to offer the electrical maintenance jobs to the subcontractors' employees because there were no skilled workers in the area. The electricians accepted and then promptly went on strike and refused to make the final connections necessary to start production, until management agreed to a hefty pay settlement and job security. Only organised resistance at shop and office floor level can ensure real protection from new technology, but then that's an old story!

Keith Brown

Between war and revolution

The Blood of Spain

Ronald Fraser

Penguin £4.95

It would be difficult to praise this book too highly. It is probably the best book yet to be written on the Spanish Civil War. And it is written from a revolutionary standpoint.

Fraser shows how the Civil War was not just a struggle between those who stood for a democratic republic on the one side and those who wanted an authoritarian regime on the other. It was the culmination of class tensions that had been growing for decades. And these tensions were, in both town and country, *capitalist* tensions, between on the one hand a bourgeoisie that owned both industry and the land, and on the other, workers, landless labourers and some of the poor peasants. The picture was complicated by the republican sentiments of sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and by the reactionary, religious attitudes of the peasantry in parts of Northern Spain. But the central issues were *class* issues.

Discussion on the war at the time (and since) was dominated by one major argument: the argument defined by Fraser as 'between war and revolution'. Was it necessary for the workers to abandon the making of a revolution in order to win the war? This was the contention of the Communist Party, the right wing socialists, the Socialist-led government formed in Madrid in the second month of the war, the Catalan nationalist party and, eventually, the main stream anarcho-syndicalist leadership. Or was it necessary to forget about the war and simply concentrate on the revolution? This was effectively the attitude of much of the rank and file in the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist union that dominated the key sections of the working class.

Fraser insists that both positions were wrong. It was impossible to forget the revolution while waiting for victory in the war. In terms of conventional warfare, the republic was bound to lose, given that Germany and Italy supported Franco and that Britain and France were happy to see the left defeated. What is more, the revolution was already underway, with the enthusiastic backing of the vast mass of rank and file workers. To 'postpone' it meant attacking the conquests of these workers physically, demobilising them and destroying their enthusiasm for the struggle against Franco.

This was, in fact, what happened. In the first months of the war, Madrid could be defended against apparently overwhelming odds because, at the last minute, the people in arms were aroused to a revolutionary defence.

By contrast the cities where the revolution never really got off the ground (Irun, San Sebastian, Bilbao) or where it had been rolled back in the interests of 'winning the war' (Barcelona at the beginning of 1939, Madrid and Valencia two months later), mass pas-



sivity enabled the Francoist troops to march in against very little resistance.

The other alternative, of making the revolution and ignoring the needs of the war was equally doomed. Fraser shows the anarcho-syndicalist masses fighting heroically to almost defeat the initial fascist coup, and then going back to their factories and localities to build *local* revolutionary structures, giving the fascists a chance to strike back.

War is the highest form of class struggle. And it cannot be won without a single army fighting the enemy's single army, a single strategy countering the enemy's single strategy. The failure of *the* great mass organisation of Spain's workers to see this meant that in the first months of the war, the revolutionary initiative in the localities was not translated into any national revolutionary strategy against the armed troops of counter-revolution. Even in the localities, the individual nuclei of revolutionary initiative and power were not translated into coherent structures.

The result, inevitably, after a couple of months was victory for those who argued for postponing the revolution until the war was won. It only took a few military defeats for the republican forces to make the anarcho-syndicalist leaders see that a national strategy was needed. And since they refused a national strategy based upon a revolutionary state, they had to opt for one based on a non-revolutionary state.

In Catalonia, where the anarcho-syndicalists were strongest, their leaders (including Durruti) refused an offer at the very beginning of the war from the leader of the Catalan government Company's that they should take power; from that point onwards it was inevitable that they should end up collaborating in structures of bourgeois power.

The firebrands of the Iberian Anarchist Federation became ministers just like any other ministers.

Fraser contends there was an alternative

to the false choice of war or revolution—revolutionary war. This could have been waged, with success, he suggests. But it would have required the working class to have begun to build its own centralised structure of power.

The various revolutionary committees that had been thrown up more or less spontaneously could have been linked together into a national structure, providing the basis for a national strategy that was both revolutionary and military.

Everything then would have been different. The seizure of the factories by the workers could have been an aid to war production, not the diversion it often was. The enthusiasm of the militias could have been directed into the discipline an army needs if it is not to fall apart the first time it's offensive is checked. The necessary repression against the many reactionary sympathisers within the republican held areas could have been organised more thoroughly, without the elements of undirected randomness which drove many non-exploiting sections of the middle class into the enemy camp. The necessary struggle against the reactionary structures of the church need not have taken on crude forms that strengthened the hold of the right over the more religious sections of the peasantry. Above all, the best fighters in the war would have been seen to be the revolutionaries, not those in the Communist Party who argued against revolution.

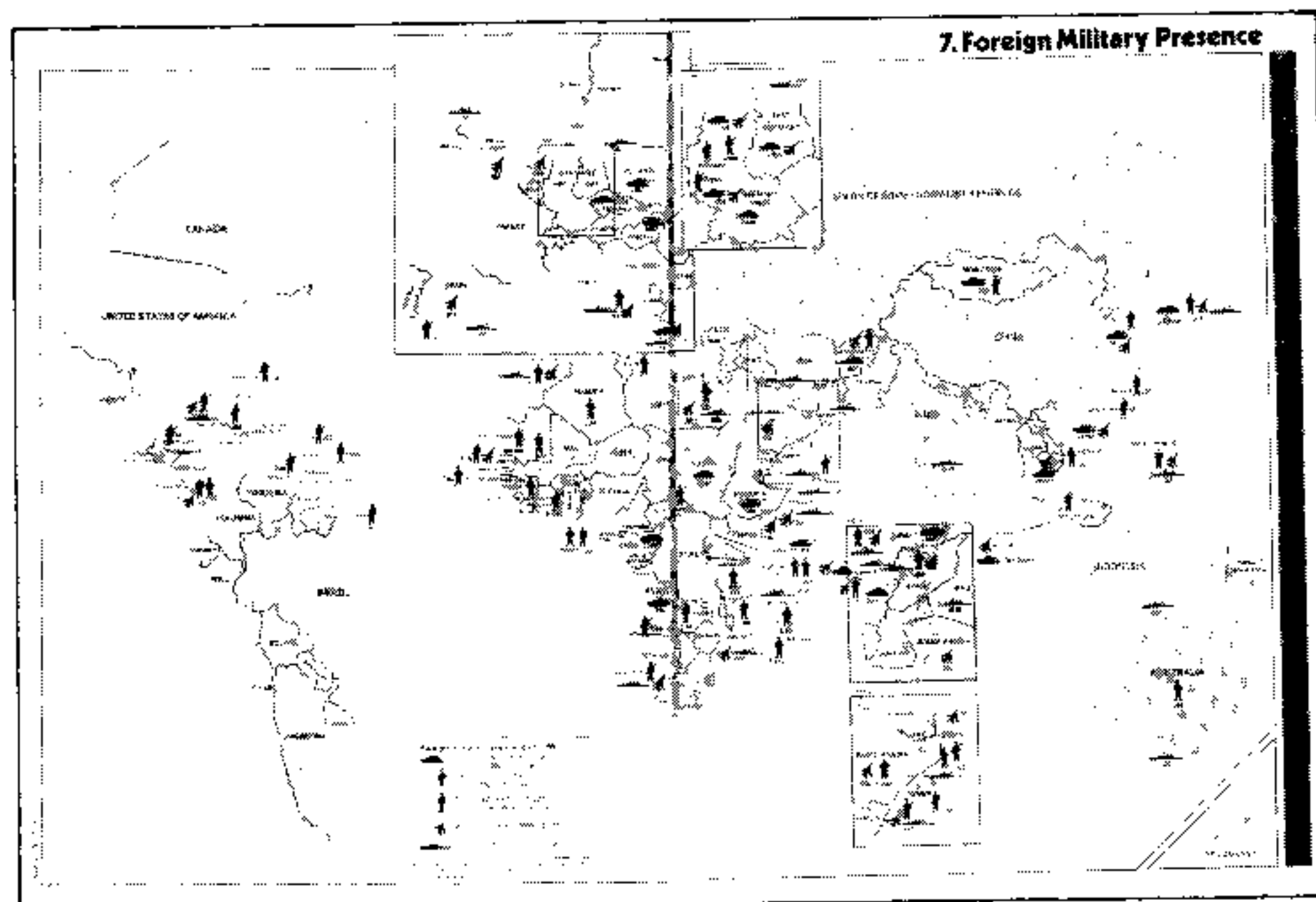
The positions Fraser argues are very similar to those presented at the time by the dissident communists of the POUM. But Fraser is prepared to criticise these as well on occasions.

The power of Fraser's book does not, however, come from the bare bones of his argument alone. It comes from the way it is argued and justified. The technique is as revolutionary as the argument. For the book takes the form of extracts from hundreds of interviews with participants in all the movements on both sides in the war. This enables you to feel the class issues underlying the struggle as they were reflected—and distorted—in the consciousness of different social groups and political formations. The struggle is seen from the point of view of the anarchist worker, the reactionary Catholic peasant, the Stalinist commissar, the Basque priest, the fascist ideologue, the right wing socialist, the left republican, the fifth columnist in Madrid, the conscript who deserts from Franco's army to the republic. It is this interaction of perspectives that enables you to grasp what held together the forces on either side—and to see how a genuinely revolutionary policy from the workers' organisations could have changed the balance of forces.

The book is a very long read (although I had difficulty putting it down), and people with no knowledge at all about the civil war may find it takes a little too much for granted (if so look first at George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* or Pierre Broue and Emile Ter-mime's *The War and the Revolution in Spain*). But if you get the chance, read it.

Chris Harman

Marx and Mercator



The state of the world atlas
Michael Kidron & Ronald Segal
Pan £5.95

A book of maps from a socialist perspective has to be winner, and Pluto Press have done an excellent job in producing this atlas, which covers a very large range of subjects in an accessible and imaginative way. It is impossible to list the aspects of the state of the world which are dealt with: just take a look yourself in a bookshop. What is worth saying is that it isn't just the obvious facts of wealth differences in the world which are illustrated. There are maps of class struggles, showing major urban upheavals in the last two decades, and the state of trade unionism worldwide. And maps of nationalist and religious movements, women workers' importance in the workforce, abortion rights, pollution.

One of my favourites illustrates the battle against nuclear power, with symbols for strikes, sabotage and conflicts with the police. A far cry from the average school atlas.

The advantage of this form of presentation is, firstly, it allows facts and statistics which can seem very boring to be looked at in an exciting way: for example, the fact that Angola's Gross National Product is lower than the income of Coca-Cola Inc, is much more likely to grab the attention on a map than in text or tables. A book containing all the facts in this atlas in any other form would be as boring as the *Guinness Book of Records*. Secondly, maps give an internationalist perspective on the facts naturally, which is difficult to equal in another format. Any atlas encourages thoughts about what the rest of the world is like: this one gives a lot of answers, and must raise more political questions in the readers' head about how it came to be like this, and what can be done about it. Obviously a very useful book for teachers, but also fascinating to almost anybody.

Some criticisms though: while accepting the enormous difficulties in collecting and making comparable the statistics used (especially as bias is built-in to many of them, and governments and international bodies are the only source available for most), the political impact of some of the maps presents a problem.

For example, the map showing exploitation rates takes as a measure payroll relative to output, which produces the (absurd) result that exploitation appears to be much higher in, say, Mauritania, than in Japan or the United States. Absurd from a Marxist standpoint, that is (as Mike Kidron himself has shown). The note in the back of the book acknowledges this: 'Exploitation in rich states appears to be lower than in poor states, when the opposite may well be the case.' Given that producing a proper measure is probably impossible with the information available, it would have been wiser to omit the map. The authors decided against producing a map showing unemployment for just the reason that official figures for most of the world were completely useless, so it is odd that they chose otherwise in this case.

There is also a general problem when it comes to dealing with the 'socialist' countries; reliable figures are just not available. On many of the maps, these areas are left blank. On the other hand, some of the maps do show measures of the standard of living in these countries, figures which naturally, the governments do make available. The figures are not in themselves necessarily distorted, but perhaps the overall effect is: for example, Russia is shown to have high levels of education and medical provision, while the 'Slumland' map is blank for almost all of the Eastern bloc. The debt map is also marked 'data not available' although in fact information is available on the debt of the Eastern bloc countries. On a political level the maps are better, showing repression of workers and national minorities, and the

enormous arms expenditure of the Warsaw Pact.

A minor criticism is of the out of dateness, some of which could have been avoided by using national sources as well as the international yearbooks. The notes at the back should be read. All in all, an excellent £5.95 worth.

Sue Cockerill

Missing workers

The Soviet Union since Stalin
Edited by Stephen F Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, Robert Sharlet.
MacMillan (Indiana University Press)
£4.95

On Soviet Dissent
Roy Medvedev interviewed by Piero Ostellino.
Constable £5.95

The working class is the most important element in Soviet society. It is the only class which will bring about change in the Soviet Union. Events in Poland have made this clear. Yet, the working class is completely omitted from *The Soviet Union since Stalin*, though its editors are 'trendy lefty' academics. The book covers almost every other conceivable aspect of Soviet life. As in all compilations, some of the articles are good, (on Krushchev, on the Soviet middle class) some are bad (on agriculture and economics) and the majority fall in between. They all, however, have a unifying theme—how much has the Soviet Union changed since Stalin? Some very interesting conclusions can be drawn from them.

Stalin dragged Russia into the modern age by her hair. He virtually created Soviet industry, he consolidated the regime and made the Soviet Union a superpower. This might have been done in several ways. Stalin did it through the concentration of all power and resources in the country into a gigantic, brutal, grossly over-centralised state machine, under his personal command.

His successors faced a different task—developing the Soviet Union into a more complicated, highly-skilled, diversified industrial society. Essential for this were economic decentralisation, higher living standards, political liberalisation. The Soviet Union has progressed in this direction since Stalin, but not nearly fast or far enough. Change has been severely impeded by the need to maintain military priorities (because of rivalry with the West); and by the continued existence of the monstrous state bureaucracy, staffed by officials with a vested interest in the status quo.

Whenever the leadership (Krushchev, Kosygin) have attempted change, the bureaucrats silently made sure that their efforts came to nothing. As a result the Soviet system is shuddering to a halt. Stagnation prevails in the ideological, economic

and political sphere. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism is set and static. The middle class (the intelligensia) has become disaffected and cynical. Industry is clogged down by red tape and is absurdly inefficient, agriculture is in a crisis which no amount of investment seems able to mitigate. There is a drastic shortage of housing, consumer goods, and, increasingly, of food. Wages are low. The working class is gradually turning to the strike weapon in protest. The political system is headed by a group of doddering old men, clinging obstinately to the old ways. So far, with the help of the state machine, they have dealt successfully with outbursts of discontent.

The dissidents (mostly middle class) have been shut up in psychiatric hospitals, thrown into labour camps, or forced to emigrate. Almost all the leading figures have been silenced.

The exception is Roy Medvedev. And he is still at large, still writing, still allowed interviews with Western journalists, only because, when it comes to the crunch, he takes the side of the Soviet regime rather than the dissidents. He is incessantly praised, almost venerated, by Marxist circles in the West (for example, *New Left Review*), as the leading Marxist dissident. I myself had a great respect for him—until I read what he has to say in *On Soviet Dissent*.

Here he reveals his true colours—that his Marxism, for all its democratic varnish, is essentially that of Soviet (ie Stalinist) Marxism. Not only does he believe in the capacity and desire of the Soviet rulers to introduce change from above, he also states that censorship and repression are good for writers because it stimulates them to produce better stuff; he says that most of the people sent to camps are 'persons of weak character'; he defends the government's refusal to allow Sakharov to collect his Nobel prize, on the excuse that he knows military secrets; he side-steps the issue of psychiatric abuse; he declares that the Soviet Union has no nationality problem and that 'the Soviet citizen is allowed more latitude to state his grievances than he is inclined to utilise'. All this shows that Medvedev has become another Yevtushenko, a person who abuses his reputation as a dissident and profits from his international fame, while taking care to remain acceptable to the Soviet bureaucrats and preserve a comfortable existence.

Working class discontent, like intellectual discontent, has been stifled by individual repression. Those who complain at work are instantly dismissed. There is no collective working class organisation, only puppet unions run by the state. The Soviet working class has long been cowed. But now things are changing. Attempts to form free trade unions and strikes in Soviet car factories in Gorky and Togliattigrad preceded the mass upsurges in Poland. Strikes all over the borderlands followed them. The 21 demands of the Polish workers are now circulating in samizdat in the Soviet Union. It may not be long before Soviet workers are following their example.

Claire Herschfeld



Looking behind the wire

Television has at last cottoned on to the problems concerning a little colony west of Liverpool called Ireland—or so Robert Kee in conjunction with BBC/RTE would have us believe. On the other hand ITV's *Troubles* pointed out that if only British capitalism did not exist there would be no problem at all.

Such is the approach to the question by the sparring networks. However, as far as it goes, anything that is shown on the mainland about the 32 counties is more than welcome, and it is with this thought in mind that I viewed both series.

Neither have been radical, which is to be expected, but in a reformist context *The Troubles* has offered a more positive response. It has taken as its base year 1968 and has traced the history back from there—an important value judgement since the British public have by and large been kept ignorant of the realities across the water. BBC however takes its principles from the exact time and birth of one Robert Kee, the David Attenborough of the peat bogs.

The difference of approach is well illustrated by the treatment afforded to the 1845 famine. *A Television History* although implicating Westminster, ended up blaming the civil servant Trevelyan because he bungled the relief and poor laws. One man alone could cause so much hunger? ITV at least had the decency to pose the question of mass genocide as British government policy. An editorial in the *Times* of the day had welcomed the deaths and enforced emigration as going some way to solving the Irish 'problem'. But dear Robert would not be likely to mention that, would he? It might affect his academic credo.

If ever a televised history plodded, the BBC production does: Janet and John books in woodcuts.



But if *A TV History* is turgid and long-winded then *The Troubles* has suffered from what can only be described as terminal brevity. Obviously one cannot encompass all the intricacies in only five programmes, but having posed a question why not answer it? To illustrate the point: in the fourth episode some unique documentary footage was used including the Civil Rights march being led into an ambush by loyalists with the connivance of the police, who had promised to protect the demonstrators. But apart from a brief appearance of People's Democracy person Michael Farrell and a cameo of Bernadette there was no further explanation. No 'Free Derry'—where are you McCann?—none of the Provo rompings by O'Connell and O'Brady to embarrass the British government. Especially no insight into the IRA split, or the rise of militant Protestants, not the likes of Paisley, but those of the ilk of Glen Barr and Andy Tyrre who were later to become the leaders of the Ulster Workers Council strike of 1974 and the UDA.

The conclusions both programmes are working towards are a long way from a united Ireland. ITV comes nearest, but it is hampered by its own caution. The BBC does not appear in the least embarrassed by its openly partisan views. We must be cautious about heaping praise on the ITV series simply because its competitor is so abysmal. More media coverage of the Irish question is certainly to be welcomed—but with open arms?

John Caveney

Chicago had nothing on this

Everyone knows Hackney in East London is the centre of the universe. That sacred spot on the map from whence, each Wednesday morning, as the sun rises over the crumbling tenements, fresh new copies of *Socialist Worker* roll hot off the press to be dispersed to all corners of the globe. Now Hackney has another claim to fame: it was the setting for a new cops and robbers TV saga called *Wolcott*.

Piloted in mid-January in the ITV *Best Seller* slot, *Wolcott* is being considered for a future weekly series. In the context of British television it is a cop saga with a difference: its hero is black. Written by two Americans resident in Britain, *Wolcott* is an attempt to relocate the conventional Hollywood tough cop in a realistic British setting complete with British-style police corruption and British-style racism. A good deal of effort is put into conveying the 'sociological' details in the background.

In case you missed the pilot episodes, Richard Cribbin fills in the story so far:

Episode 1 begins with Wolcott kicking one felon in the mouth and throwing another through a plate glass window. Such dedication to duty must receive its rightful reward, and the man is duly promoted to detective. For the last time he peels off the drab blue uniform of the Met.

Cut to next scene as we see him, snazzily attired in one of the twenty five white suits which fill his wardrobe, bounding up the steps of his new neck. Wolcott's workmates are far from overjoyed when they discover the ethnic origins of their new colleague, but a quick flex of the muscles and a stern glare sends these forces of reaction scuttling for cover.

A brief encounter with the police chief who tells him that he has not been promoted because he is black but because of his remar-



kable talent for throwing villains through windows, and Wolcott is ready to set out on his new mission: making Hackney a place where decent people can live in slums without the constant fear of being mugged as they come out of the dole office.

Aided rather reluctantly by a chess playing black youth club leader and a radical-chic American journalist—ITV's answer to Lauren Bacall—Wolcott discovers that compared to Hackney 1930s Chicago was about as lawless as the Vatican city. Against a back-ground peopled by *Socialist Worker* sellers and NF thugs two rival gangs, one black, one white, are engaged in a bloody feud as to who should extort protection money from the local baked bean wholesaler. The black gang are impelled to ever nastier deeds as a means of bringing Babylon to its knees, while the white gang need no such ideological prompting. They beat up people for the fun of it.

By episode three Hackney has become the world centre for the trafficking of heroin. The gangs blast one another bloodily into eternity. Mr Big of the white gang is left impaled on an African spear, while his opposite number shoots the youth club leader and takes Wolcott's mum hostage. Now debadged, Wolcott rushes to the scene but fails to prevent his mother and the villain plummeting to an ugly death. Wolcott's reputation is at stake. He must turn his attentions to corruption in his own ranks. The final frame freezes as Wolcott and the key villain of the force confront one another, shooters in hand. Will our hero survive?... tune in next time.

Not much different from the familiar Hollywood potboiler, you might argue. But clearly it was intended to be. Interviewed by

the *Guardian*, producer Jacky Stoller identified *Wolcott* as a programme with a mission:

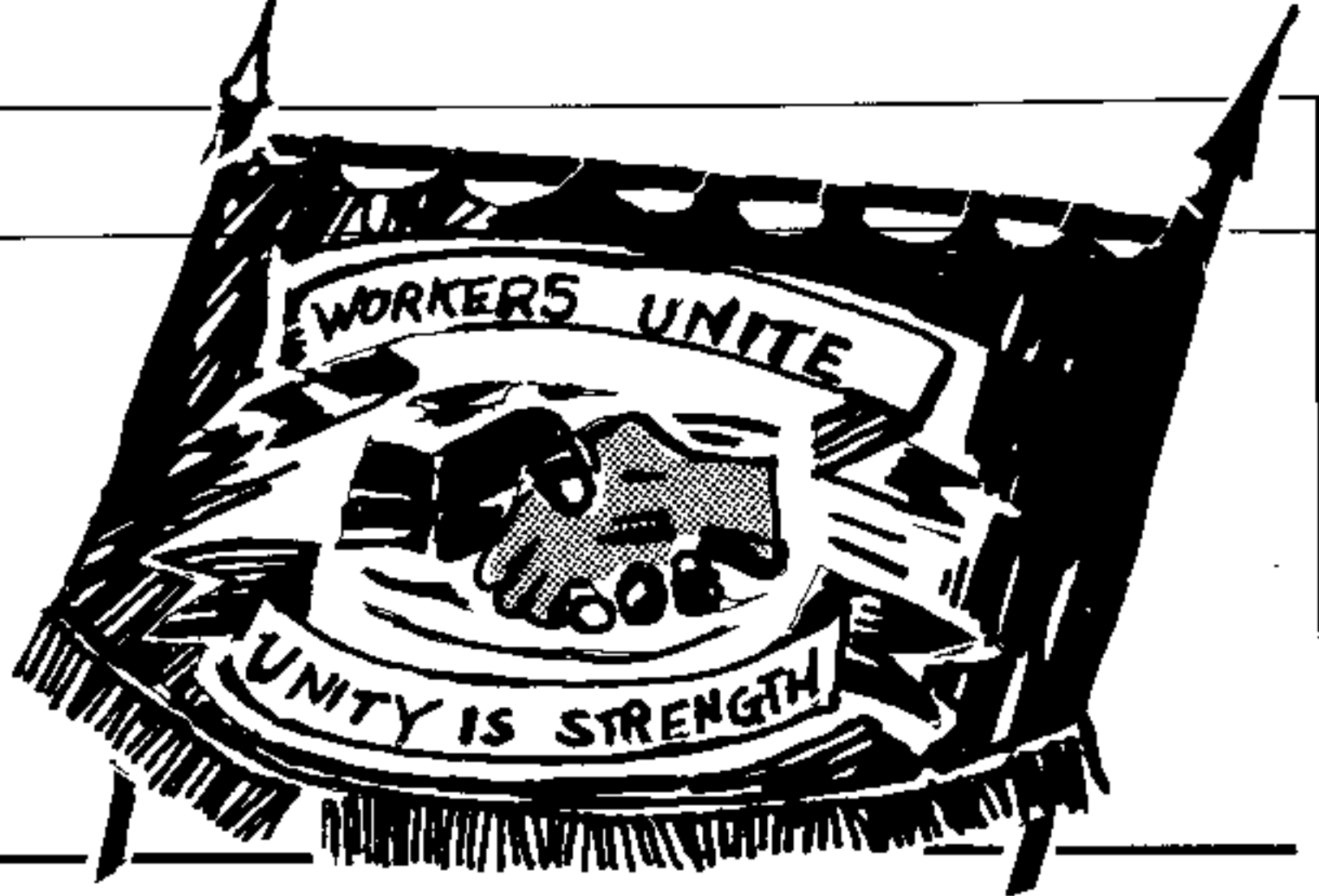
'I think that sometimes drama can educate more effectively than documentary. Certainly it has the opportunity to educate more people because its audience is wider. But it also has the facility to make people identify with characters from an alien and previously misunderstood group and that can lead to sympathy for group.'

The best of liberal intentions. But is it possible to deal effectively with the problem of racism in this way? Is *Wolcott* the kind of programme that will have people arguing the issues in their workplace next morning? Does it make people think about the police in the way the *Law and Order* series did?

Bippin Patel comments on the programme:

The Metropolitan police were said to be most unhappy about *Wolcott* which surely must be a point in its favour. The programme showed the police force as racist and corrupt, but there was nothing to make those who have read the stories about black kids being harassed but don't believe it really happens, actually think again. Basically the writers don't understand the problems faced by young blacks in Britain today. They were more at home portraying the *Time Out* set. The blacks didn't come across as real people. Even the language was wrong—people don't talk 'man this', 'man that' any more, that's straight out of American movies like *Shaft*. The only message for black kids was 'don't get involved in crime—you get blown away.' Hopefully after *Wolcott* any black kid who had thought about joining the police force would think again!

U is for the **Union of Workers,** the union that lasts to the end



In all countries the wrath of the workers first took the form of isolated revolts. In all countries these isolated revolts gave rise to more or less peaceful strikes.

★ What significance have strikes (or stoppages) for the struggle of the working class? To answer this question, we must first have a fuller view of strikes. The wages of a worker are determined by an agreement between the employer and the worker, and if, under these circumstances, the individual worker is completely powerless, it is obvious that workers must fight jointly for their demands, they are compelled to organise strikes either to prevent the employers from reducing wages or to obtain higher wages. It is a fact that in every country with a capitalist system there are strikes of workers.

★ As capitalism develops, as big factories are more rapidly opened, as the petty capitalists are more and more ousted by the big capitalists, the more urgent becomes the need for the joint resistance of the workers, because unemployment increases, competition sharpens between the capitalists who strive to produce their wares at the cheapest and the fluctuations of industry become more accentuated and crises more acute.

★ Strikes, which arise out of the very nature of capitalist society, signify the beginning of the working-class struggle against that system of society. When the rich capitalists are confronted by individual, propertyless workers, this signifies the utter enslavement of the workers. But when the workers state their demands jointly and refuse to submit to the money-bags, they cease to be slaves, they become human beings, they begin to demand that their labour should not only serve to enrich a handful of idlers, but should also enable those who work to live like human beings.

★ In normal, peaceful times the worker does his job without a murmur, does not contradict the employer, and does not discuss his condition. In times of strikes he states his demands in a loud voice, he reminds the employers of all their abuses, he claims his rights, he does not think of himself and his wages alone, he thinks of all his workmates who have

downed tools together with him and who stand up for the workers' cause, fearing no privations.

★ Every strike means many privations for the working people, terrible privations that can be compared only to the calamities of war—hungry families, loss of wages, often arrests, banishment from the towns where they have their homes and their employment. Despite all these sufferings, the workers despise those who desert their fellow workers and make deals with the employers. 'People who endure so much to bend one single bourgeois will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie,' said one great teacher of socialism, Engels, speaking of the strikes of the English workers.

★ Every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thought of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital. It has often happened that before a big strike the workers of a certain factory or a certain branch of industry or of a certain town knew hardly anything and scarcely ever thought about socialism; but after the strike, study circles and associations become much more widespread among them and more and more workers become socialists.

★ A strike teaches workers to understand what the strength of the employers and what the strength of the workers consists in; it teaches them not to think of their own employer alone and not of their own immediate workmates alone but of all the employers, the whole class of capitalists and the whole class of workers.

★ The government itself knows full well that strikes open the eyes of the workers and for this reason it has such a fear of strikes and does everything to stop them as quickly as possible. One German Minister of the Interior, one who was notorious for the persistent persecution of socialists and class-conscious workers, stated before the people's representatives: 'Behind every strike lurks the hydra [monster] of revolution.' Every strike strengthens and develops in the workers the understanding that the government is their enemy and that the working class must prepare

itself to struggle against the government for the people's rights.

★ This is the reason that socialists call strikes 'a school of war', a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labour.

★ 'A school of war' is, however, not war itself. When strikes are widespread among the workers, some of the workers (including some socialists) begin to believe that the working class can confine itself to strikes, strike funds, or strike associations alone; that by strikes alone the working class can achieve a considerable improvement in its conditions or even its emancipation. *It is a mistaken idea.* Strikes are *one* of the ways in which the working class struggles for its emancipation, but they are not the only way; and if the workers do not turn their attention to other means of conducting the struggle, they will slow down the growth and the successes of the working class.

★ Even in those countries where workers' unions exist openly and have huge funds at their disposal, the working class can still not confine itself to strikes as a means of struggle. All that is necessary is a hitch in the affairs of industry (a crisis) and the factory owners will even deliberately cause strikes, because it is to their advantage to cease work for a time and to deplete the workers' funds. The workers, therefore, cannot, under any circumstances, confine themselves to strike actions and strike associations. It is strikes that have gradually taught the working class of all countries to struggle against the governments for workers' rights and for the rights of the people as a whole. Only a socialist workers' party can carry on this struggle by spreading among the workers a true conception of the government and of the working-class cause.

★ Strikes are, as we said above, 'a school of war' and not the war itself, strikes are only one means of struggle, only one aspect of the working-class movement. From individual strikes the workers can and must go over, as indeed they are actually doing in all countries, to a struggle of the entire working class for the emancipation of all who labour.

V.I. Lenin 1893