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**The TUC: a bang
or a whimper?**

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6 MONTHS ON



The miners' strike has now reached a crucial stage. At the time of writing the outcome of the TUC conference isn't known. But it is clear that if the right wing block support for the miners at the TUC it will be a major blow to the strike.

After six months on strike the miners now find themselves fighting on home ground. The focus is no longer round steel or the power stations. The emphasis now is stopping the Coal Board's attempts to prompt a drift back to work.

Some evidence for the depth of support for the strike was shown by the failure of the Coal Board's back to work push in August. Despite all the press propaganda and all the inducements only a few isolated scabs responded.

The miners succeeded in holding the line. But they now find themselves fighting a defensive battle. A battle, however, that is still there to be won.

The Tories have been helped in their determination to crush the miners by Terry Duffy, Bill Sirs and Neil Kinnock. But unfortunately the left wing controlled unions have ensured the miners fight on in isolation. The transport workers in particular settled the docks strike in July, having made no effort to go on the offensive by fighting to extend the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The turning point

The leadership of the NUM—particularly the area leaderships—who have led the dispute haven't taken the strike forward. The rank and file took the picketing into Nottinghamshire in the first week. But it took the NUM's national leadership six weeks to force the Notts area to call for those pickets to be respected.

The shift to hitting steel production came late and was blunted by the area leaderships granting dispensations to local steel works.

The turning point of the strike was the battle of Orgreave. Scargill joined the picket lines but the Yorkshire area leadership blocked the kind of mobilisation both in and out of the pits which could have shut the coke works. Since then there have not been mass pickets of key targets like steel plants. We've seen large scale picketing but it has usually been of the pits themselves, trying to stop any back to work campaign succeeding.

The strike is now on the defensive. But there is no sign of it collapsing. The best response to Coal Board attempts to achieve large scale scabbing is to organise regular visits by activists to every striker. That wouldn't only help maintain the strike but could increase the numbers available for picketing.

The best way to build solidarity outside the pits is through a weekly levy. The very process of collecting in the cash allows the arguments to be had about the strike. In

several workplaces pits have been adopted and cash is taken directly there by those workers who've given it.

Six months ago the Tories provoked the strike expecting a quick victory. Despite all their efforts they've failed to undermine the strike. But lack of leadership has meant the strikers have continually found themselves pushed back on to the defensive. ■

Scargill's strike

It's impossible to talk about the strike without mentioning Arthur Scargill, the most hated union leader in Britain, according to the press (and that was before the strike began). He has cast a giant shadow over the last six months. The Tories and MacGregor depict him as a power mad extremist tearing at the fabric of civilisation. He is clearly extremely popular with the miners. Even for socialists critical of the role of all union leaders, there is something about Scargill which seems to be different.

And the fact is, Scargill is different. Anyone familiar with the Len Murray or Alastair Graham style of union leader can only delight in watching Scargill argue with reporters, get arrested on picket lines and refuse to condemn picket violence. But there are important reasons why Scargill acts as he does. And there are important limitations on his activity.

Firstly he comes from a background of rank and file organisation in the Yorkshire coalfield. Although a criticism of Scargill is that he has forgotten many of the lessons he learnt in those days, nonetheless he still reflects it to some extent. That is why he is

prepared to picket in certain circumstances and why he appears to have much more feel for the strikers on the ground than a number of the area leaderships.

But it is for that reason as well that the Tories want to make an example of Scargill and the way he is running the strike. They prefer their trade union leaders more tame and distant from the members they claim to represent.

Secondly, Scargill has little choice but to fight. At stake for him is his whole future as a union leader. Certainly there are those within the NUM leadership itself who would like to see the back of him. That is why on occasions he has attempted to appeal over the heads of the area leaderships. Certainly the latter don't all feel so threatened. Jack Taylor knows that the massive Selby complex assures a future for the union in Yorkshire whether this strike wins or loses.

These factors force Scargill to act to the left of the leaders but with little room to manoeuvre. He cannot break fully from the other NUM leaders, or from the strategy mapped out. Although in the early days, he was quite an enthusiastic supporter of mass picketing, since Orgreave he has moved much closer to the other bureaucrats. There has not been any attempt to repeat the sort of mass picketing which took place at Orgreave.

Organising rank and file

The Clyde Workers' Committee in 1915 gave excellent guidelines on how to treat leaders like Scargill: 'We will support the officials just so long as they rightly represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them.'

In other words, socialists should recognise the important differences between Scargill and a number of other union leaders, and try to use those differences to the advantage of the rank and file. But we should not have any illusions.

It was Scargill who wanted to set up a paper trade union international with countries like Poland—a country which now is breaking the strike by supplying scab coal. It was Scargill who before the strike put such





faith in the Triple Alliance from above, without talking about building the rank and file links from below between different unions which alone could have ensured its success. And it is Scargill who still keeps the arguments within the executive behind closed doors, instead of taking them to the members.

His practice can be extremely good on occasions. But it is still tied to his politics and position as a union leader—and that is where his weakness lies. ■

Upholding British rule

THE police riot on the anniversary of internment brought down a howl of criticism on the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Labour, Liberal and SDP politicians criticised the RUC for their 'excess' which left one man dead after being shot at point blank range by a plastic bullet.

To many the incident seemed to be evidence of another move towards a Tory police state. But the truth is that on both sides of the Irish border the police have always held far greater powers than the police in Britain. That has been the direct legacy of British colonial rule.

In 1922 as the two Irish states came into existence two new police forces were created — the RUC and the *Gárda Síochána* (the Civil Guards). Both were created in a situation in which the new states were under attack. In the south of Ireland a civil war was breaking out between those who supported the treaty with Britain and those who opposed it. In the North the new state, solidly Unionist, faced the permanent opposition of the Catholic minority.

Both new police forces were built in the mould of the old Royal Irish Constabulary. For nearly a century the RIC had upheld British rule in Ireland. Directly controlled by the British colonial administration the RIC was an armed, paramilitary body stationed



RUC—paramilitary police

in barracks around Ireland. The RIC's priority was in dealing with those republicans opposed to British rule.

Both the RUC and the *Garda* inherited that concern with republicanism. Both new states saw republicanism as the main opposition.

Enforcing sectarianism

The RUC was set up by legislation which simply copied the statutes governing the RIC. The new force wore the same dark uniforms with a cap badge modelled on the RIC. It was permanently armed, centrally controlled by the new Stormont government and stationed in specially constructed barracks inherited from the RIC.

Preference in recruitment was given to RIC officers and members of the A Specials — the full time equivalent of the infamous B Specials, the armed Protestant militia. Supposedly the RUC would have Catholics as a third of its force. The best proportion ever reached was eleven percent.

In 1969 people were shocked to discover this situation still existed. Nightly they saw the RUC attack Catholics demanding civil rights. When the Labour government sent British troops into Northern Ireland it pro-

mised the RUC would be reformed. The Hunt Commission produced a report outlining steps to make a police force 'more civilian in nature'. Central to that was the disarmament of the RUC.

All of this was simply ignored — even Hunt's suggestion that the RUC's uniform be changed to blue to make it more 'British'. The B Specials were abolished but the Unionist government ensured 400 of them were hurriedly recruited to the RUC. Since 1969 the RUC has increased in strength by 268 percent.

To the South the *Garda* was set up by legislation which simply deleted reference to the RIC and inserted the new name. The massive recruitment of RIC members brought about a mutiny in the new force among pro-republican members. The new government quickly moved to enforce the ex-RIC elements who formed many of the *Garda's* officers and instructors. Today the *Garda* operates from barracks similar to the RUC and its record is scarcely less distinguished.

On both sides of the Irish border two police forces exist with a fierce record of repression against those challenging the state. Both share the legacy of the RIC and British colonial rule. ■

Chris Bamberg

Biting the hand

Dummy bites Ventriloquist. Well, not quite. But the arguments which have broken out between East Germany and Russia look a bit like it.

The cause of contention is a new DM950 (about £300m) loan which a consortium of West German banks have raised for the East German government. The East Germans are to repay the loan, and 7.5 percent interest, over a period of five years. On top of this a condition for the loan were a number of concessions about things like visits to East Germany by West Germans and access to West German TV in East Germany.

There is nothing particularly new about any of this. East Germany has borrowed a total of 10 billion dollars from Western banks and governments in recent years. A similar loan last year created no problems with Moscow, even though a key role in the negotiations was played by the right wing Bavarian politician, Franz Joseph Strauss. Inter-German trade has been a vital ingredient for the East German economy for decades and now totals more than £2 billion every year.

Yet articles have appeared in the Russian press which are clearly critical of the latest loan and which imply that the East German leader Hoenecker should cancel this month's visit to West Germany.

And the East German government has deliberately seemed to snub the Kremlin. It has broken with tradition by failing to reprint the Russian articles in its own press, instead publishing articles from Hungary and elsewhere which praise East/West economic ties.

Russia's economic dominance

Articles appearing or not appearing in the official press may not, on the face of it, seem a big issue but on occasions in the past such shadow boxing has been the prelude to major bust-ups in the Eastern bloc (for instance, the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s and the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968). So inevitably there is speculation about a major rift between Russia and its most faithful client state.

However, speculation apart, there are important points to be made about the squabble.

Russia's rulers have been following a policy in the last few years of getting the Eastern bloc to cut back on its ties with the rest of the world economy. Instead, the stress is on trying to avoid the effects of the world crisis by integrating the economies of the Eastern states with each other.

This policy appeals to Russia's rulers because the overwhelming weight of their own economy compared to the others means that they are bound to dominate such an arrangement. At the same time, they believe they have sufficient resources inside Russia to be able to keep the economy expanding into the 1990s despite losing the advantages

in terms of access to new techniques and economies of scale which integration with the rest of the world would give.

This does not mean they do not want deals with individual Western states or companies (like the gas pipeline into Western Europe). But they want those deals to be under their own centralised control, believing this will enable them to enforce terms favourable to themselves. So they have wanted increased economic links between West and East Germany to be dependent on the West Germans making concessions to themselves over the question of missile deployment.

The policy harks back to that pursued by all the great capitalist powers in the 1930s of responding to world slump by building up militarised, economically self-contained blocs. The Russians think their size enables them to get away with a modern version of this policy (just as Reagan thinks the US's size enables it to get away with a Keynes-style armaments-led boom).

But this approach cannot appeal to the smaller fry in the Russian bloc. They believe that their economies will stagnate and even decline unless they can get access to the most modern technology. East German's links with West Germany have been an important ingredient in the formula that has made it the



most economically successful of the Eastern bloc states in recent years. Its rulers cannot be happy about having to abandon that formula under Russian pressure. And the rulers of other countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland feel very much the same.

The present disagreements between Russia and East Germany are important not because a major rift between the two countries is likely but because they point to a source of division between Russia and the other East European states which we can expect to come to the fore again and again in the next few years.

They are an expression of a world capitalist crisis that individual states cannot simply turn their backs on. ■

Chris Harman

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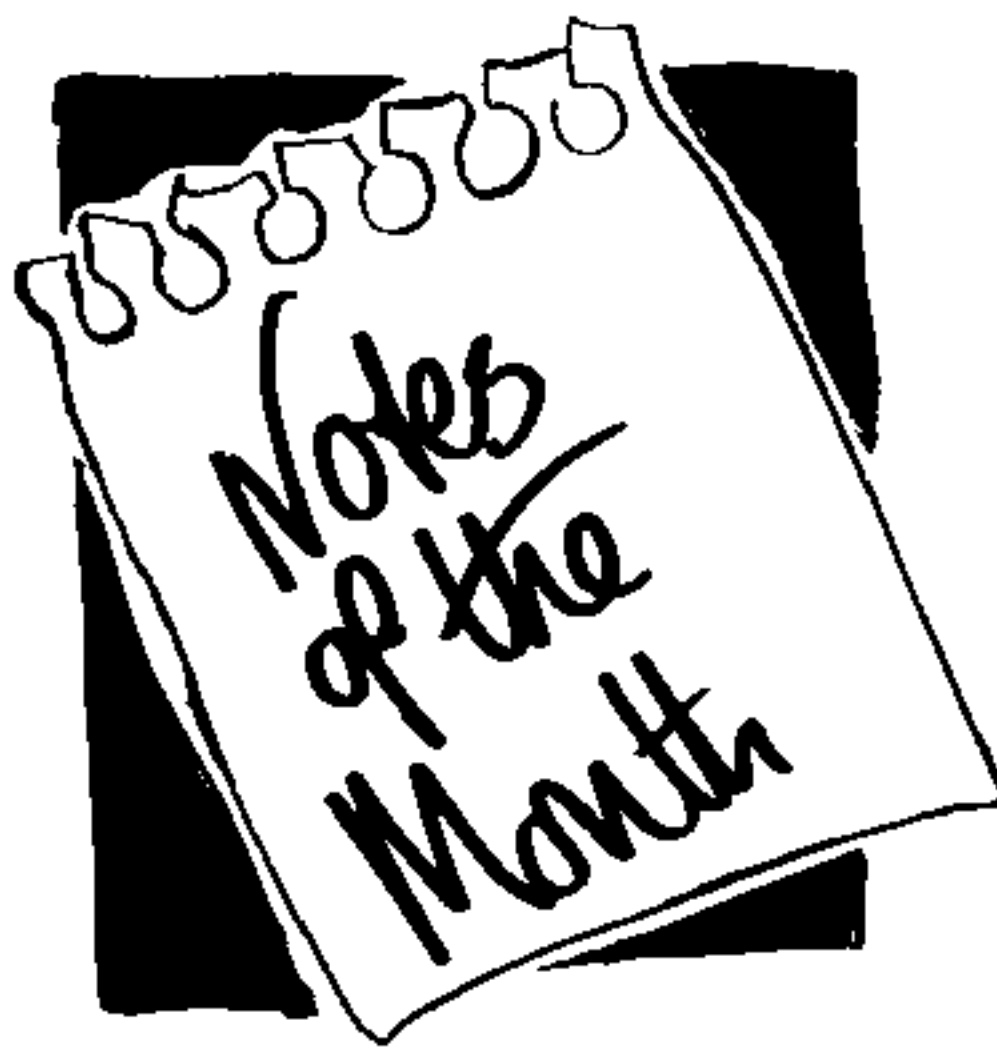
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Disunity at the unit

The GLC has been trying to smooth over a row which could prove embarrassing in the months to come. It concerns the much vaunted women's unit — set up under the GLC women's committee only two years ago. The head of the unit, one Louise Pankhurst, is leaving with a pay-off of £30,000 on condition she doesn't talk about the unit's internal rows. She is being defended by a Tory councillor. Meanwhile GLC Labour members are equally tightlipped.

Behind it all fly vague accusations of institutionalised racism on the one hand, of black nationalism on the other. Chief villain of the piece according to the press is councillor Valerie Wise. She is accused of being 'ambitious' and of expanding the unit to a far larger size than Louise Pankhurst ever expected (it is rumoured to be reaching a staff of 70 soon).

But the differences do appear more political than personal. It was never at all clear what Pankhurst's feminist credentials were, apart from her name (although she isn't and never claimed to be related to the suffragette family). Some of the allegations of racism appear to have been directed at her, and it is thought that she was considering legal action to clear her name at one point. The job of £20,000 a year administrator probably didn't sit comfortably with the radical ideas coming from the women's committee and its strong feminist supporters.

The job is now being shared amongst two women, but this doesn't appear to have solved any problems. Allegations of old pals' acts and complaints from trade unions about job appointments have added to the problems. Indeed it appears that some of the senior staff in the unit see little need for a union at all, and at least one shop steward has been victimised for campaigning about some of the unit's practices. Attempts to solve some of these tensions seem only to have created new ones. A two day gathering in Brighton for all staff to discuss the tensions only led to more problems. With

complaints about the lack of childcare provision, and failure to pay overtime and out of town allowances for the weekend. This in turn led to a row about the unit's management failure to inform and consult with the unions.

The allegations of a black separatist takeover would fit with a lot of the politics dominant in what's left of the women's movement today. The only two regular publications, *Spare Rib* and *Outwrite* both have a strong emphasis on black women, third worldist politics and the racism of white feminists. It would be surprising if these ideas didn't have some impact on the women's committee and so on the staffing of the women's unit.

The allegations of racism are vague, but appear to have involved staffing and promotion disputes as well as complaints that black women's groups and organisa-

Population politics

The US government has further restricted the right of women to abortion by stopping money which might go towards funding them. Although the American team at the Mexico City population conference last month backed off from their original complete freeze on abortion funding, they have still dealt a severe blow to agencies trying to provide contraception and abortion in various parts of the world.

They are now saying that funds for contraception can still continue—as long as they are segregated from abortion funds. But this 'concession' does not apply to non-government organisations—which stand to lose all their money.

Contraception is much bigger politics than it often appears. For women in many parts of the world contraception and abortion are not freely available. In Ireland both are illegal. But in other parts—particularly the third world—contraception and abortion are used as a means of forcing the poor peasantry and working

classes to restrict the number of children they have. An allegation which would certainly apply to working class women. All in all it is a sad picture for those that started off with good intentions.

No doubt Pankhurst's departure will allow the argument to blow over. And with the threat of abolition facing the GLC, there will no doubt be more pressing problems. What the arguments show is that the whole basis of the unit is fairly dubious. A genuinely socialist council would surely have employed women active and concerned over women's issues on the same salary as the people they worked with. And it would have attempted to raise issues which benefitted working women in London as a whole. The row at the women's unit doesn't appear, unfortunately, to have moved it in that direction. ■

classes to restrict the number of children they have.

The contrasts show the relevance of the old abortion campaign slogan 'a woman's right to choose'. The right to choose is already denied to millions of women.

There seem to be two reasons for the US argument. One is that they want to restore the 'natural balance' between the size of population in a country and the state of its economy.

The other is pressure from the American anti-abortion lobby in election year. The hardline anti-abortion Moral Majority has little support from the mass of the American population (a recent opinion poll showed only 5 percent shared their views). But that doesn't stop the Reagan administration pandering to them. The fact that the US team in Mexico was headed by well known right winger James Buckley can only have given them pleasure.

The consequences of this policy are serious enough in the United States. They can be catastrophic elsewhere. As it is, only a pitiful £1,500 million a year is being spent throughout the world on contraception. Withdrawal of US aid will dent this figure. The Planned Parenthood Federation could lose a fifth of its annual budget.

As usual, the real losers will be the countless women denied the right to have children, or not, when and as they decide. ■



Miners' wives

One of the most remarkable and remarked on features of the miners' strike has been the involvement of the miners' wives. In most areas, the wives have been instrumental in setting up food centres, providing meals for strikers and their families. They have joined local demonstrations, and up to 20,000 marched in London in support of the strike. A minority of the wives have gone picketing and some have travelled the country raising money, speaking at support meetings and arguing their case.

It has been a very positive and encouraging step in a strike which hasn't always seemed encouraging. A history of even the last ten years shows a number of strikes where the male strikers have been opposed by a number of their wives, often with serious effects on the strike itself.

On the face of it, the present miners' strike should have been one where press, employers and government appealed to the wives to 'see reason' and get the men back to work. This is especially the case since a sizeable minority of miners themselves have been scabbing throughout the strike. But that didn't happen.

Action and passivity

Instead the wives have been solidly behind the strike. Even in the divided areas like Nottinghamshire, the striking miners' wives appear to be fully in support. The fact that the women's support has been turned into activity shows the depth of bitterness and determination in the mining areas.

But the wives' involvement has its negative side as well. There are many difficulties for those women who want to go picketing regularly. There is a shortage of money,

which leads some women to think they should give priority to the men. Many of the women have jobs—obviously a crucial source of income—which restrict their ability to picket. And there are family ties for many of the women. So they tend to do work around the strike that reproduces their normal work—cooking meals, running the canteens, playing a backup role to the pickets.

This leads to massive contradictions. On the one hand, the women see their role as a positive step forward which allows them to act collectively with other women and men, being forced to argue against the ideas in the press and so on.

On the other hand, they suffer from exactly the same problems as their husbands. The strike remains at a passive level. There is virtually no action independent of the bureaucracy. Pickets have been curtailed. All that has a spin-off in terms of the ideas of the miners and their wives.

It means the wives' organisation remains very much under the influence of the bureaucracy. This has seemed particularly true over the last two months, when the emphasis of the strike has turned more towards winning public support, rather than adopting militant tactics which can win. Women and children are usually regarded as more sympathetic figures than pickets fighting the police. So if the main aim is to build sympathy among the general public, the women's organisation can play a very important role. In practice this means the notion of women's organisation has never broken with the traditional ideas about the role of women.

This was evident on the wives' march in London during August. It was led by Betty

Heathfield and Ann Scargill. Why? Because they are the wives of the union's president and general secretary. It presented a petition to the Queen, because the march deliberately tried to avoid politics. The tops of Socialist Worker placards were removed on the orders of female bureaucrats from the South East TUC. Socialists were discouraged from selling papers or putting across their ideas.

Some people might conclude from this that the wives are less political than their husbands. That isn't so. A number disagreed with the stewards and with the lack of politics. What it points to, rather, is the way in which the whole strike has been run.

Few people have been involved, decisions have remained firmly in the hands of the area leaderships. So the potential for building a strong confident rank and file who can act despite the bureaucracy hasn't been realised. What is true of the men is even more true of the women who have had even less opportunity to picket, to travel or to speak. That means accepting a demonstration which deliberately plays down class politics, and plays up the traditional role of women.

That is precisely the politics of the bureaucracy. They may talk about the importance of women's involvement, but they still see it as a token. All this makes the claim by many feminists that the miners' wives are an example of a new women's movement a bit thin.

Challenging the old ideas

The women's organisation mirrors the passivity and weaknesses of the strike. It also shows what potential can exist when working class women organise. But the potential and the actuality are two different things.

People's ideas change in struggle. By taking action to change the world, they begin to perceive a view of the world which conflicts with their old one. But people don't all change in the same way or at the same pace.

In particular they don't necessarily look to ideas which challenge the *whole* system. So someone can argue against Thatcher, MacGregor and so on, but still accept the ideas of the trade union bureaucracy.

There are very few people who challenge these ideas at present. Certainly most feminists do not. The wives' demonstration was an interesting indication of that. The trade union bureaucracy was quite happy to allow certain feminists to organise the demonstration, so long as there was no serious challenge to the bureaucrats' control.

And the feminists—often the very same people who have spent years attacking sexist language, women being treated as the property of men and so on—were happy to oblige. None of those issues have been raised when it comes to the miners' wives, nor have any of the backward ideas been challenged in any serious way.

The explanation for this lies in many feminists' acceptance of reformist politics. Far from helping the wives to organise, they will, like their male counterparts, use them as a stage army—useful at times, but a bargaining counter rather than a strength in their own right. ■



Portugal ten years on

Ten years after the Portuguese Revolution of the Flowers, many of its gains are being rolled back. Paul McGarr reports.

On 25 April 1974, the 48 year old fascist dictatorship in Portugal was overthrown in a coup led by junior officers in the army. With the regime bogged down in costly colonial wars in Africa the coup was supported by most sections of Portuguese society. This ranged from industrialists who wanted to move towards the EEC and modernise Portuguese industry, the conscript army tired of fighting wars they knew they couldn't win, to the working class who had suffered nearly half a century of low wages and police repression.

Over the next year and a half a revolutionary crisis of immense proportions unfolded in Portugal and in the summer of 1975 workers' power was seriously on the agenda. For many reasons this possibility was never realised.

Following a right wing offensive on 25 November 1975 the gains made by the working class have been slowly but systematically eroded as the Portuguese ruling class re-established its hold on power.

One of the most vivid symbols of the revolutionary period in Portugal was the figure of Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. Otelo was one of the army officers who organised the initial coup which overthrew the dictatorship and who, under the impact of the social upheavals and workers' struggles, moved close to the revolutionary left in 1975, though the illusions of the revolutionary left in Otelo and other 'progressive' officers was one of their central weaknesses.

The Portuguese economy

Ten years on, as if to underline the defeat of the revolutionary possibilities and the restoration of 'normality', Otelo is in jail on trumped up charges of 'terrorism' (amongst the evidence is the possession of 'revolutionary books!') and the Socialist Party-led government is pushing through an Internal Security Law which seeks to construct a new secret police.

The government, led by Mario Soares of the Socialist Party (PS) in coalition with the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), is faced with a world economic crisis which is hitting Portugal particularly viciously. Its economy, with the partial exception of textiles, is unable to compete effectively on the world market and promised foreign investment has not materialised. Last year a £1 billion Ford plant, intended to be the centrepiece of the Sines industrial complex, was indefinitely shelved.

The scale of Portugal's foreign debt is immense. In 1982 it was over £13 billion, which at 58 percent of GDP is one of the highest, proportionately, in the world.

The ruling class have responded in the usual fashion by attempting to make the working class pay by increasing the competitiveness of Portuguese industry.

The 'socialist' Soares has taken to this task with a relish that must make him a prime contender for a place in the ruling class's hall of fame. He and his party played a key role in defusing the revolutionary situation of the mid 1970s and are now pushing through one of the severest austerity programmes in Western Europe.

The ruling class offensive has rolled back many of the 'gains of the revolution'. The previously nationalised banking system has been reopened to private capital, and the law has been changed to allow lay offs in industry, which were previously banned. However these measures have been insufficient and in the last year the offensive has been stepped up. There have been massive price increases in basic foodstuffs and in public transport charges. But the biggest attack has come on the wages front.

Whole sections of workers have simply not been paid for months on end. At the time of writing this affects something like 150,000 workers. In some cases they have not been paid for over 14 months and at the giant Lisnave shipyard in Lisbon workers are owed two months wages. Many workers have been forced to rely on loans from relatives but as the amount they are owed and the number of workers affected increases real hardship is large and growing.

The Communist Party (PCP), which is the main working class party and which has a monolithic grip on the main union federation, the CGTP—has not provided any focus for a serious fightback.

Despite its ferocious verbal attacks on the government in practice it limits its activities to token demonstrations and calls for the PCP to be in the government.

In these circumstances, although there is growing anger among many workers, there is also an attitude of resignation among many others. When the boss says he can't afford to pay this month many workers see no alternative but to keep working in the hope they may be paid next month, and with no coordinated fightback many fear to risk fighting on their own in case the factory simply closes altogether.

The internal security law

Nevertheless the demonstrations this year on 25 April, to mark the tenth anniversary of the overthrow of the dictatorship, and on May Day were large and the ruling class is clearly aware of the possibility that this passivity may not continue indefinitely in the face of attacks. The Internal Security Law being pushed through is an attempt to reassure domestic and foreign capital and to be ready to meet any concerted fightback by the working class.

The supposed pretext for the law is the need to crack down on a wave of 'left wing terrorism'. In reality the law has little to do with this. The law proposed to create a special police force to coordinate 'anti-terrorist' activities with powers to open mail and tap telephones (both explicitly banned by the constitution drafted in the revolution-



Portuguese soldiers and sailors join with workers on the verge of revolution

ary years a decade ago).

More importantly the law gives the government the power in 'special circumstances' (to be decided by the government of course) to ban strikes in 'essential' industries (again the government decides what it considers 'essential') and to 'temporarily' close workplaces if the needs of Internal Security demand—in other words to impose lockouts. The law also gives the government the power to ban demonstrations and meetings.

The ruling class and Soares will continue their offensive to try and solve their economic crisis and are preparing to meet working class resistance head on. The problem for the left is whether they can turn the undoubted anger which exists among many workers into a real fightback. It cannot be ruled out that the PCP (as it has often done in the past) will make a left turn and lead some kind of fight. But this will primarily be a manoeuvre to get influence in the government and to guard its working class base.

The decline of the left

But, more importantly, what of the revolutionary left which ten years ago was the most powerful in Europe?

Unfortunately, the picture is gloomy. The PRP, with whom the SWP had links in 1974 and 1975 and who were unquestionably the best organisation in Portugal at the time, no longer exist. The PRP's politics had many weaknesses, principally a tendency towards illusions in the actions of small armed groups and in 'left' army officers.

These weaknesses meant that they failed to measure up to the harsh test posed for revolutionaries by the situation in 1975 and have proved even more fatal in the period of retreat since then.

When the leadership of the PRP were jailed for four years in 1978 the party disintegrated and elements were involved in the formation of FUP (Forces of Popular Unity), the party led by Otelo. The politics of FUP (who have something like 150 members) are not marxist in any sense and represent the worst elements of the PRP tradition.

Their open support of FP25, the alleged 'left wing terrorists' had led to the closing down of their headquarters in Lisbon and the arrest of Otelo and much of their leadership, along with others who are not in FUP—though this could turn out to be a political blunder by the government if they can't produce any hard evidence, especially in the case of Otelo.

The only organisations of the revolutionary left are the Maoists of the Reconstructed Communist Party (PCP-R)—the name says enough—and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR), the Portuguese section of the Fourth International. Both have a couple of hundred members at best and formed a curious electoral alliance (of Maoists and Trotskyists!) in the elections last year. The PSR headquarters in Lisbon is a poignant symbol of the decline of the revolutionary left. A large building, formerly a hive of activity, is now half derelict with the PSR running a café in a side street round the

back.

Nevertheless at least the PSR produce a regular paper which is the only serious revolutionary paper produced in Portugal today. The paper, and the organisation, is obsessed with 'politics in the large'—huge articles on the presidential elections, which are over a year away, the trade union leadership and international issues, with little attention paid to day to day workers' struggles—not one strike report in the last

Divided Cyprus

Cyprus remains a divided island ten years after the Turkish coup. Ali Saffet reports.

Ten years ago, on 22 July, the Turkish armed forces landed on the northern shores of Cyprus. Within a month 40 percent of the island was occupied, thousands were dead and the independent Republic of Cyprus was divided. Over a thousand Greek Cypriots died in the first days of the invasion; 2,000 are still missing. Fifty thousand houses were demolished and 145 Greek Cypriot centres of habitation turned into ghost towns as the population were forced to migrate to the south. Twenty thousand Greek Cypriots are now refugees in the south, unable even to visit their homes and land in the Turkish-occupied north.

The division of the island had been consolidated over the past ten years. It is now argued that Greek and Turkish Cypriots cannot possibly live together in peace and never could. It's worth seeing what lies behind this argument.

Cyprus became part of the British Empire in 1914. The island's importance was military and strategic: it was seen by imperialist powers as a huge naval base within easy reach of south-east Europe, North Africa and, most importantly, the Middle East.

With one of the largest Communist Parties in Western Europe (AKEL), strong trade union organisation and a tradition of anti-imperialist struggle, the island has not been easy to rule. The British ruled it with their most time-honoured method: divide and rule. In the inter-war period, as Greek Cypriots struggled for independence, Turkish Cypriots (18 percent of the island's population) were used against them. The legislature was rigged in such a way that Greek Cypriots were unable to legislate anything at all; the judiciary and police force were packed with Turkish Cypriots.

When hopes of independence were again dashed by the British after the War, anti-imperialist feelings were channelled into EOKA, a nationalist organisation founded by General Grivas.

EOKA argued for *Enosis* (union with Greece), rather than independence, and soon gained the support of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie and the Church (which controlled 20 percent of the arable land on

three issues of the paper.

Of the thousands who were around the revolutionary left ten years ago many, seeing no alternative, have drifted back into the orbit of the Communist Party or out of political activity altogether.

It remains to be seen whether any individuals, from the remnants of the PRP or other organisations, can draw the lessons and begin to rebuild a serious revolutionary current in Portugal.

the island, as well as numerous profitable businesses). AKEL's failure to adopt a principled stand also enabled EOKA to gain large-scale working class support.

Throughout EOKA's struggle against the British, the Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie supported the latter, spawning their own terrorist organisation (VOLKAN) which fought alongside the 30,000 British troops on the island.

The island gained its independence in 1960; Britain, Greece and Turkey were the guarantors of its independence. British military bases remained on Cypriot soil. Imperialist interests were not, however satisfied by this arrangement. The seeds of inter-communal enmity were therefore continually fostered. EOKA was replaced by EOKA-B, VOLKAN by the Turkish Resistance Organisation (TMT).

Throughout the post-war period AKEL has been the largest party on the island in terms of the popular vote. It has, however, refused to take power, preferring to play second fiddle to Archbishop Makarios.

When, in 1974, a well known Cypriot fascist, Nikos Samson, attempted a coup with the support of the Greek colonels' junta of the time, the Turkish government had a perfect excuse to invade and partition the island. The Cypriot working class, Greek



**Makarios:
represented
wealth
church
and state**

and Turkish, thus suffered a great blow. They have borne the consequences over the past ten years.

This makes the re-unification of Cyprus extremely difficult. It is true that Turkish Cypriots have no illusions in (and certainly no love for) the Turkish army. They do, however, see it as the lesser of two evils: they are a small minority and feel threatened both economically and by the talk of 'union with Greece'. Unpleasant as it is, therefore, the army is seen as protection. Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, see the Turkish army as invaders of their land and homes. This further pushes them towards desperate nationalism, towards the idea of unity with Greece.

Clearly, there is only one realistic solution in Cyprus. This lies in the struggle of Cypriot workers against *all* foreign troops on the island and against the Cypriot ruling class.

What do we mean by..?

Agitation and propaganda

To agitate is 'to excite or stir it up', according to the Oxford dictionary whereas propaganda is a 'systematic scheme or concerted movement, for the propagation of some creed or doctrine'.

These definitions are not a bad starting point. Agitation focusses on an immediate issue, seeking to 'stir up' *action* around that issue. Propaganda is concerned with the more systematic exposition of ideas.

The pioneer Russian marxist Plekhanov pointed out an important consequence of this distinction. 'A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but presents them to a mass of people'. Like all such generalisations this one should not be taken too literally. Propaganda can, in favourable circumstances, reach thousands and tens of thousands. And the 'mass of people' reached by agitation is a highly variable quantity. Nevertheless, the general point is sound.

Many ideas to the few

Lenin, in *What is to be done* develops this idea:

'The propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present "many ideas", so many indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration the death of an unemployed worker's family from starvation, the growing impoverishment etc and utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a *single idea* to the "masses". Consequently the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the *printed* word; the agitator by means of the *spoken* word.'

On this last point Lenin was wrong, because he was too one-sided. As he himself had argued, before and after he wrote the statement above, the revolutionary paper can and must be a most effective agitator. But this is a secondary matter. The

important thing is that agitation, spoken or written, does *not* try to explain everything. So we say and must say that those individual miners who resort to the capitalist courts against the NUM are scabs, villains, in terms of the struggles today; quite apart from the general argument about the nature of the capitalist state. Of course we make the argument but we seek to 'excite', 'stir up', rouse discontent and indignation' against the courts among as many working people as possible. This includes those (a big majority) who do *not* yet accept that the state, any state and its courts, is *necessarily* an instrument of class rule.

Or take another example. Lenin speaks of 'crying injustice'. Yet as a profound student of Marx he knew very well that there is no 'justice' or 'injustice' independent of class interest. He is pointing to, and appealing to, here, the *contradiction* between the notions of 'justice' or 'fairness' which are promoted by the ideologists of capitalist society and the *realities* exposed in the course of the class struggle. And that is absolutely right from an *agitational* point of view.



The propagandist, of course, must probe deeper, must examine the notion of justice, its development and transformation through different class societies, its inevitable class content. But that is not the main thrust of agitation. Those 'marxists' who do not understand this are themselves victims of bourgeois ideology, of timeless generalisations which reflect an idealised class society. Most important, they do not grasp concretely the way in which working class attitudes actually change. They do not understand the role of experience' for example the experience of the role of the police in the miners' strike. They do not understand the difference between agitation and propaganda.

Both are necessary, indispensable, but both are not always possible. Agitation requires bigger forces. Of course an individual can sometimes agitate effectively against a *particular* grievance, say, lack of soap, or decent toilet paper in a particular workplace, but a widespread *agitation* with a *general* focus is not possible without a significant number of people who are suitably placed to carry it, without a party.

So what is the importance of the distinction today? For the most part socialists in Britain are not talking to thousands or

tens of thousands. We are talking to small numbers of people, usually trying to win them through general socialist politics, rather than on the basis of mass agitation. So what we are arguing is basically *propaganda*. But it is here that the confusion arises. Because there is more than one sort of propaganda. There is a distinction between *abstract* propaganda, and that propaganda which can hopefully lead to activity, concrete or realistic propaganda.

Abstract propaganda raise ideas which are formally correct, but which do not relate to struggle or to the level of consciousness which exists among those to whom the ideas are being put. For example to argue that under socialism the wages system will be abolished is absolutely correct to place such a demand to workers today is not agitation, but propaganda of the most abstract form. Similarly constant demands for a general strike regardless of whether the prospect is a real one in the present situation leads not to agitation but to abstaining from the real struggle in the here and now.

Realistic propaganda on the other hand starts from the assumption that tiny groups of socialists cannot decisively influence large groups of workers at present in most circumstances. But it also assumes that there are arguments over specifics around which socialists can attempt to build. So the realistic propagandist in a factory will not argue for abolition of the wages system. He or she *will* argue for a set of demands which hopefully can lead the struggle to victory, and certainly beyond the tokens of the trade union bureaucracy. So they will argue, for example, for a flat rate increase, the full claim, all out rather than selective strike, etc.

Getting the balance right

None of this is agitation in the sense that Lenin talked about it' it is one or two socialists raising a set of ideas about how to win. But neither is it abstract propaganda' because it relates to a real struggle and so can relate to a sizeable minority of the workforce. This means that realistic propaganda can strike a chord with a much larger group of people than those who are fully open to socialist ideas. That' at present very small' group of people will be open to all the ideas of socialism. The larger group will not be but may still accept much of the propaganda of socialists about not trusting the officials, organising among the rank and file and so on.

The importance of the distinction is twofold. Those socialists who believe that they make propaganda in their small discussion groups, and agitate in their workplace, are very likely to overestimate their influence among the *mass* of workers and therefore miss the opportunity to build a base among a tiny number of supporters. Those who believe they just raise abstract propaganda in their discussions with other socialists and in their workplace are likely to adopt an abstentionist attitude when real struggles do break out.

By raising realistic propaganda in a period when mass agitation is not generally possible socialists are much more likely to be able to avoid both traps. ■

Duncan Hallas

TUC

a bang or a whimper?

The attention of the press and the left focuses on the annual Trades Union Congress this month, amid much speculation as to the fate of the so-called 'big bang'. Lindsey German and Andy Zebrowski look at the TUC's record of opposing the Tories and what are the prospects for this year's congress.

Most years, the annual TUC Congress is a non-event. It is fine for those bureaucrats who want an expenses-paid junket in Blackpool or Brighton — but to rank and file activists inside the unions it has usually appeared as an irrelevant charade.

This year it will be different. For the Congress will take place against a dramatic backdrop. The miners will have been on strike for six months. The NUM delegation and the left-led unions will be calling for solidarity action to be stepped up. They will do so to the acute embarrassment of the right in the TUC. The right would no doubt like the strike to end and Arthur Scargill to disappear — but that is clearly not going to happen before 1 September. And that means the right wing will have to pay lip-service to the need to win the strike.

The situation is even more embarrassing for Neil Kinnock. He has made strenuous efforts to distance himself from the strike since it began, seeing it as harmful to Labour's election chances and its new trendy image. But even he doesn't have that much room to manoeuvre. Given Thatcher's all-out confrontation and her refusal to give in to any of the miners' demands, even the Labour right wing is forced to at least give the appearance of supporting the strike. There is no doubt the

miners' strike will be the central issue at Congress. The left will be trying to turn Congress into a miners' support rally.

The fact that the strike will be six months old when Congress meets will force the right effectively to sit on its hands and silently pray for the strike to end.

They will point to the expense of a levy, and the inadvisability of breaking the law on picketing. They will also criticise Scargill's intransigence, although most will do so in very muted terms. Van Tuffin of the UCW has called for a one-day special conference to take the heat out of the situation. But they will be able to do little more.

Whereas the left will feel far more confident about raising their ideas and policies than a year ago. They know there are massive weaknesses with the miners' strike and with the levels of solidarity. But they also know there has been a changed mood among a sizeable minority of their members. The half-hearted call by Murray to strike in support of GCHQ had a resonance few of them expected and showed a growing bitterness with Tory policies.

The level of *passive* sympathy and support for the miners is also extremely high. This altered mood has been sufficient to give the left more confidence. But while they feel more confident than a year ago (after all the 1983 Congress was a massive victory for the right and the 'new realism'), they are still on the defensive as a whole.

The manual unions in particular are losing members and therefore in the long term influence and money. More importantly, the TUC left and right has been singularly ineffective in opposing the successive anti-union laws of the last five years. The fight of the NGA against them last year was sabotaged by

Five years of Tory rule

JANUARY 1980 In line with the Ridley plan to pick fights with weaker but significant sections of workers Thatcher attacks the steelworkers. The strike lasts for 13 weeks during which time an emotional Bill Sirs claims he is ready to go to prison. Instead he sells his members out in a deal that will cut steelworkers' jobs in half in the next couple of years.

The judges rule that solidarity strikes, flying pickets and blacking are illegal. Len Murray's contribution is to offer money so the ISTC can appeal to the Lords.

Moss Evans waits until week nine of the strike before instructing TGWU drivers not to cross picket lines. The TUC officially supports the strike. In practice this means a total donation of £80,000. In comparison Fleet Street AUEW alone gives £12,000.



Lenin Murray!

9 MARCH 1980 A huge demonstration called by the TUC takes place in London against the Prior Employment Bill. Len Murray uses this focus of militant opposition to the Tory law to proclaim 'our willingness to sit down with the government and put any problems on the table'

14 MAY 1980 A million workers strike against the government in the first of the days of action. During the hysterical press campaign, the *Daily Express* brands the TUC general secretary 'Lenin' Murray. The massive build up to the day meant it was seen as a flop. This was ensured as the TUC played down the idea of strike action as the day approached.

MAY 1981 North West Region TUC organises the People's March for Jobs. Aptly summed up by the *Morning Star* as a march to 'unite the bishop and the brickie'. No politics were allowed on the Sheffield leg of the march.

29 NOVEMBER 1981 Only 5,000 turn up to greet the 'Jobs Express'—375 young people had been shunted around the country in a TUC effort to chase public opinion.

16/17 JULY 1982 The Finance and General Purposes Committee (inner cabinet) of the TUC stabs the ASLEF train drivers in the back. The dispute lasts three weeks and receives solid support from the drivers. For the first time since 1926 a whole union is threatened with the sack. The TUC response? ASLEF is threatened with expulsion from the TUC unless the strike is called off. A relieved Ray Buckton accedes saying that unless a general strike is called his members will have to return to work.

A myth grows up about the role of the lefts on the treacherous Finance and General Purposes Committee. The decision to sell out is unanimous despite the presence of Moss Evans and Alan Sapper at the meeting.

5 APRIL 1982 TUC special conference against the Tebbit Bill. Control of any future fight-back is placed firmly in the hands of the general council, the TUC leadership. Most delegates, with the notable exception of Arthur Scargill, accept the argument that small battles over the law should be avoided.

The conference takes place the week after the TGWU instructs shop stewards to cross dockers' picket lines in London since they represent illegal secondary picketing.

14 APRIL 1982 Health Service wages dispute is launched with a one-hour stoppage called for 2.30 in the afternoon—the least disruptive time.

26 APRIL 1982 Two hour stoppage called by COHSE well supported in a series of pickets and rallies up and down the country.

19 MAY 1982 The biggest ever health workers' strike takes place, as the TUC call for a 24-hour stoppage gets a massive response. Miners at three Yorkshire pits come out in support.

27 MAY 1982 The first of the weekly two-hour stoppages takes place.

8 JUNE 1982 Hundreds of thousands of health workers support a further strike. They are joined on picket lines by thousands of workers from all industries in defiance of the law.

10 JUNE 1982 'Union Day' Leaflets against the Tebbit Bill

the TUC — something which will be raised with bitter acrimony at this year's Congress. And fines and sequestrations seem to be things that the trade union bureaucracy is accepting as a fact of life. Yet the anti-union laws can threaten not just the right to picket but — much more important for the bureaucrat — the assets, headquarters and very existence of the union itself.

That is why some sections of the bureaucracy see a limited (usually very limited) fight against the laws, Tory policy and so on as important, even though they will all try to confine the action to tokens. And that is why the divisions between right and left — which in broad terms have always existed — have taken on a greater importance inside the TUC in recent years. In particular since the defeat of the NGA, the left leaders have tended to cohere together much more, attempting to provide an alternative pole to the right wing majority round Len Murray.

The key left-led unions are the TGWU, the NUM, NUR, NUPE, ACTT, TASS, ASLEF and the Bakers' Union. The right leads the AUEW, EEPTU, ISIC, IRSE, Engineers and Managers and the ISSA. The leader of last year's new realism, Alastair Graham, is being replaced on the General Council by a left from the CPSA executive. The balance is about three to two to the right at present. There are two lists of candidates for the 11 General Council seats to be contested by the 77 unions who do not get on automatically because they have under 100,000 members.

The differences between left and right are important.

It is easy to fall into two traps when talking about the splits inside the trade union bureaucracy. The first is to assume that the *only* fight

is that between left and right. Papers like the *Morning Star* and the *Militant* make this mistake. Class struggle and the fight to build a base inside the unions is often reduced to winning votes inside a particular executive or on the TUC General Council, regardless of whether this is reflected in an increased level of struggle and confidence on the shopfloor.

The other trap is to believe that both the left and right trade union leaders are exactly the same. They are not. It does make a difference whether a union leader calls on his members to support the miners' strike or not to support it.

It might mean little on its own, but it gives the opportunity to militants on the ground to argue for levies, collections, refusals to cross picket lines, solidarity action or whatever. It can make a huge difference in particular workplaces where the arguments are taken up.

But while it is important to take advantage of the differences between different sets of bureaucrats it is even more important to understand why they arise. The trade union bureaucracy occupies a unique position in capitalist society. It is neither completely integrated nor completely separate from the system. Its job is to negotiate between capital and labour, so it vacillates.

In a period like today when the ruling class is trying to shift the balance of class forces in their favour, this vacillation becomes more acute. The trade union leaders alternate between resisting and running away. It is this which explains the deeper division between left and right.

The pressures are on certain sections of the bureaucracy to stand and fight (the alternative may often be the decimation of a whole industry and so of the union itself). On the other hand fear of what can be lost by the union machine if there is a major confrontation leads to compromise and



concession in the face of massive Tory attacks. Hence the contradictory attitudes towards major issues like the miners' strike and GCHQ.

It also explains the emphasis on token action that the left leaders in particular have taken in the past few years. But even though the left leaders will usually be very timid in putting forward action, and even though their politics will usually be, as Trotsky said, 'distinguished by complete ideological shapelessness', the outcome of the TUC should not be a matter of indifference in any sense.

If the right wing is successful at playing down the miners' strike, arguing against solidarity action, justifying the sell-out to the anti-union laws and so on, they will have struck a massive blow to the miners' strike and will give Thatcher and McGregor much more confidence to stick the boot in. That is why it is crucially important that the right don't win and that the left are victorious.

But neither should anyone have illusions that such a victory will solve the problems of the miners' strike.

The left at the TUC will call for a 10p levy per member to support the miners — proposed by the NUR. No doubt there will also be calls to respect picket lines. But the reality behind the calls — after the experience of six months strike — is not so good.

As *The Financial Times* pointed out on 9 August, the right:

'will be aided by the private view of many left wing leaders that there is little they can offer in the way of solidarity through industrial action, and that a 10p levy on all members will cost them dear, especially if the strike is prolonged.'

Similarly the T&G has formally respected picket-lines since the early days of the dispute. Yet T&G drivers are daily crossing picket lines. All the iron ore and a lot of the coal that has been feeding the steel plants throughout the strike has been coming through registered ports employing registered dockers who are TGWU members.

Ron Todd can claim he is trying to get maximum solidarity from dockers and drivers. Ray Buckton can make disapproving noises about Shirebrook (ninety percent of the coal moving by train to the power stations is coming from the North Derbyshire area). Yet neither will campaign aggressively among their own most militant rank and file members to plug these holes in the support.

At the end of May Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton settled for a wage increase of between 4.9 and 5.6 percent for their members. This amounted to a half per cent increase on British Rail's original offer. The *Morning Star* hailed this as a victory at a time when Thatcher was desperate to avoid another powerful group of workers joining the miners.

When the dock strike broke out over the issue of blacking iron ore at Immingham, the TGWU was content to flex its muscles for two weeks and then pull back. They did not take the opportunity of extending the National Dock Labour Scheme to non-registered ports. And they emphasized that the dispute was nothing to do with the miners' strike.

Even the left officials in the NUM itself have been a barrier to victory: Mick McGahey in Scotland, Emlyn Williams in South Wales and Jack Taylor in Yorkshire have all gone along with the argument that steel production must continue to protect jobs. It is this gap between the left's word and deeds which presents the biggest problem for those who want to see the strike succeed.

are handed out by trade union leaders outside Waterloo station. Other action included...leafletting in other parts of the country. A truly pathetic display

19 JULY 1982 First three-day strike occurs. The level of health worker participation is high but the numbers of other workers visiting picket lines begins to dwindle.

23 JUNE 1982 Three quarters of a million health workers strike for a day. NUPE officials tell Yorkshire miners not to support the stoppage because their help will be needed later on in the dispute.

4 AUGUST 1982 In the middle of the health workers' week of action, southern editions of the daily papers fail to appear. The Fleet Street electricians have come out on strike, taking the call for solidarity seriously. Albert Spanswick of COHSE and Len Murray have already told SOGAT printworkers not to come out. Sean Geraghty, the electricians' branch secretary, is fined a pitiful £350 which is paid anonymously.

22 SEPTEMBER 1982 Two million workers strike in support of the health workers in the biggest Day of Action yet. The Congress meeting earlier in the month pointedly avoids calling for a 24-hour general strike.

OCTOBER 1982 Regional days of Action are called all over the country. The TUC's inventiveness, in calling for anything but the all-out strike that can win the dispute, knows no bounds.

8 NOVEMBER 1982 Nothing happens. The Day of Action for transport workers to show solidarity with the NHS workers is called off by the TUC. The reason? The Tories have added half a percent extra to their offer.

15 DECEMBER 1982 The health workers are finally sold out as the TUC Health Service Committee accepts a two-year deal. The biggest ever action in the hospitals and the biggest ever solidarity by other workers is poured down the drain.

JUNE-JULY 1983 The nine week strike by 24 NGA machine minders at the *Financial Times* ends in victory. The workers win £13 increase having demanded £17. Murray had threatened to suspend the NGA from the TUC if they didn't go back on management's terms.

18 AUGUST 1983 TUC prepares for the 'new realism' by talking to Tebbit. Len Murray talks of the minister's 'constructive and serious attitude'.

SEPTEMBER 1983 Blackpool TUC represents a massive shift to the right among the union leaders. Len Murray speaks of the need to talk to government, whoever is in power. There are moves to weaken the links with



the Labour Party. The effect of this is clearly to push Labour even further to the right. Scargill is treated as a laughing stock by Alastair Graham of the CPSA. He derides Scargill for his failure to lead his members in industrial action. Graham launches the 'new mood of realism'.

11 DECEMBER 1983 The TUC EPOC (employment policy) committee meets and decides to back the NGA in flouting the law in the *Stockport Messenger* dispute. The left accidentally won a majority. Len Murray spares everyone's embarrassment. He walks straight out to the waiting TV cameras and reverses the decision. Even the NGA leadership seem relieved. The *Financial Times* reports, 'Many members of the committee were privately amazed that Mr Wade (almost openly) and Mr Dubbins (less overtly) wanted to find a way out.'



28 FEBRUARY 1984 TUC Day of Action over the ban on unions at Cheltenham GCHQ. It is the biggest single day of political strike action for ten years. Len Murray calls for strikes in a fit of bureaucratic pique after Thatcher dismisses him in only eight minutes. Thatcher remains intransigent even though Alastair Graham

The response to the call marks a 'new mood' in the working class. The stoppages are organised on the ground by activists, since there is no time for the union machines to get into gear. Over a million workers strike including hundreds of factories in engineering and the car industry which have not responded so well to such a call for ten years.

29 MARCH 1984 Democracy Day. A Day of Action called by the TUC against Tory attacks on jobs and services in local government and local transport. The TUC still wants to talk to the CBI. It withdrew from the National Economic Development Council in March over the union ban at GCHQ. 'Neddy' is the forum for unions, government and employers' organisations. On 11 July, in the middle of both the miners' and dockers' strikes, the economic committee of the TUC decided on further talks with the CBI.

NO STRIKE DEALS

The EETPU's negotiation of a no strike deal with Hitachi at Hirwaun in South Wales was all set to make the union into a scapegoat for the left. The EETPU has negotiated a handful of such deals since 1981. But the Hitachi deal is different. Previously there were four other minority unions, of which the AUEW was the largest. But now the company and the EETPU have pushed the others out.

And a similar strategy is being pursued by management and the EETPU at a Thorn/EMI subsidiary in High Wycombe, Elco Plastics.

The other unions will find it difficult to pillory the electricians.

First, other unions have got in on the no-strike act — notably the AUEW the GMBATU, and of course, the civil service unions at GCHQ. Second, the AUEW is negotiating a single union no-strike deal with Nissan in Sunderland. Third, the EETPU has now decided there will be recognition of shop stewards from other unions at Hitachi, although it maintains sole negotiating rights.

The AUEW's outrage at the EETPU's behaviour has been largely for public consumption. The longer term strategy of the right wing is to force an amalgamation with the Electricians. They can argue that the divisions caused by the single union deals would be overcome by a merger.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

The notion of a 'new improved' Social Contract resurfaced recently at the TUC Consultative Conference on Low Pay held at Congress House on 26 July. The line up of left and right-led unions was interesting.

The problem was how to deal with the deterioration in the position of the low paid since the late seventies. One in six male manual workers were low paid in 1983, compared with one in ten in 1979, 80 percent of women are today low paid as opposed to 66 percent five years ago.

Only one delegate, Jack Dromey of the TGWU, argued for the use of industrial muscle to raise wages in all sectors of industry.



Unions offered no-strike deal at GCHQ

There was an unholy alliance between right and left. Both Alastair Graham of the CPSA and Rodney Bickerstaffe of NUPE supported the idea of the statutory minimum.

Graham has many low paid clericals in his union. He is always keen to exploit the possibilities of avoiding industrial action. But Bickerstaffe believes that his members simply do not have the strength to fight. What better then but to have a nice friendly Labour government up your wages with no necessity for struggle?

MURRAY'S SUCCESSOR

Len Murray's successor is now almost certain to be Norman Willis, the current deputy general secretary. The candidate of the right, David Lea, (one of two assistant general secretaries) now seems to have no chance.

Willis was a research director for the TGWU and has been pushed by his former union. His election will be seen by other union bureaucrats as a sign of the TWGU again exerting its influence. In fact it is likely to make little or no difference to the general Congress House strategy.

TALKS WITH GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYERS

Despite the talk of breaking off relations with the Government after the union ban at GCHQ, the TUC economic committee (clearly right wing this year) has been holding private talks with the CBI and looking for every opportunity to get back into the corridors of power.

The left bureaucrats have occasionally muttered about this, but there has been no attempt to challenge it. Trade union leaders enjoy comforting themselves with the notion that if they can't horsetrade with the Tories, at least they can snuggle up with the employers. Yet these are the same people who backed Eddie Shah at Warrington, who have applauded every stage of the government's step-by-step approach on anti-union laws, and who are now financially supporting the scabs in the miners' strike.

100 YEARS ON

THE ORIGINS OF THE FAMILY

Chris Harman looks at Engels' classic work on the family, and its critics

Frederick Engels spent the period after Marx's death in 1883 in a frantic labour of love. He took notebooks which Marx had filled with notes on 'ethnography' (what today is usually called cultural anthropology—the study of non-civilised peoples) and wrote, on the basis of them *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which was published for the first time in 1884.

The book has been one of the most abused in the Marxist canon. Anyone who has studied sociology or anthropology in the last 20 years will have been told that it is 'out of date rubbish', not to be taken seriously.

The book has faults. As Engels himself noted, it was based on ethnographical material 'now available' in 1884; much more such material has become available since. This means there are bound to be limitations to Engels' argument. What is more, he projected backwards from periods of early history about which there was some, limited knowledge, to draw conclusions about pre-historic periods about which there was virtually no knowledge at all.

But Engels' real 'offence' is that he made three arguments of immense importance:

- (a) Women's oppression is not a general feature of 'human nature', but has material roots in the sort of family which prevails.
- (b) The family itself is not invariant, and we can look back to societies in which the sort of family we know did not exist, and nor did women's oppression.
- (c) The move to the oppressive family coincided with the rise of class society.

The three contentions have revolutionary implications. It follows from them that women's oppression is not a result of biology or of the behaviour of individual men, but of class society. Women's liberation is then a very real possibility. But it cannot be achieved either by reforming the present system or by women cutting themselves off from men. It requires, instead, socialist revolution.

How do these contentions stand up against the evidence which is available to us today?

We have two main sorts of evidence: from archaeology and from anthropology. Both are limited in what they can tell us.

Archaeological evidence is based upon the material remains of societies that existed many thousands, or even millions of years ago. This can tell us something about the physiology of the earliest human beings; it also provides us with some of their tools, ritual artefacts and the remnants of some of the food they consumed.

But of certain key elements in their lives there is little trace: any wooden or woven tools or artefacts; any vegetarian food; their language and mythology.

So from the scantiest of evidence we have to make guesses as to their relations with nature and each other.

However, there are certain limited things we can conclude with some certainty. The most important concerns the ways in which human beings have provided for themselves materially.

Until about ten thousand years ago all human societies were based upon gathering and hunting. Tools were used to collect, cook and if necessary kill sources of food, shelter and clothing which were to be found 'wild' in the locality: nuts, wild fruit and tubers on the one hand, wild animals on the other. Because the supplies of both vegetable and animal foodstuffs in any locality would be limited, the size of the groupings humans lived in were limited too. And because the supplies would be exhausted after a certain period of time, the groupings were forced to move from place to place at fairly frequent intervals. Under such circumstances they could not accumulate more than a very small number of tools or foodstocks.

This was the period of pre-history which Engels, following Morgan and other nineteenth century writers called 'savagery'. It accounted for something like 90 percent of the span of existence of human beings with a biological makeup identical with our own (rather more than 99.5 percent if you include those of our earlier ancestors who were human rather than apelike in characteristics).

If there is a biological 'human nature', its features must have been laid down in this period (which is why the form of social organisation and the relationships between the sexes in that period has a bearing on all sorts of present day arguments).

Then, about 10,000 years ago peoples in some parts of the world discovered how to produce regular crops through burning off the wild



Frederick Engels

vegetation, and then planting seeds in ground which had been scratched with a hoe-like tool or had holes made in it with a digging stick. The initial techniques might have been rudimentary, but they increased the productivity of the particular locality enormously.

The human grouping now only had to move when the fertility of the soil was exhausted—every few years rather than every few months. It made sense to put a lot of labour into making relatively sophisticated artefacts, even if they were quite heavy. So now human beings devoted a lot of effort to the manufacture of clay pots: that in turn allowed them to store foodstuffs in a way which had not been possible previously. The increased and more secure supplies of food enabled them, in turn, to attract to them, and tame, relatively large animals (sheep, goats, pigs, cattle etc).

The average size of the groupings in which people lived was now much greater: it was not restricted by the locally available supplies of wild food; on the contrary, a bigger population could, up to a certain point, increase the amount of labour applied to the land and the output of food.

The evidence from archaeology

Archaeology provides evidence of one other important change which takes place at this point as well. For the first time there are stocks of weapons deliberately designed for killing other human beings. It becomes worth the while of one group of humans waging war on another in order to get control of their fertile land and their stores of food and artefacts.

These societies (known to present day anthropologists as 'horticultural' societies and to those who used the Morgan-Engels terminology as 'lower barbarism') in turn underwent a further development in some places. People discovered how to apply the muscle power of certain of their domesticated animals (especially the ox) to an improved wooden tool for tilling the soil, the plough. The result was a further massive improvement in agricultural productivity, the provision of enough food both to allow a much larger human population to live in the locality, much greater herds of animals to be bred, and many more human resources to be put into the production of tools and artefacts as opposed simply to food.

This stage of agriculture proper (or 'higher barbarism' in the Morgan-Engels terminology) provided a material basis on which was possible the development of towns, non-agricultural crafts, the first forms of writing, professional armies and priesthoods—in short, the stage of agriculture proper (or 'higher barbarism' in the Morgan-Engels terminology) provided a material basis on which was possible the development of towns, non-agricultural crafts, the first forms of writing, professional armies and priesthoods—in short, the stage of 'civilisation'.

The transitions from gathering-hunting to horticulture, from horticulture to agriculture proper and from agriculture to civilisation did not take place everywhere. Indeed, until capitalism spread out from Western Europe to sink its tentacles into all pre-existing societies, a very large portion of the world's peoples lived under material conditions very little different from those which preceded the rise of civilisation.

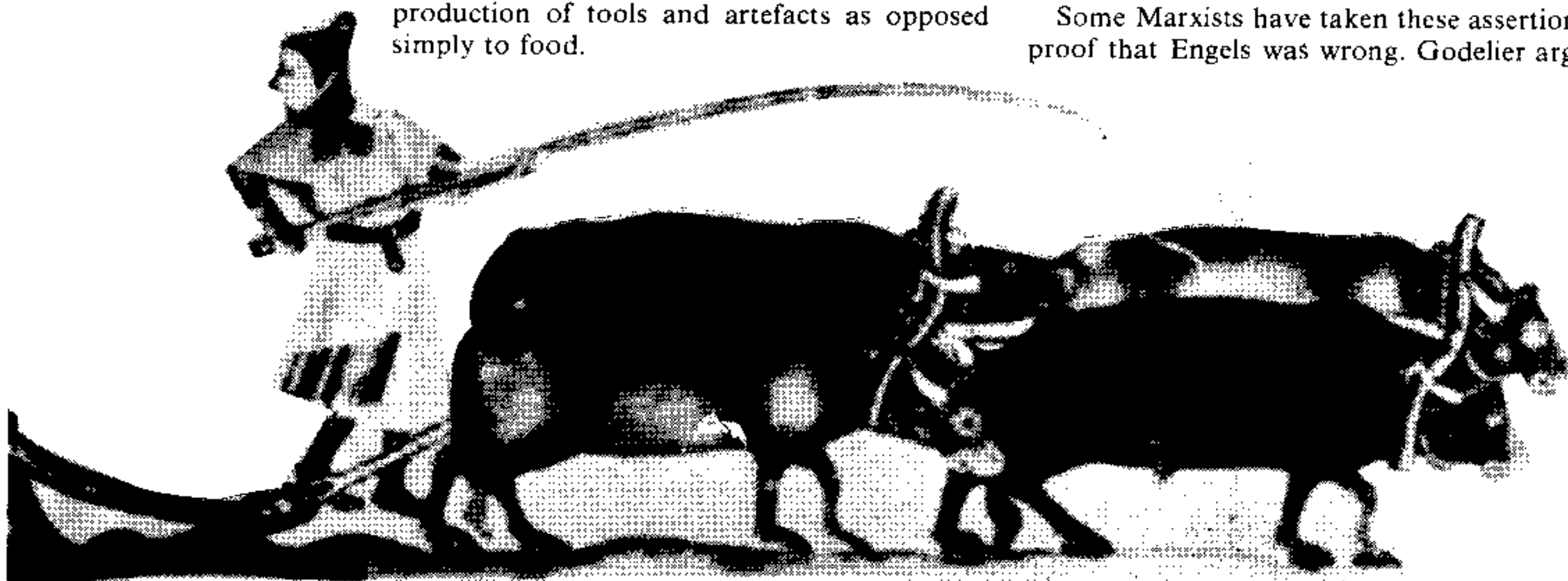
Anthropology has been the attempt to develop a 'science' based upon observing these so-called 'primitive' societies and drawing general 'theoretical' conclusions about them.

These observations and conclusions have then been used to make assertions about the nature of pre-historic societies existing in similar material conditions.

Although Engels and the American ethnologist Morgan who influenced him were among the first to use this approach, most people who have done so in the last half century have claimed the evidence refutes Engels' arguments about women's oppression and the family.

Thus the American anthropologist Linton claimed the family was an invariant of all societies, even existing among the higher monkeys. The most influential British anthropologists, Malinowski and Evans Pritchard tried to prove the same thing, with Evans Pritchard insisting, 'regardless of forms of social structure, men are always in the ascendancy (over women)'. The French anthropologist, Levi-Strauss, despite claiming in his earlier writings that he owed a debt to Marx, asserts the universality of male dominance by seeing the complex incest rules you find in many pre-civilised societies as 'rule for the reciprocal exchange of women by men'.

Some Marxists have taken these assertions as proof that Engels was wrong. Godelier argues,



'we can assume that in any society men's labour is evaluated more highly than women's' and Maurice Bloc denies there were ever societies in which 'women were equal to men, or in which classes did not exist'.

Finally, separatist feminists like Firestone, Ortner and Rosaldo have accepted the same basic argument. They accept that men have always been and will always tend to dominate—unless women separate themselves off.

Yet this use of the evidence from anthropology falls down on two counts.

Firstly, the 'primitive' societies which exist today cannot simply be assumed to be the same as those which existed everywhere until 5,000 or 10,000 years ago. They have gone on changing in periods since. Some of the gatherer-hunter societies that now exist (for instance, in parts of the Amazon region) were once horticultural societies that regressed; some of the peoples who live in agricultural societies are the descendants of civilisations which collapsed.

The existence alongside them of societies based on more developed forms of production has necessarily influenced all of the 'primitive' societies. Gathering-hunting peoples have usually only been able to maintain themselves in the face of pressures from horticulturalists, agriculturalists and, above all the 'civilised' in the most marginal areas—the Arctic, the Kalahari and Australian deserts, the tropical forests.

What is more all three sorts of pre-civilised society have been to a greater or lesser degree integrated into the world market: hunters sell animals' skins to capitalist traders; horticulturalists produce seeds or fibres for the Western multinationals; agriculturalists are part of the world's biggest single industry.

With the bourgeois market has come the bourgeois state and bourgeois religion, consciously setting out to change norms of behaviour to fit in with their own notions of morality.

It would hardly be surprising, then, to find imprinted on these societies today features of male dominance, which may not have existed in the past.

The second problem is that there is no doubt that the great majority of anthropological observers have expected to find these features. For all of their pretence at being 'scientists', they have been little more than individuals from established bourgeois societies who have gone to look at 'primitive' societies from the outside, often not even speaking the language, and taking with them all the prejudices of bourgeois society.

Such anthropologists have gone out to look at primitive societies in the expectation of finding exactly the features which capitalism has been imprinting on them. They have then used their observations to draw the conclusion that these features have always existed and must always exist!

It has only been in recent years, as some non-separatist feminists influenced by Marxism have looked again at their evidence that its faults have

been revealed. Malinowski, for instance, was able to claim that women played very little economic role in the Trobriand society he observed because he completely ignored the role of women in the collecting of banana leaves—even though he was photographed in front of a pile of them.

Other anthropologists have asserted that women play no role in certain Australian aborigine rituals: failing to observe a key point in the ritual in which the men (including, presumably, the male anthropologists) turn their backs while the women make vital ritual gestures.

So if we want to use the evidence of anthropology in order to understand the development of human society, we have to treat it very cautiously and very critically. We must not make the mistake of those who simply parrot the words of Malinowski, Evans Pritchard or Levi-Strauss. Nor should we follow certain would-be Marxists (especially Evelyn Reid) by indulging in speculations which no evidence can support.

Nevertheless, there are a few conclusions we can draw.

Existing gathering-hunting peoples live in bands 20 or 30 strong. There is little in the way of a formal authority structure in these bands and no division into classes. People enter the bands quite freely, and if there is a dispute one or other party to it simply leaves and joins another band.

Women and men live within the band as couples, and there is a sexual division of labour between them, with women mainly involved in gathering and men in hunting (although some women may choose to take part in this).

This has led many writers to the view that the men dominate the women in an early version of the patriarchal family. But, in fact, this is not so. In most (if not all) surviving gathering-hunting societies women and men both take part in decision-making (for instance, as to whether to leave the band and join another), and either member of the couple can break the liaison if they wish to.

The view that men must dominate is usually based on the myth of 'man the hunter': that somehow gathering tubers, berries and nuts must be intrinsically less important than hunting. In fact, gathering provides for a much greater proportion of the diet than hunting. Meat rarely accounts for more than 30 percent of the diet, and it is a much less reliable source of food than gathering.

The sexual division of labour in these societies is not something imposed on women by men, but fits in with the needs of the band. It cannot survive unless a certain minimal number of children are born and reared, which involves breast feeding in infancy. The band is continually on the move in search of new food supplies, and so a woman who is rearing a child has to carry it about with her until it is about four years old. Under those circumstances, she cannot have children more than once every four years and, since about half of the children die in infancy, the average woman has to be either pregnant or

Gatherer-hunter societies

rearing a child throughout almost all of her adult life if the band is to survive.

This does not mean that women alone bear a responsibility for child raising. Men play an increasing role from the age of four onwards. But it does make it difficult for women to be involved in hunting.

Hunting for larger animals involves rapid movement, hardly compatible with carrying a child. What is more, it is usually a precarious, even dangerous occupation. The band can afford the risk of losing a few of its men; it cannot afford to lose those of its members who alone can give birth to the next generation.

The important point, however, is that although the division of labour arises out of the biological differences between the sexes, it does not *automatically* lead to the domination of one sex by another.

The American anthropologist Ernestine Friedl has argued that in those gathering-hunting societies where hunting is of most importance in terms of supplying the diet (in the Arctic and Australia, for example) men have greater prestige and power. But even she insists that this is nothing like the systematic domination of men over women you get in class societies.

Eleanor Leacock and Karen Sacks both go further than this. They argue that if you look critically at the evidence, you find a rough equality of men and women in all gatherer-hunter societies.

But in either case, we are a long way from the 'universal domination of men' that so many people claim to exist. If a basic 'human nature' was produced in the huge period of time our ancestors lived in such societies, there is no reason to believe it involved any innate tendency of men to oppress women or of women to accept such oppression.

The rise of class society and women's oppression

If there is room for some argument about the relative contribution of men and women to material production in gatherer-hunter societies, there is no such room in the next stage of development, horticultural societies.

The tilling of the soil with the hoe and digging stick developed out of the gathering of vegetable foodstuffs, and is almost everywhere a female occupation (although men are likely to be responsible for clearing the land). These are societies in which women are the main providers of food and clothing, and women's social standing is correspondingly high.

The division into classes is necessarily accompanied by the rise of the state—of a body of armed men cut off from the rest of society. The new exploiting class needs this in order to protect its own position and to extend it through conquest, the taking of slaves and so on.

The changes that occur with the rise of agriculture, class society and the state have very important implications for the position of women. Ploughing and the herding of animals involves labour which is not comparable, on a continuous basis, with bearing and breastfeeding children. In this sense agricultural labour proper

differs from the preceding horticultural labour.

In these societies, women help appoint war chiefs, take part in decisions as to who marries whom, decide for how long prisoners will be tortured.

It was one of these societies, the Iroquois of New York state that Morgan studied. It was on the basis of these studies that Engels claimed there had been a stage in human society of mother right, or matriarchy.

The Iroquois is one of a number of societies based upon what anthropologists today call 'matrilineality' and 'matrilocal'. By these terms they mean that descent is reckoned through the female line and that men go to live at the homes of their wife's mother. Women's standing in such societies is especially high: the man is always a stranger in the house in which he lives, along with his wife, her mother, her sisters, and the assortment of men to whom they are married.

However, it is wrong to apply the term 'matriarchy': that implies that women dominate men in the same way that men dominate women in class societies. But such domination of one group in society over another cannot exist until you get class society.

What is more, most surviving horticultural societies are not 'matrilinal-matrilocal'. Descent is often reckoned through the male line, and residence is usually at the male home.

Nevertheless, these are still societies in which women's standing is high. The reason, as Engels noted, is the key role played in them by kin-groups (what he called the 'gens' or the 'clan').

In all these societies the key element of social organisation is the line of descent in which someone finds themselves (in patrilineal societies their relationships to their father, their siblings, their uncles and aunts on their father's sides, and so on; in matrilineal societies their mother, mother's brother, mother's sister and her children and so on). Marriage is always outside this line, but its ties remain all important for the individual—more important in many ways than their ties to their spouse. Marriage is not just an individual relationship, but a relationship between lineages mediated by individuals.

So although the woman is a 'wife', she is also, more importantly a 'sister'—and any oppression of her by her spouse would rapidly lead to the intervention of her lineage in her defence. And within her own lineage, decisions are taken not simply by the men, but by the elder women as well (for a fuller elaboration of these arguments, see Karen Sacks' *Sisters and Wives*).

The systematic exploitation of one section of the population by another is not possible in gatherer-hunter and horticultural societies. The productivity of human labour is simply not great enough to produce such an excess of food and clothing over and above what is needed to keep the mass of people alive so as to allow a minority of the population either to devote themselves to non-productive tasks or to live in idleness. No significant *surplus* exists in these societies.

This only comes into being with the great leap forward in productivity which results from the transition from horticulture to agriculture. It is this change which allows embryonic class divisions to begin to emerge.

A stratum of rulers, priests or merchants who are not tied to continual agricultural labour begin to develop. This provides certain benefits for the community as a whole: the stratum can devote some of their time to studying how further to improve its productivity, to increasing its trade with neighbouring communities, to building regular armed forces for raiding the neighbours. However, the benefits are monopolised by the rising class (so while in gatherer-hunter societies the average working day is about four hours, in agricultural societies it is much longer).

As C Gordon Childe has noted:

'The plough changed farming from plot cultivation to agriculture and welded indissolubly cultivation and stock breeding. It relieved women of the most exacting drudgery but deprived them of their monopoly over the cereal crops and the social status that inferred. Among the barbarians, although women normally hoe plots, it is men who plough fields. And even in the oldest Sumerian and Egyptian documents, the ploughmen really are males.' (*What happened in history* p 72)

Women continued to do productive, as well as reproductive tasks. But the production of the main means of livelihood—and the source of the new, growing surplus—was in the hands of men.

Two of the other changes also tended to enhance the position of men at the expense of women. The trading of surpluses between different communities could involve long and arduous journeys, not easily carried out by women burdened with young children; that trade often (although not always) became a male monopoly. And the demands of child rearing also meant the new full time armies tended to be all male institutions (there are some societies which have female warriors, but they are few and far between).

The people who came to control the new surplus tended to be men. For them, male dominance was one aspect of their overall domination of the rest of society. Women

became for them playthings, ornaments, or means of establishing alliances with other rulers; they ceased in any sense to be regarded as human beings of the same standing as men.

What is more, the polarisation into classes undermined the kinship lineages. As class and state replaced the clan or gens, the woman lost the last vestiges of protection from the man in the household.

This had its impact on the exploited peasants (or occasionally artisans) as well as on the new ruling class. The exploited class was now organised not in lineage groups, but in households where one male would come to control the main productive activity and where most of the men (his sons and servants or slaves) and all the women would play a subordinate role.

The rise of class society and the disintegration of the old lineage groups produced the patriarchal family and the oppression of women.

This account allows us to see how relevant remains the central, revolutionary core of Engels' argument. His account was not perfect. But he was absolutely right to insist that women's oppression does not follow from human nature but from a particular family form; that the family form depends upon the material production and reproduction of society; and that the oppression of women was associated with the rise of class society and the state.

The argument continues to have revolutionary implications today. Through most of humanity's time on the earth, women's biological differences from men did not condemn them to oppressions, although there was a certain sexual division of labour. It was only at a very late stage in human history with the rise of class society, that biology and oppression became associated. Finally, the most recent stage of class society, capitalism, has increased the productive potential of humanity so much that there is no longer any material reason for women to be excluded from the most productive processes.

Their oppression today is not a product of human nature or of their own biology. It is a product of a class society which has to be overthrown if the whole of humanity is not to face a return to something much worse than barbarism.

Engels today



A tale of two cities

Left Labour councils continue to make the headlines. Here Alan Gibbons looks at the recent Liverpool budget crisis and Gareth Jenkins examines Ken Livingstone's by-election strategy.

LIVERPOOL city council's campaign against Tory spending curbs ended at 3.44pm on 11 July, when the Labour budget was passed. It was greeted with miners-style chanting of 'Here we go, here we go,' by euphoric Labour supporters in the gallery.

Since then the claims for the budget passed on 11 July have grown and grown. The *Militant* of 27 July saw it as a major turning point in the class struggle:

'First Liverpool workers showed the way to the miners; then the miners moved into action lifting and strengthening the battle in Liverpool; then victory in Liverpool lifted the miners. Thatcher had been beaten.'

The subject of all this euphoria? The Labour group had passed a massive 17 per cent rate rise and withdrawn its decoration allowance for council tenants, worth £7.2 million. Whilst they had preserved council jobs, extracting some new government money, the £8.5 million conceded amounts to a good deal less, than the Liverpool Labour Party's imaginative claim of £60 million.

The *Financial Times* analysed the situation in the following sober terms:

'The financial package which will allow Liverpool to pass a legal budget today contains several significant Government concessions and some compromises on the part of the ruling Militant-influenced Labour group.'

This realistic assessment of the agreement by the house journal of the British ruling class as a good, old-fashioned compromise is in marked contrast to the *Militant's* claim that 'Ninety-five per cent of the council demands were conceded.'

But the key to a socialist assessment of the settlement lies in locating it in the context of the class struggle. From this standpoint, the conclusion of Liverpool's campaign can only be seen as a miserable sell out of its original aims.

A generalised fightback

The *Militant* editorial of 13 July is alive to the issues involved but quite oblivious to the prospect of a generalised class fight against the Tories:

'The Tory government are in a mess. The miners are slowly but surely grinding the Tories' noses in the dirt. The dockers have taken up the struggle.

The Tory government was facing a major crisis. The dockers were opening up a second front in the industrial struggle alongside the miners. But what conclusion should a socialist draw in this situation? Cut your losses and accept the first compromise offer made by the Tories? Accept a few concessions off the backs of the miners and give in? That is what the railwaymen's leaders did and what the dockers were to do ten days later. It is also precisely what the Liverpool Labour Party chose to do. For three months Liverpool put off passing an illegal budget and squandered the chance of linking up with the miners.

The Militant-led council used token demonstrations as substitutes for the all-out industrial action, which, in concert with the miners' strike could have put the Tory government under real pressure.

The politics of the Labour left in general and Militant in particular, finally did lead the campaign down a blind alley. Next year the Tories will be back for more councils, encouraged by their success this time. There is already talk of a 45 per cent rate rise.

But next year there will not be a miners' strike. Liverpool have wasted a golden opportunity to roll back the Tory offensive.



IN A well-publicised move, Ken Livingstone and three other GLC councillors have resigned their seats so as to give the voters of London (at least, some of them) an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights—rights which, with abolition, the government plans to take away. This follows the Lords' decision to scrap the Paving Bill, which would have appointed commissioners to run the GLC and the six Metropolitan Counties after their elected terms of office had expired.

Will this new initiative carry the anti-abolition campaign forward?

No doubt there will be widespread interest generated by the campaign and the media coverage that goes with it. In many workplaces the question of whether the seven councils should be retained will be the subject of intense argument.

While we are clear that they should not be abolished (because of the threat to jobs and services) we part company with the arguments being pushed by Ken Livingstone and others. These stress only the need for an alliance of all sincere democrats as a way to beat the reactionary Tory government.

Livingstone seems to have developed an almost mystical faith in the power of the ballot box:

'Despite Mrs Thatcher's predilection for Churchill quotes she has apparently forgotten the words of another Churchill—Lord Randolph—who once told the party to "Trust the People".'

'But in the end no opinion polls, no matter how accurate, no petition however large, and no march, however long, has the validity of the ballot box. Labour is prepared to trust the people and submit to the verdict of the voters ...' (*Guardian*, 6 August 1984).

The reference to Randolph Churchill is grotesque. But there has always been a populist strain to Tory politics (indeed, Thatcher skilfully exploited it in the 1979 election). An appeal to the people invariably means a manipulation of the backward, deferential, reactionary and racist elements in the population in order to defeat the struggles of the workers' movement.

Not that Labour has shown any real inclination to 'trust the people'. The 'validity of the ballot box' in the sense of abiding by promises to improve the lot of working people, has always come a very poor second to the 'validity' of running the 'democratic' system that assures the bosses' profits.

Popular front politics

But the worst aspect of Livingstone's arguments is the way he wants specifically to exclude any consideration of the issues that really affect our lives:

'Voters will not be asked their views on defence policies, unemployment, the economy or the TV performances of different party leaders ...'

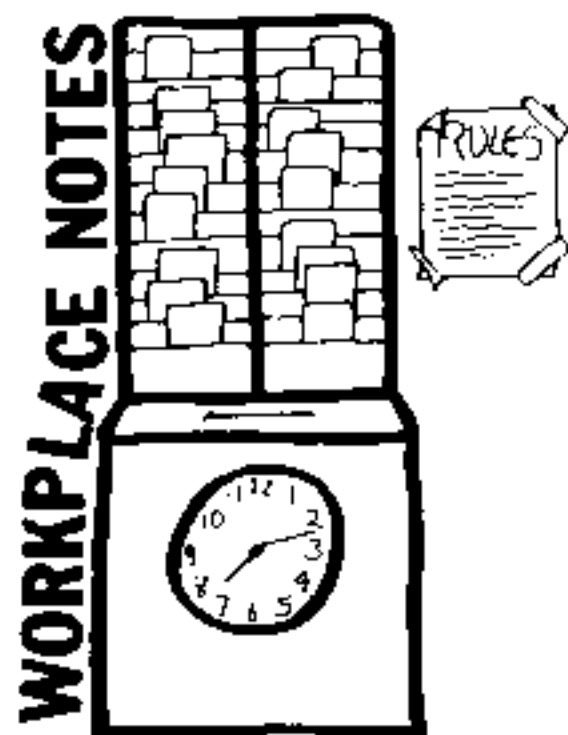
The reason for their exclusion is his popular front politics. The stress on the lowest common denominator—democracy in the abstract—is designed to blur the essential differences in class interests that any attention to these issues (all except the last) would bring out.

The question of, say, jobs not bombs would bring into focus the real content of local democracy: whether or not there are funds to finance adequate social services, an effective transport system, etc. And that in turn would bring into focus how we get these things.

The one weapon that workers have to defend their livelihoods and so defend services is strike action. But that is one that would frighten voters. Yet there is no other power—and certainly no power in voting—to stop the Tories' abolition plans.

Livingstone would undoubtedly say that he is not against industrial action as a last resort, but in effect he is asking workers to renounce any independent action of their own for fear of antagonising potential allies.

These politics, which appear so attractive because they promise broad popular support, are a trap. Of course, vote Labour. But we should have no illusions that there is any other way to stop abolition, protect jobs, and defend services, except through the hard, narrow, and not particularly popular politics of arguing for action in the workplace. ■



CANDY UDWIN is a NUPE shop steward at University College Hospital in Central London. In the first of a series about organising in the workplace *Socialist Review* talked to her about her experiences.

I've worked in UCH for four years. I was elected as a shop steward after just six months. I was elected at a branch meeting but there were virtually no NUPE members in my section, Medical Records—I was virtually appointed and I had to recruit people into the union.

The only people in a union were in NALGO which had meetings once every six months with cheese and wine to discuss, say, the pay claim. The last time anyone tried to organise clerical staff into NUPE was in 1976.

With little record of union activity we had to take up those smaller issues which affected people. One of the first was that women weren't allowed to wear trousers to work. Management were also trying to force us to wear overalls. I personally argued against wearing overalls. In the end we won a compromise. Women could wear trousers as long as they were neat and we only had to wear overalls in reception.

Understaffing and overtime

It was something which concerned people in their day-to-day activity. After that the most important issue was staffing levels. Medical Records was badly understaffed. For years people had worked extra hours without booking overtime. The first stage was getting people to book overtime.

Then we started demanding extra staff with a campaign involving a certain level of industrial action—an overtime ban, no covering of vacant posts and a work to rule.

Management tried to bring in a work study claiming that was the only way we'd get extra staff. I argued against it and won opposition to it but then management insisted on a ballot. That was accepted but I managed to make sure it wasn't secret.

People said we'd never win but we persuaded people by simply going round arguing and linking the issue to cuts which were looming on the horizon. We caused quite a stir. We won the ballot and the end result was a sort of stalemate. We didn't win extra staff but we ensured our department wasn't cut at a time when the Health District cut staff in similar departments in other hospitals.

This was before and during the 1982 pay dispute. NUPE in UCH voted for strike action on each one of the one day stoppages during the dispute. That didn't mean the strikes were solid. The level of scabbing went up and down with the dispute. On 22 September the action was strongest. The porters who'd worked till then came out. People were hoping that with the extra support we were getting we'd be successful. Even non-union workers came out.

In Medical Records NUPE members were in a minority but we came out every time. But when you go back to work after just a one day strike and find an extra day's work piled up you feel very isolated.

It was quite difficult building the one day strikes while arguing the need for an all-out strike. We had a half-day stoppage to lobby the TUC calling for an all-out strike. At the end of the dispute no one thought we could win with one-day strikes but people didn't really believe in all-out strike either. Right at the end we won a vote for all-out strike but most people who voted for it didn't believe it would happen.

I joined the SWP in the middle of the dispute. I didn't feel I was organising at work and developing the political ideas of those I was in contact with. I'd been involved in various anti-cuts committees and hospital closure campaigns but they were increasingly involving the same handful of people. Now we've a small group of SWP members in the hospital.

As SWP members we try to organise around issues affecting our sections. Recently I've been pushing for a rest room for Medical Records and clerical staff. At the same time we take up outside issues like the

miners, and the strikes at Hammersmith and Barking hospitals by organising support for the demonstrations, one day strikes and mass pickets.

We've had speakers into the rest rooms and canteens from all three strikes. Every week we have a collection at the clock cards which we split three ways. At the moment it's down to 60 people giving 50p a week. The feeling of collective solidarity that's built up is important. You find some surprising people who give money and we meet people we didn't know.

Using *Socialist Worker*

We sell *Socialist Worker* at the collections to people who stop to talk about the miners. The combination of selling *Socialist Worker* and developing union activity is vital. Some people get active and we can then sell them a paper. Others buy the paper because they want to read and discuss politics. Through selling them *Socialist Worker* we've drawn them into activity.

The people who are involved in backing the strikes are the people we can sell the paper to. They're a minority but they're important. Many of them now buy *Socialist Worker*. Over time I've seen people who wouldn't buy it or wouldn't even argue drop out of activity. That shows if you don't have some understanding of a political alternative you can become very cynical with the little nitty gritty battles.

What we do best is finding people we can talk to by combining activity and using *Socialist Worker* to talk and argue with people. The paper is often an advert that we're around and that we're serious militants.

We've managed to draw a group of people around us in this activity. When we had a one-day strike in support of Barking it wasn't totally solid but we got 25 down to the mass picket. Those people got a lot out of it and now recognise each other. When people find they're not on their own and there's other people with similar ideas that helps them get active.

One of the interesting things is that people who came out over Barking weren't just from the traditionally well-organised sections. Often people who've been in NUPE for years think it equals one-day strikes and are a bit cynical. People in less well organised sections aren't held back by that.

If you're a nurse and want to fight you immediately have to argue politically. In a central London teaching hospital you've no choice over, say, the miners!

It's also true that people who've been involved in union activity are the ones who'll back the miners and take solidarity action.

We have regular section meetings on top of branch meetings—usually every six weeks. You need to campaign among the membership for them. If it's only me who's pushing for a section meeting they're not successful so I have to involve other people. Those people and those who come have to face up to the fact they're a minority. Stopping people getting demoralised by that fact is one of my crucial activities as a shop steward and a revolutionary. You have to seek out the arguments all the time. ■



The right and reselection

THE big issue at this year's Labour party conference is going to be the re-selection of MPs. This was the issue that caused so much friction between 1979 and 1981. Then however it was the policy of the left attempting to exercise some democratic control over MPs, this time it is Neil Kinnock, and the Labour right who are raising the question. With the aid of the trade union block vote they will almost certainly win the day.

What difference will the new rules make? Surprisingly enough, probably very little. But the issue is quite revealing about the present state of the Labour Party.

Up until now the Labour parliamentary candidate for a constituency has been selected by the General Management Committee of the Constituency Labour Party. This Committee is the governing body of the Constituency Party. It consists mainly of delegates from the ward branches of the party and locally affiliated trade union branches and meets monthly with an average attendance of perhaps 30 to 40.

One man, one vote

Before 1980 if the candidate then went on to be elected MP they were virtually impossible to remove. So a Labour MP in a safe seat had a meal ticket for life. Now of course, with reselection even an MP has to go through the same selection process again between every election, something still bitterly resented by many right wing Labour MPs.

Despite the move to the right since the Bennite highpoint of 1981 the old style Labour right wing is not in a position to simply turn back the clock and get rid of reselection. So they are pushing for what they call 'one man, one vote'. This means that instead of the General Committee choosing the candidate, the choice will be made by some sort of ballot of all the individual members of the constituency party (on

average 4-500 per constituency).

For all their hypocritical talk of 'extending democracy' the right's real thinking is that the individual membership as a whole are more right wing and more easily manipulated by the press and the local MP than the activists on the General Committee.

That thinking is correct, but only up to a point. First of all when it comes to reselection General Committees are nowhere near the solid bastions of the hard left that Fleet Street likes to pretend or that they themselves sometimes like to believe they are. We have the experience of one full round of reselections between 1981-83 to judge them on.



'EVEN IF THE VOTE WAS EXTENDED TO LABOUR PARTY MEMBERS CATS AND BUDGERIGARS JOHN SILKIN WOULD STILL BE THREATENED WITH DESELECTION'

Then only half a dozen Labour MPs were deselected, and probably another half a dozen of the SDP defectors would have been deselected had they stayed on in the Labour Party. A dozen deselections out of more than 200 sitting Labour MPs who wanted to go into the 1983 General Election is not all that dramatic.

It was a particularly feeble performance

from the left when you consider that about one hundred declared opponents of unilateral nuclear disarmament (nearly half the present parliamentary Labour Party) were reselected—most of them, presumably, by General Committees composed of an overwhelming majority of unilateralists.

The experience of reselections last time, then, was that virtually any right wing MP who took the trouble to cultivate his or her local party had little difficulty in being reselected. There is no reason to believe that things would be any different this time round, especially when you remember that some of the most outrageous of the right wingers have already gone while those that remain have mostly learned a bit more over the past few years about keeping sweet their local General Committees.

So despite the headlines about '25 Labour MPs face left takeover' it would be surprising if even half that number were deselected—even if the present system is maintained.

But will the new 'one man, one vote' system moved by Kinnock's lieutenant John Evans stop even these deselections?

No. A few heads will roll anyway. First, because it is going to be optional for each General Committee whether it goes for 'one man, one vote' or not. They will be under some pressure from the media and the party leadership to take that option. But some that are really determined to deselect may well resist the pressure.

The Fleet Street lobby

Second, even if they do opt for 'one man, one vote' this is no guarantee that an unpopular local MP will survive. The recommended procedure in the new proposals is for voting at branch meetings open only to those who have attended at least one branch meeting in the past year. That stops wheeling out the dead men. And the one to two hundred in each constituency who would vote in such a poll may well be just as left wing as the General Committee members and just as fed up with a particularly stand-offish local MP.

To take one example of an MP who is seriously under threat of deselection: shadow cabinet member John Silkin in Deptford. The general feeling seems to be that Silkin's devotion to his parliamentary duties whether in Deptford or Westminster is now so minimal that even extending the franchise for reselection to the cats and budgerigars of Labour Party members would not save him.

For all the fuss, then, the new rules on reselection are going to make little difference if they are passed.

But the fuss is important. Kinnock has shown once again that he is willing to desecrate some of the hallowed ground of the Labour Left simply in order to get a few temporary plaudits from Fleet Street and to keep a few right wing Labour MPs in the style to which they are accustomed. The fact that he is doing that two or three years before an election should be a very clear pointer to what Neil Kinnock, Prime Minister, will be like.

Pete Goodwin ■

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One party states

Why does bourgeois democracy hardly exist in the Third World? Why is political power so frequently exercised in the form of a one party state? These questions are raised by the recent second congress of the ruling party in Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF.

The congress's main theme was the establishment of a one-party state. This would involve the suppression both of the remnants of the old white supremacist Rhodesian Front, still headed by Ian Smith, and more seriously, of ZAPU, whose enduring popular base in the western provinces of Matabeleland has called forth a large-scale military operation against the local peasantry.

Two reasons are usually given to justify the creation of one-party states. One is an appeal to traditional, pre-capitalist values. African society before the white conquest was based on consensus, one is often told in Zimbabwe; the one-party state involves a return to such a condition. I doubt if anyone takes this sort of nostalgic hogwash seriously.

The second, more serious, argument for a one-party state is that made for example, by Zimbabwean prime minister Robert Mugabe. National unity, he says, is required to build socialism. This seems to suggest that capital can be expropriated with its own consent, without class struggle. This is a rather strange idea coming from someone who led a bloody seven year peasant war to wrest *political* power from white hands. Is economic power likely to come any easier?

The president's power

In any case, there is not the slightest prospect of socialism being built under the present Zimbabwean regime.

As David Caute, covering the congress for the *New Statesman*, put it:

'Four years after he (Mugabe) took power Zimbabwe's economy, whether industrial, financial, commercial or agricultural, closely resembles that of white Rhodesia ... What lies ahead for Zimbabwe is not socialism but presidential power.'

So Zimbabwe looks headed to join the long line of bourgeois regimes, especially in Africa, where power is concentrated in the hands of a president, who heads a single mass party organised on lines formally similar to the structure of the 'Communist' Parties of the eastern bloc (politburo, central committee etc), and proclaiming a commitment to socialism. Yet, unlike the state capitalist countries, one-party states usually have a sizeable private sector. How did this peculiar political form arise?

One way of answering this question is to consider the conditions under which multiparty systems evolved in countries such as Britain. There seem to be three crucial factors.

First, the ruling class broadly accept the

legitimacy of the existing state. This can't be taken for granted — in England, for example, it took a hundred years for the capitalist political regime established by the revolution of 1640 to be stabilised. It took a similar length of time for the bourgeois republic to consolidate itself in France.

From the standpoint of the Third World ruling classes the one-party state has been a success. Many one-party regimes have shown remarkable stability

Second, economic and political power have become to some degree separated. Under feudalism, the landowner's control of the means of production was bound up with his coercive power. Capitalism, because it separates the workers from the means of production, and places them under economic pressure to submit to exploitation, doesn't require the same sort of continuous application of force. The state can become an arena in which the different sections of the capitalist class seek to hammer out a unified strategy, with the party system acting as a mechanism through which the bourgeoisie's internal conflicts are expressed.

Third, it is both necessary and possible to incorporate the working class in the political system — necessary because of the strength of workers' organisations, possible because the ruling class of imperialist countries find themselves in a position, for long periods of time, to make economic concessions to workers. This provides the material base on which bourgeois democracy, and in particular the emergence of the trade union bureaucracy and the reformist parties as intermediaries between labour and capital, can flourish.

It is the absence of these three conditions which gives rise to one-party states in the Third World. To take the third, and most obvious factor — few ruling classes in the poor countries are in a position to make significant material concessions to the mass of workers. Repression takes visible and daily forms which are comparatively rare in the imperialist countries.

However, the lack of a material basis for reformism is not the decisive factor in explaining the existence of one-party states. Thus India combines a brutal, highly coercive state apparatus, *and* a multiparty system whose divisions are largely a reflection of conflicts within the propertied classes. The one-party state is a function of the weakness of the ruling class itself.

Thus, one cannot in many Third World countries take acceptance of the legitimacy

of the state for granted. So many ex-colonies were simply arbitrarily carved out by one or other imperial power, and often contain within them different ethnic groups united only by subjugation to the same master.

Post-colonial states usually undertake a process of 'nation-building' which seek to create a national identity where none existed before. Usually this process involves the dominance of one ethnic group over others — thus the creation of a nation state in Zimbabwe involves the subordination of the Ndebele-speaking minority to a Shona-speaking nationhood.

Even where ethnic divisions are not so important, local ties undermine the power of the central government. In pre-conquest African societies, kinship played a crucial part in the distribution of economic and political power. The persistence of kin relations today creates local networks in which people seek to become clients of a powerful relative whose economic and political influence will get them jobs and government favours. The strength of local loyalties, the weakness of commitment to the nation state make it difficult for a party system to evolve in which conflicts within the ruling elite are openly expressed.

To this is added the fact that state power is often in the Third World the main instrument in creating a local capitalist class. The development of a 'national' bourgeoisie was generally stunted by colonialism. Those holding power in the new independent states generally belonged to the petty bourgeoisie. Often where a local bourgeoisie did exist at the time of independence it was regarded as 'alien' by the new ruling parties — the Asians in east Africa, the overseas Chinese in Malaysia, the English-speaking bosses of the mining finance houses in South Africa.

The new bourgeoisie

The state inherited from the colonial days had often played a major economic role in any case — usually this has been expanded in an effort to create an authentically 'national' bourgeoisie. But the importance of the state *in bringing into existence* a bourgeois ruling class makes it virtually impossible for a multiparty system to be permitted to evolve — very often it is in the ruling party that the new bourgeoisie crystallises.

Major conflicts do occur within the ruling party, frequently under ethnic labels. But the one-party system helps to prevent splits within what is still a weak ruling class from acquiring open expression, and thereby drawing the masses of workers and peasants into political life. At the same time the party cadres act as intermediaries between the ruling class and the masses, permitting some degree of popular mobilisation when it suits those at the top.

From the standpoint of the Third World ruling classes, the one-party state has been a success. Many one-party regimes have shown remarkable stability.

When one-party states have fallen, it has been to a military coup, not a mass uprising. But whether this will remain the case, given the depths of the crisis in much of the Third World, is another question.

Alex Callinicos ■

Beating the nazis

The last few months have seen a number of incidents inspired by the National Front or similar fascist organisations: the campaign around Patrick Harrington at North London Polytechnic; the attack on an anti-racist band at a GLC festival in June; the NF march in Maidstone. These, plus the major success the fascists scored in the French EEC elections in June, have led some on the left to question what sort of response we should adopt to the fascists. Here Paul Holborow looks at the experiences of the 1970s, and the lessons for today.

The decade of the seventies saw a gradual growth in the size and influence of the far right, especially the National Front. Despite a number of confrontations with the left—the most famous being that of Red Lion Square in 1974—this growth accelerated as the Labour government's policies led to disillusionment among large sections of workers.

By 1977, the NF could seriously claim in some parts of the country to be challenging the Liberals for third place in British politics. In the GLC elections of that year the NF contested 91 out of 92 seats, polled 119,000 votes and pushed the Liberals into fourth place in 23 seats. The East London constituencies proved to be the most responsive. In Bethnal Green and Bow they polled nearly 20 percent of the vote, Hackney South and Shoreditch 19 percent, Stepney and Poplar 16.4 percent, Hackney Central over 15 percent.

Becoming a force

But they did well elsewhere too. In Leicester, the NF beat the Liberals in 15 out of 16 wards, pulling 22,526 votes (13.2 percent). In the county council elections on the West Midlands, they stood 55 candidates who pulled out a total of 30,296 votes. In West Yorkshire and Bradford they came within an ace of winning council seats.

This electoral progress was achieved by pursuing a carefully conceived strategy that reached the height of its success during the last Labour government. The Front had been formed in the late '60s from a variety of neo-fascist and extreme right wing (mainly anti-immigration) groups. Its joint leadership was provided by John Tyndall and Martin Webster who between them combined the traditional 'hard' fascist tactics of military style marches and rallies with a 'soft'

electoral strategy appealing to a wider if less committed layer of supporters. In this way, they hoped to disguise their Nazi core behind a veneer of electoral respectability.

This strategy appeared to be working. In 1974 Webster stood in the West Bromwich bye-election and polled 15 percent of the vote, saving his deposit. A couple of months after the 1977 council elections the Front felt confident enough to announce that they would be standing over 300 candidates in the next general election. This meant free election literature, television time and extensive press coverage. The scale of propaganda was greater than anything achieved by Mosley in the 1930s.

All these factors meant that the Front was poised to become a real force politically. But at the same time there was growing opposition to their ideas. Repeated mobilisations against them showed that sizeable numbers of socialists, trade unionists, students and—when they marched in the black areas—considerable numbers of young blacks and Asians, could be organised to drive the fascists off the streets. It was after a major battle where the fascists were humiliated at one of these

clubs, and in numerous counter demonstrations and marches. It produced literally millions of leaflets taking on the arguments of the racists. Hundreds of thousands of posters proclaiming *Never again* over a picture of a concentration camp were printed.

In 1978 four major carnivals against the Nazis—two in London, one each in Manchester and Leeds—attracted tens of thousands of working class youth who participated in a mixture of political speeches, huge marches and massive anti-racist concerts. The campaign culminated in the general election of 1979 with demonstrations against the NF in Leicester and Southall.

The result was that a horse and cart was driven through the carefully planned electoral strategy of the Front. Even their supposed strongholds in East London, where Webster and Tyndal stood as candidates, their vote declined by 20 percent compared not to their highpoint of 1977 but to their much more modest results of 1974. On the same basis, in Leicester it declined by 51 percent and in Bolton by 63 percent. Since their electoral humiliation, the Front has splintered three ways. There is no evidence of growth in either membership or votes, their mobilisations are tiny. In short they are demoralised, localised and fragmented.

A major role in this was played by the ANL.

There are a number of points which are



ANL organised against NF

mobilisations in Lewisham, that the Anti-Nazi League was formed.

Lewisham marked a real turning point. It put the Front on the defensive and showed that there were thousands outside of the existing political organisations who wanted to oppose the fascists. The problem was how could those people be organised on the basis of their opposition to fascism?

The aim of the League was to build a much bigger movement than previously, tapping much of the anti-fascist feeling which at present was passive, and so defeating the Nazis. From its early days in the autumn of 1977, the ANL placed the emphasis on action against the Nazis—on the streets, on housing estates, in the schools and youth

relevant for us today. Firstly, the NF are much weaker than they were in the 1970s. They have still not recovered from their defeats of the 1979 election. But the conditions in which they have to try to rebuild are much more difficult too. There has been a growing disaffection with Thatcher and her policies during the past year. But the people who have benefited from this disaffection are not the extreme right, but the mainstream of the Labour Party.

And the fact that the miners strike has struck a level of sympathy and solidarity from other workers makes it hard for the Front to make any headway with workers fed up with unemployment, bad housing and

so on. This obviously is not a permanent situation, and if the miners' strike went down to a bitter defeat it could change fairly rapidly. At present however, the audience for the fascists remains tiny and marginalised. It means as well that the possibilities of mobilising against the fascists will not be nearly as great as they were in the seventies. The Harrington issue, which looks like continuing into the new term, is still an exception.

This is important in terms of our attitude to things like fascists selling their literature publicly. Our attitude has always been simple. We are against the right of the Nazis to organise and we believe that where possible they should be prevented from doing so. But our assessment of this has to depend on the balance of class forces. There is no point in half a dozen socialists driving two fascists off a sales pitch only to find that the situation is reversed the next week—something which degenerates into small skirmishes and street fights each week. Not only can we not win, but the effect of such action is to cut us off from an audience for our paper, our activities etc. That is why the question of fighting the Nazis is not one of individual moralism but of mass mobilisation.

And that is the major difference between today and the experience of the ANL. Then it was possible to join in united action with forces much wider than those of the SWP. This idea of united *action* was very important. There were, after all, other anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations—usually under the leadership of the Communist Party or the Labour Party. Unlike them, the ANL proposed a series of very specific *actions* from mass leafletting, carnivals and marches, to physically confronting the Nazis on the streets. It was not a bureaucratic organisation tightly controlled from the top seeking a respectable image. On the contrary it drew its strength from activity and from the grassroots. It developed its pace to fit the most active participants, not the most politically cautious (strikingly dissimilar to CND today).

Some political problems

That doesn't mean there were no problems with the ANL. Because it was an amalgam of different political organisations and many non-aligned, differences of approach and emphasis could and did develop, especially at local level. And there were discussions about how far it was committed to physically confronting the fascists—something which soon became clear in practice. And the Socialist Workers Party, which initiated and led the ANL, also found political problems. These problems have been described as believing that 'The ANL was our periphery—it wasn't, it was Tom Robinson's.' In other words we believed that the masses of young people who came to one or two events initiated or organised by revolutionaries would automatically be open to active revolutionary politics. In reality, only a tiny minority of them were.

Nonetheless the ANL did command real support. Its steering committee included various strands of the Labour left, including

Peter Hain, Ernie Roberts and Neil Kinnock (maybe that's where he got the idea for the Tracey Ullman video). The Communist Party joined after initial hesitation, followed by the Indian Workers Association. The effective leadership for the ANL lay with the SWP. This was possible because in the three years previously we had established a pre-eminent position on the left as the most consistent and active opponents of the fascists. We had also kept up a consistent and principled opposition to the policies of the Labour government and its attacks on workers. Unlike the French left with Mitterrand today, this allowed us to argue against the fascists without being compromised into supporting Labour policies.

The important thing was that the ANL was never the SWP on its own; it was a successful attempt to build a mass movement on a principled basis around a specific aim—smashing the fascists. Its main method of operation was to mobilise large numbers in an open confident manner. This has little in common with the subsequent development of groups of anti-fascists making individual attacks on fascists. This tended to happen after the threat of the Nazis had sub-

REVIEW ARTICLE

Racist roots

Just before her election Margaret Thatcher told an interviewer: 'People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture.' It didn't take much effort to see that Thatcher meant colour rather than culture.

This statement received due recognition from the Metropolitan Police when it named its assault on black areas of London, which triggered the first Brixton riots, 'Swamp 81'.

For Thatcher racist attitudes have always existed and always will. It's an idea which is accepted by many even on the left. Racism is inbuilt into people's attitudes—and in particular the attitudes of white workers. Racism remains, unchanging, part of 'our' character.

Peter Fryer's *Staying Power* provides much needed ammunition in the fight against those who accept the fear of being 'swamped', or those who believe racism was some sort of natural development. It charts in great detail the history of black people in Britain, from black Roman legionnaires stationed on Hadrian's Wall, black court musicians in 15th century Edinburgh and through to the major post-war immigration of black workers.

More importantly Fryer shows clearly that racism developed as part of the development of British capitalism. For it wasn't until British merchants began to enter the slave trade in the mid-17th century that racism emerged as a mass phenomenon.

As the emerging capitalist class accumulated much of its capital through the brutal trade in black slaves they had to provide an ideological justification for their activities.

sided in 1979. And it resulted in small groups trying to substitute for a movement which was not there.

Although there appears to be a slight resurgence of fascist activity (probably inspired by Le Pen's success in France), the way in which we deal with the problem is different from in 1978. The most effective way of isolating the fascists is by making sure that we collect for the miners, sell our literature and argue for socialist politics to as wide an audience as possible. That is not to rule out physical confrontation with the fascists. It is to say that the fascists' ideas are isolated, that they have no influence and that those looking to an alternative to Thatcher are much more likely to look to Kinnock and Hattersley than to tiny group whose high-point of the year is celebrating Hitler's birthday.

It follows that the main argument for revolutionary socialists is with the ideas of the Labour centre and right. Maybe that will change. But at present to put much effort into chasing the fascists is to credit them with a political influence which they clearly don't possess.

In the 18th century as Britain's slave trade reached its height there was a massive effort to portray blacks as ape-like, indulging in all sorts of sexual activities, dirty and lazy.

Such views were sponsored by the 'plantocracy'—those who owned estates in the West Indies—but they were not views held by a few cranks. Virtually every British scientist in the 18th century accepted that blacks were a 'lesser breed'. The philosopher John Locke might write about human rights being 'inalienable', but this didn't stop him investing in the slave trade or stating: 'A Negro is not a man.'

The radical Scottish philosopher David Hume waded in by announcing that blacks were 'naturally inferior to the whites'.

Racism wasn't peripheral to the development of bourgeois ideology—those ideas justifying capitalism. It was something very central to it. It reflected a material reality. First of all the huge slave trade which financed the rise of British and other capitalisms and then the carving out of vast empires in Africa and Asia. As Fryer notes, 'The golden age of the British Empire was the golden age of British racism.'

Having clearly explained this Fryer concludes: 'Long after the material conditions that originally gave rise to racist ideology had disappeared, these dead ideas went on gripping the minds of the living.'

But racism wasn't automatically accepted by British workers. Anti-slavery was central to the demands of early working radicals. Blacks played a part in the rise of the British working class. One, Thomas Davidson, was one of the last people publicly beheaded. Secretary of the London Tailors Union, Davidson was executed for plotting to

assassinate the right wing government of Castlereagh. Another black, William Coffey, was a central leader of the Chartists, deported to Australia in 1848. All this is well documented by Fryer. In doing so he is able to draw on works like *Capitalism and Slavery*, written by the then radical Eric Williams.

Fryer goes on to document the growth of Britain's black working class in the post-war period. How London Transport specially recruited labour in the West Indies or how the then Health Minister, Enoch Powell, was pictured shaking hands with newly arrived West Indian nurses.

He also points out that far from the common picture of ignorant West Indians flooding into Britain the truth was that 77 percent of male immigrants were skilled or semi-skilled. But once here they weren't employed using those skills but were herded into the lowest grades of work.

The immigration of the 1950s and 60s acted to reinforce all the racist ideas taught by imperial Britain. Because blacks were forced into the worst possible jobs, the worst possible housing and the worst possible schools this seemed to confirm an image of blacks as ignorant, stupid and dirty. Racism created a stereotype of blacks but it then created a material situation which seemed to confirm that stereotype.

Blacks were forced into decaying inner city areas. White workers were already trying to move out of these. White workers, having reached the outer suburbs, began to blame the poor conditions in inner city areas on the very people forced to live there.

But it was in the 1960s and 70s that racism really began to develop as a factor in British politics. And it did so only with the assistance of the state.

The rise of Powell

By the early 1960s the British economy no longer needed a supply of cheap labour. In 1962 the Tories passed the first Immigration Act which restricted *black* immigration. The Labour Party opposed the act, its leader Hugh Gaitskell calling it 'miserable, shameful, shabby'.

From then on the race question (and the emerging race relations industry) in Britain was, as Fryer and others point out, dominated by the idea that the problem was somehow the number of blacks. That's as true for Enoch Powell as for Roy Hattersley, who might stop short of repatriation but is for tough restrictions on the numbers of blacks in Britain.

As the British economy hit problems, racism emerged into the open. And as in France today those who opened the door for it were the reformists of the Labour Party.

In 1968 socialists still basking in the euphoria of Paris in May were rudely shocked to see London dockers and Smithfield meat porters striking in support of Enoch Powell's call for repatriation.

During that summer Powell had launched a campaign of inflammatory speeches aimed at pressuring the Labour government to halt black immigration. The expulsion of Asians from Kenya brought things to a head.

In just three days a new Immigration Act

was hurried through by the Labour government. Kenyan Asian holders of British passports were refused entry into Britain. No such restrictions were put on white Kenyans.

One right wing Labour MP correctly said, 'This measure makes racism respectable... this bill panders to the racist ideology... That a socialist government should be responsible fills me with shame and despair.'



Both Labour and Tory governments introduced racist laws

In the late 1970s, as Britain felt the full blast of economic recession under the Callaghan government, racism once again emerged as a major factor in British politics—partly reflected by the growth of electoral support for the National Front, partly in the racist language of Tories like Thatcher.

As workers' confidence was on the wane, unemployment mounted and massive cuts were pushed through, blacks were once again fingered by Labour politicians. This was the period when more and more blacks holding immigration vouchers were refused entry to Britain, virginity tests for female immigrants were brought in at Heathrow, 'fishing raids' of black workplaces were organised to discover 'illegal' immigrants, the 'sus' laws were fully implemented and police chiefs and Labour ministers started the scare about black muggers.

In that climate attacks on blacks grew. But while racist ideas gained a wider acceptance only a small minority of white workers were drawn into open racist activity. More importantly the left was able to hit back with massive effect through the Anti-Nazi League.

And here we discover the key to the question of how racism can be combatted—something which eludes Fryer.

For if it is true that racist ideas affect the majority of workers, it's also true that workers' ideas change through their own experiences. Old racist ideas can coexist alongside ideas reflecting new experiences.

Racist ideas are contradicted by experiences firstly at work. Black and white are brought together and are forced to work together. At Dagenham there are 14,000 black workers. In 1981 in the West Midlands one in three of West Indians and one in three of Pakistanis worked in the motor industry.

One London busworker describes a situation where people can still hold racist ideas but think their black workmate is OK.

Racist ideas are most effectively challenged in struggle. And here there are a number of examples Fryer only glosses over, from Grunwicks to Chix, where white

workers have responded with massive solidarity to the struggles of black workers. The mirror of that is the support shown for the current miners' strike among black trade unionists.

The one example Fryer correctly points to as an example of this is the 1981 riots. For while it's true that the Brixton and Toxteth riots were led by blacks—the product of the liaisons between white prostitutes and African sailors' was how Merseyside's chief constable described the Toxteth 'ring-leaders'—many of the foot soldiers were white. And many of the 'copy cat' riots were wholly white. The riots showed real racial integration at work. But unfortunately one night of rioting is too short a time in which permanent organisation can develop.

Among white workers racism can be challenged. A minority of workers will reject racist ideas. The higher the level of struggle, the higher the challenge.

Among two groups these tendencies are weaker or don't exist. Firstly among those whites on the peripheries of the economy—the lumpenproletariat, those engaged in the black economy or casually employed. There the collective ties of the workplace are weaker, and it is often among these groups that fascist organisations recruit their street fighters.

Racists in uniform

Among the police, racism, far from being countered, is massively encouraged. As defenders of capitalist society the police reflect all the worst aspects of that society.

Separated off, they inhabit a world where all blacks are muggers. As early as 1973 a survey of police officers discovered they generally believed 'niggers' were, 'in the main...pimps and layabouts, living off what we pay in taxes'. The authors of that survey noted that such beliefs were used to justify violence against blacks. A survey last year of the Metropolitan Police showed that nothing has changed.

Such 'state racism' acts as a major source of racist beliefs. Virtually every six months the head of the Met appears on TV to reveal details of *black* crime. We're never told that the average Londoner would have to live a few thousand years before being likely to be mugged, or that that few pensioners are ever mugged. Instead an image of white society under attack from criminal blacks is conjured up.

Peter Fryer's book, for all its weaknesses, must be heartily welcomed. But Marxists have to bring home the conclusions which remain unwritten. Racism is an integral part of the capitalism system. It cannot be reformed out of the system. It will only disappear when that system is toppled.

Finally, capitalism created the material basis for racism. It isn't something natural or inevitable. In the very struggle against capitalism, workers—black and white—will create the conditions in which racist ideas can be overcome.

Chris Bambery

Staying Power: the history of black people in Britain

Peter Fryer, Pluto Press, £9.95 (£6.50 to Bookmarx Club subscribers)

Confusion reigns

British Trotskyism

John Callaghan
Blackwell £19.50

This book starts off with the brief period (1944-47) when practically all British Trotskyists were united in one small organisation, and then traces the subsequent developments to the present time.

As a history it has the grievous fault of carelessness. There are too many slips on matters of fact, especially dates. Typical examples: Trotsky did not decide that a new revolution was necessary to establish workers power in the USSR in 1936 but in October 1933; the Trotskyist-led Young Socialists came out of the Labour Party in 1964, not 1965; the ANL was not founded (nor even thought of) in 1976 and so on.

Mistakes of this sort are irritating but, worse still, even textual quotations are not immune. The present reviewer is quoted as writing (in 1971) that the founders of our organisation 'saw themselves as mainstream Trotskyists differing only on unimportant questions from the dominant group...'. What the text cited actually says is 'differing on important questions from the dominant group...', which is a very different matter. We did not set up a separate organisation on account of differences we thought unimportant.

Nonetheless John Callaghan has made a serious attempt at an account of the ideas and organisations and, since there is no other remotely adequate account, this book may well come to be regarded as an authority. Therefore it is worthwhile subjecting it to critical examination.

The author writes to defend a definite standpoint. 'The thesis advanced here' he writes 'will attempt to show that the classical Marxist tradition, of which Trotskyism is a principal organised legatee, was not only unable to theorise the liberal-democratic state, but advanced a theory of imperialism and the imperialist epoch that prejudiced Marxist discussion against taking this issue seriously.'

The Bolshevik experience reinforced these tendencies and added some new dimensions—notably the militarism of the Comintern and the alleged universalism of the Bolshevik scenario—which helped to create a powerful metaphysical pathos among Communists that incorporates an imagery and associations inimical to internal democracy and political pluralism. This, rather than just the organisational precepts of Leninism, is at the roots of all authoritarian tendencies among Trotskyists.'

The history, then, is written to

point out this moral and the author tells us, candidly enough, that the 'chief guide to my choice of material on which to focus my attention is the question of democracy.' Of the four aspects of the 'relationship of Trotskyism to democracy' which 'will be examined throughout this study, the first is the "internal regimes" of the far left organisations.'

What a grotesque disproportion between aim and method! The big fundamental question: the nature of the capitalist state, the class character of bourgeois democratic regimes etc, are not directly argued at all in the book. Yet if the Marxist theory of the state is wrong then the social-democratic labourite tradition is right on this absolutely central matter and the revolutionary tradition as a whole is wrong. These are questions of an altogether different order of importance than the minutiae of organisational structures in the Socialist Workers Party and the various grouplets about which Callaghan displays an obsessive (if not always well-informed) interest.

It is not that internal structures are unimportant. It is that they are, or ought to be, related to *function*. Do we need a revolution to establish workers' power or can 'the liberal-democratic state' be transformed piecemeal into an instrument of the working class?

To judge purely by the internal evidence of the book, Callaghan formerly held the first position and is now sliding towards the second, without, however clearly stating it, perhaps without actually deciding. Yet the type of organisation needed for revolutionary politics is very different from that adapted to reformist ones.

Callaghan has a purely abstract concept of democracy, he does not really start from a class analysis. To take a glaringly obvious example: the Labour Party has always had an internal regime which by Callaghan's own criteria, is pretty undemocratic (and on occasion brutally so) but its commitment to *bourgeois* democracy has never been in doubt. The two things are not at all incompatible, indeed they are functionally related.

Still, more strikingly, Callaghan speaks of 'socialism in the USSR, of the sovietisation of Eastern Europe' and so on. It is not that he has illusions in the political character of these regimes, nor that he believes that socialism is possible without real and effective democratic control. It is simply that he does not think consistently about the class content of political forms.

Confusion reigns. He appears to hold, I say appears because like so much else in the book it is implied rather than stated clearly, some kind of 'deformed workers' state'

analysis of the stalinist states. At any rate they are 'post-capitalist', the state capitalist analysis being 'a shibboleth with few organised adherents outside Britain'.

The Revolutionary Communist Party broke up because Trotsky's view of the world, which it inherited proved seriously misleading in various ways and because in the end its leadership proved politically incapable of resolving the resulting problems. By 1949 it was finished. Of the organisations that can trace their descent back to it, two, the SWP and Militant, are of significance today. Each gets a lengthy chapter and is duly condemned.

Callaghan is much more sympathetic to what used to be called the International Marxist Group—its regime of permanent factions appeals to him

Defending our traditions

Marxism and the oppression of women

Lise Vogel
Pluto Press £5.95

Any book which says it

'constitutes an argument for the power of Marxism to analyse the issues that face women today in their struggle for liberation' demands serious attention from socialists.

And Vogel's book is to be welcomed for both tracing the history of Marxist discussion of women's oppression and in trying to give a materialist account of its roots.

The book tells us about the writings of both Marx and Engels on women, and explains how the reformist politics of the Second International, with its growing belief in gradual change, was reflected in its thinking on women. It then goes on to describe how Lenin, writing during the ferment of the Russian revolution confronted the problems which faced those working class women who had played such a huge role in creating that revolution.

Vogel smashes the myth that the Marxist tradition has never had anything to say on women—an achievement for which any revolutionary socialist must be grateful.

Yet Vogel's book has some serious flaws. These stem from a failure to realise how historical circumstances have influenced and moulded the attitudes and consciousness of workers, including socialists and militants.

So she tends to select certain ideas which she feels reflect 'analytical confusions' in the tradition of socialist writings on women. She then attempts to trace and understand these confusions through a process of purely abstract reasoning. This inevitably leaves the changes and tensions in the system itself, rather than just in its

strongly—but even the ex-IMGI insufficiently purged itself of the Comintern heritage in his view.

It is not surprising that he praised the 'feminist, environmentalist and peace movements' for the range and depth of their critique of capitalism.

Inevitably the author's politics mar the history. There is a good deal of information in the book. Callaghan has accidentally done serious research and his rather numerous errors appear to be due to carelessness and the lack of understanding of the real problems of revolutionary organisations, rather than to wilful distortion. Anyone curious about Trotskyism in post-war Britain will find the book interesting. But don't rely on Callaghan's interpretations and treat his facts with caution. ■

Duncan Hailas

ideas, to one side.

The clearest example of this is her discussion of the 'domestic labour' debate.

This debate, which was a great talking point among socialist feminists in the early 1970s, hinged around whether women's work in the home was *productive*—in other words whether it made profits for capitalism.

Vogel holds that the debate was just the newest form of a century old *analytical confusion* over the socialist analysis of women's oppression.

She even goes as far as to say that the failure of the socialist feminists to solve this question lead socialist women to adopt the ideas of radical feminism. In particular she points to the problem of *patriarchy*, the idea that women's oppression stems from the domination of men, and says that its wholesale adoption by socialist feminists dates from their failure to solve the problem of domestic labour.

This analysis is a little misleading. For although the domestic labour debate was of concern to feminists at the time, it was not the only theoretical problem they faced. The logic of separatism, which pre-dated the abandonment of attempts to solve the problem of domestic labour, gradually drew women away from class struggle into the ghetto of cross-class women's politics.

An even more important reason for the demise of socialist feminism was the downturn of industrial militancy in the mid-'70s and the consequent decline of confidence on the left. As left organisations across Europe foundered and died, they pulled down the socialist women's movement with them.

Vogel repeats the same mistake in her discussion of Lenin. She points out, quite rightly, that Lenin took the problem of the appalling conditions of working class women's lives very seriously. She

also shows, through several all too often ignored quotes, that Lenin argued for the Bolshevik Party to take up the problems of women in every soviet, in every factory and in every housing area.

However, she goes on to say that this proves that Lenin had a different theoretical approach to earlier socialists, in particular to Marx and Engels, in that he took the problem of women's work in the home seriously.

On one level this is simply wrong. Almost every major socialist who ever picked up a pen noted the double burden of housework and waged work which the working class woman carried. Engels in particular, from whom Vogel is anxious to distance herself, wrote movingly and at length on the subject.

But the real problem with Vogel is not that she has missed this, rather that she doesn't realise the inter-relation between the historical circumstances and socialist theory.

Lenin was living in a situation where the family was being undermined as every day passed. Collective laundries and canteens, free abortion on demand, and divorce, all meant that the ties which had imprisoned women in the family were being ripped apart.

This meant that he could deal with the question of women's oppression in a situation where the real possibilities for change were there for all to see. It was there—rather than a distinct theory—which gave his thought on the question its distinct flavour.

The same mistake is seen in Vogel's discussion of Zetkin, of whom she says

'along with most socialists theorists of her period, fails to distinguish women workers from working class women: that is in speaking of the proletarian women, she always assumes that the woman participates in wage work, and along with all her contemporaries, not to mention Marx and Engels, glosses over the issue of domestic labour within the family household.'

But if one looks at Zetkin's contribution to the theory of women's liberation (a contribution which Vogel acknowledges elsewhere in the book), this can be seen to be false.

The fact that Zetkin did not concentrate on the issue of domestic labour has nothing to do with her lack of a theory. The briefest look at her work shows that she made huge contributions to the revolutionary socialist perspective on women. The need for socialist agitation among women, the dangers which the bourgeois women's movement presented to working class women, the need to get women into unions were all questions which she dealt with. And she frequently had to fight tooth and nail to win others to her position.

Zetkin's main concern was to draw the maximum number of working class women towards socialism. She did not concentrate

on the question of domestic labour because she did not consider it to be the key problem in achieving this end. And as a revolutionary she understood the central importance of the workplace.

Because Vogel does not understand this and divorces theory from practice, she gets into a muddle when it comes to talking about the modern day.

In trying to analyse the economic roots of women's oppression, she ends up merely juggling with Marx's concepts of necessary and surplus labour and stretching them out of all shape in order to fit women's domestic labour in.

Domestic labour, and by implication the form it takes in the

family, ends up being as necessary to capitalism as its need to make profits.

Because she sees things in this way Vogel ends up dealing with the family at far too high a level of abstraction. The huge changes which contemporary capitalism has wrought end up being ignored.

And such a mistake is disastrous. For modern capitalism has undermined the family to the point where it no longer makes sense to talk in terms of *working class women* as being different from *women workers* as Vogel wishes.

Capitalism has forced women out of the home and into the workforce, and turned many of the domestic services which they once provided

into services which can be sold for profit on the market.

This is not to say that women's oppression has disappeared. But how capitalism subordinates women cannot be understood independently of the institutions which it creates, or its tendency to subsume more and more of the world into the orbit of profit making.

But to understand this means looking at the material world, and developing theory as a means to understanding it. Not as Vogel tends to do forgetting that the world ever changes and trying to apply theory to a dead abstraction.

Ann Rogers

Police, thieves and sociologists!

What is to be done about law and order?

John Lea and Jock Young
Penguin £2.95

This book was published in the middle of the miners' strike. It was enthusiastically reviewed by the foaming reactionaries of the *Economist*. It was written by two ex-members of ours. It is sponsored by the Socialist Society. It is bad and dangerous.

The authors, Lea and Young were committed to radical criminology in the 1960s. They attempted to attack some of the law and order myths of the right.

A decade and a half later Young and Lea's concern with deviancy has been replaced with the study of crime.

The left, they say, have been wrong to attack the cops and to go on about the crimes of big business. Small scale crime is widespread, it affects working class people, and they are very worried about it. Only the myths of the left, like the notion that the cops are just a special body of armed men, stop the left putting forward serious solutions to these worries, like community involvement in policing and therefore the law and order lobby have a field day.

They start off by disassociating themselves from the old reaction. They have no time for the racist rantings of the *Daily Mail*. But this is what they say in the course of an attack on Chris Harman: 'We would be as critical of those who underestimate crime as of those who sensationalise.'

They are adopting just the same sort of position as Neil Kinnock. He, of course, opposes all violence on the picket line, that of the police and that of the miners. The effect of Kinnock's wavering, of course, is to make it more difficult to win effective picketing. The effect of Lea and Young is to make it more difficult to fight police atrocities.

Take another of their positions: that crime is a real issue and one that workers really worry about. Of course, various opinion polls show

that workers are concerned about crime and that concern has a basis in real experience. But opinion polls also show that workers' worry about immigration, and that too has a basis in real experience. But not even Lea and Young would go on to say that because of these worries about immigration then socialists need to put forward positive proposals to stop immigration.

Again, they argue that it is a mistake to romanticise criminal activity, which in fact is a fairly unpleasant thing and is often directed against other workers. True. The only people I know of who have ever tried to make romantic heroes out of criminals have been a number of anarchists, and Jock Young in his earlier radical phase.

Let us admit their case even in their worst formulation. Let us assume that crime is at the centre of working class worries and that it is not possible to talk about a fight back against the Tories without having something to say about law

and order.

What should socialists say? We would say that the one thing in society that has nothing whatsoever to do with fighting crime is the police.

One of the few sets of statistics which don't get paraded around this book are the ones which relate to the police clear-up record of crimes, which is appalling, always has been appalling, and is getting much more appalling. They are not there because they do not fit the argument that Lea and Young want to foist on their readers. Young, for one, is certainly familiar with them, since he cites them in his letters to the *Guardian*. But he leaves them out because they don't suit him.

What Young and Lea probably also know is that the most effective deterrent to crime inside working class communities has always been the controls exercised over the everyday behaviour of its members by the community itself. In those places where there exists a strong public working class culture the



young males who are responsible for the mass of petty crime about which Young and Lea are talking are controlled by their elders. That does not stop the more serious crime, but as they admit, the 'professional' criminal is responsible for only a tiny fraction of the crime which workers worry about.

It is the destruction of those informal controls under the impact of capitalist development and working class atomisation that has led to the rise in crime. The task for socialists is to rebuild the organisation and the confidence of the working class in the workplace so that the material foundations for a reborn community spirit is laid. As the miners' strike proves, any attempt to rebuild class confidence comes up sharp against the cops.

On Lea and Young's model, we would have to tell the miners that they should not fight the cops. The

real task is to reintegrate the cops into society. Put more crudely, it is to build up mechanisms for organised grassing. And those mechanisms, which would not have any real effect on crime, would undoubtedly be used to gather political and trade union information that could be used to smash strikes.

Faced with ideological confusions like this the marxist tradition looks to the material base of ideas. In this case there is an obvious explanation to hand. These two people are no longer hungry young intellectuals. They are both aging and successful academics.

The fear of the dark masses, of the unwashed workers, of the rough and the criminal, is an old theme on the lower edge of the middle class. Lea and Young have simply brought it up to date. ■

Colin Sparks

Women in Russia

Moscow Women

Thirteen interviews by Carola Hansson and Karin Liden
Alhson and Busby £3.95

'What is it really like to be a woman in the Soviet Union? ... The interviews in this book ... present thirteen representative Soviet women who speak out about their lives ... they discuss their children, their husbands, their jobs and daily routines, their ideals and aspirations' — so says the blurb on the back of this book.

The women interviewed include an artist, a researcher, two students, a sociology teacher, a book editor, a professor, a hairdresser, chambermaid and a draughts-woman. Given that the authors acknowledge that working women in Russia dominate in the food, clothing and textile industries; in offices and service industries and in the teaching and nursing professions, it perhaps seems surprising that they haven't interviewed any working class women from these areas of work.

This lack of distinction — between working class women and middle class women — plagues the book and is in much the same vein as many other feminist writings that view women as a homogeneous, oppressed, mass, undivided by class or class interests.

The interviews do to some extent, give a picture of what life is like for most workers in Russia, even in the capital of Moscow where facilities and services are supposedly better than elsewhere. Some of the women interviewed live in communal apartments, in dilapidated buildings and cramped conditions, sharing kitchen and toilet facilities with other families.

They talk about the endless queues for shopping and food; about the lack of consumer goods and kitchen and electrical equipment which could make life easier.

The day care centres and nurseries for children, so often lauded as a real sign of 'socialist achievement', are shown to be places where often the standard of care and hygiene are low and where children are often ill as a result — as Lyuba says: 'It's so common for children to be sick that employers actually try to avoid hiring women with small children ... but of course that's not acknowledged officially.'

Most of the women interviewed also talk of the poor conditions in the hospitals, about the inadequacies of health care and of cramped delivery rooms with three or four women giving birth at the same time. The lack of adequate birth control methods is lamented and although abortion is available many of the women were dissatisfied with the way it was done, plus the fact that it was inadequate as a method of birth control.

One of the most telling interviews is with Nadezhda Pavlovna. She is a University professor and a member of the Communist Party. Nadezhda Pavlovna, surprise, surprise, owns her own house in Kazakhstan (one of the republics). It is, in her own words, '... a very unusual house since we designed it ourselves. It's large ... underneath is a cellar with a high ceiling — almost like an extra apartment.' As added extras the house has a large garden and a swimming pool. The obvious differences in her life, even as compared to the other women, are never questioned by the authors.

The end impression of the book is one of a catalogue of horrors, but with no solution. The women interviewed (with the exception of Nadezhda Pavlovna who, as a result of her class position, is keen to stress that '... here, women have finally gotten the emancipation they're entitled to') view their situation as individuals and can see no collective way out.

The authors do too. The

prevailing ideology which stresses 'femininity' and motherhood, preserves and encourages sex roles and sexism at home and work, is seen as the result of something generally 'male'; of a society and working patterns '... set up by men for men'. They feel that the fact that women in Russia haven't been allowed to set up their own independent organisations 'has contributed to this state of affairs'.

The brief glimpse of liberation for Russian women during the few years that followed the Russian revolution with its equality at work, its communal feeding, laundry and child care facilities, its common law

marriages and 'post card' divorces and the opening up of personal relationships isn't considered.

Now as then however, the hope for working class women lies with working class men — its foundation lies, remote as the possibility may seem in Russia, within collective independent organisation at work. Given the difficulties in contacting and interviewing anyone in Russia (the interviews in this book were recorded in secret and the tapes smuggled out) and the hard work that must have gone into collating the book, I wish I could say that it's worthwhile reading, but I can't. ■

Cathie Jasper

CIA jobs for Nazis

The Belarus Secret

John Loftus
Penguin £1.95

This is a remarkable book. Although written by a liberal and 'cleared' through the CIA, it is nonetheless a real eye-opener for anyone even partially seduced by the idea that World War II was a war against Nazi tyranny. Unknowingly, John Loftus debunks this myth once and for all.

He records how, at the end of the war, the intelligence agencies of the British, US and French governments, systematically and deliberately recruited many hundreds of Nazis, including the leaders of nearly all the Eastern European puppet regimes of the Third Reich. They provided this scum, which embraced Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyons, and many other major war criminals, with new identities and papers. They smuggled them throughout Europe and America, giving them effective immunity from prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. And they got them jobs,

often in specially established front organisations, such as Radio Liberty, as cover for their intelligence gathering activities and later, for guerrilla operations within the Soviet Bloc.

Their aim was to use the old Nazi intelligence networks to supply the names of those left behind the Soviet lines, or in the Displaced Persons camps, who had served the puppet regimes and who could be recruited or blackmailed into providing the cadre for a guerrilla army within the Soviet Union.

Masking the plan's inadequacy was the Western orthodoxy of the time, which regarded the USSR as being close to collapse.

The Nazis the Western powers were falling over themselves to net, had carried out similar duties just a few years before. In fact, the Third Reich established puppet regimes specifically in order to rouse nationalist aspirations to stem the Russian advance. However, the puppet governments had been so deeply penetrated at every level by Soviet Intelligence, that the Nazi

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editor Chris Harman

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collaborators were eliminated in their droves as the Red Army pushed westwards, or else (for Moscow was up to the same dirty tricks) were 'turned' into soviet double agents.

The only people in the West who knew this were the quislings themselves. Their security from prosecution as war criminals depended upon them keeping it that way.

And war criminals they most certainly were. Contrary to popular belief, the Nazi atrocities were largely conducted not by Germans, but by their local collaborators. One survivor, of Koldichevo concentration camp, is cited in this book as testifying that the only German he ever saw in the camp was the cook.

It was for the services of those responsible for these gross inhumanities, that the Western intelligence agencies vied in the Displaced Persons camps. At the same time, the British and American governments were busy on *Operation Keelhaul* — the deportation of 2 million displaced Russians, some former collaborators, but most POWs. Aware that Soviet soldiers and citizens captured by the Nazis were all treated as traitors upon repatriation, a great many committed suicide *en route*. The rest were either shot on arrival, or else sent to slave labour

camps.

Having the most resources and possibly also because the much penetrated British and French intelligence groups were planting Soviet double-agents inside the USA, the American State Department eventually harvested by far the biggest crop of Nazis. Unaware however, that the Nazi networks of agents in Eastern Europe were a spent force, they were strung along for over a decade with largely bogus intelligence reports and a few hair-brained guerrilla operations inside the USSR, all of them failures. (The CIA even sent in a Ukrainian parachute team equipped with folding bicycles.)

It was not until 1956 that the Hungarian Uprising revealed the total impotence of these 'special forces', which were disbanded to become the nucleus of the Green Berets. By this time, however, the leading quislings had compromised a sufficient number of public officials, including Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, to ensure continued government protection of them and their secrets.

Thanks to John Loftus, they have not been entirely successful. Even so, many are still alive and working for the US government, some extolling the virtues of the 'free world' over the airwaves of Radio Liberty.

Rod Hudson

A film of injustice

El Norte is the tale of a brother and sister escaping from their village in Guatemala to North America after the killing of their father by the army. It tells of the journey from the simple and communal village life to the complexity and individualism of city life with oppression and suffering as the over-riding reality at every stage, though changing in form.

The film opens with village life — the family meal, the riverside washing, the traditional wooing of sweethearts. But the scene is already disturbed by the slave-like labour on the plantations and the ever-present army. 'They came because our land is good' explains father to son, 'and there comes a time when you have to fight'.

Off he goes to a secret meeting. Betrayed, the inexperienced conspirators are shot. The last to be killed is the father at the very moment he grasps his first gun.

The subsequent recrimination on the rest of the family portrays the daily reality for the Guatemalan poor, especially the Indians who make up over half the population. Dispossessed of their land, then forced to work on the coffee and sugar plantations, they face hardship and persecution under military terror, or flee across the border to Mexico. The official figures (20,000 killed in the last four years, and 100,000 refugees on the Mexican border) only hint at the scale of repression.

In the film, the course taken by the family's survivors, Enrique and sister Rosa, is to go to the north where, even the poor can pee in flushing toilets and drive around in cars.

The way to America is through rat-filled sewers. Desperation produces unbelievable human strength and courage. It also produces another layer of parasites — those who survive by living off the wretchedness of the very poorest.

At the end of the tunnel is San Diego. Enrique and Rosa stand over it marvelling at the magical beauty of its distant night-time

appearance. The reality comes later. Their price is haggled over and they are sold — the transition to the labour market is complete.

One of the film's best qualities is that it is not just a 'moral outrage' account of misery and suffering. There are touches of comedy, fantasy and human warmth throughout, showing how people survive oppression by forming new friendships, dreams and humour.

There are, however, important things missing. It doesn't show the civil police in Guatemala (the worst of the murderers). It doesn't give Enrique the alternative of joining the guerrillas. It doesn't show the mass refugee camps on the Mexican/Guatemalan border where most escapees end up. And it doesn't show any resistance by the American working class. But these are beyond the scope of the film.

It is a film which shows what happens to the poor all over the world as a consequence of the struggle for profits and political domination. It shows that in Central America oppression is through the gun and mass terror, while in America it is through legal and monetary means. It counterposes the beauty of nature to the ugliness of cities, yet doesn't fall into romanticism by ignoring the gains of technology and the hardships and 'rural idiocies' of peasant life.

El Norte is art almost at its best. It gives insight into other people's lives, it provokes thought, and is beautifully made. Emotionally, it evokes anger and sadness for the plight of millions and awe at human resilience.

Any film that evokes indignation at political and economic injustice must be a good thing — there are few enough that even approach the subject. *El Norte* achieves this with added depths. And despite the obvious lack of political answers, the film offers an important contribution to our understanding of peasants, migrant workers and the human parasites who feed off them.

Clare Fermont

IRA leader remembers

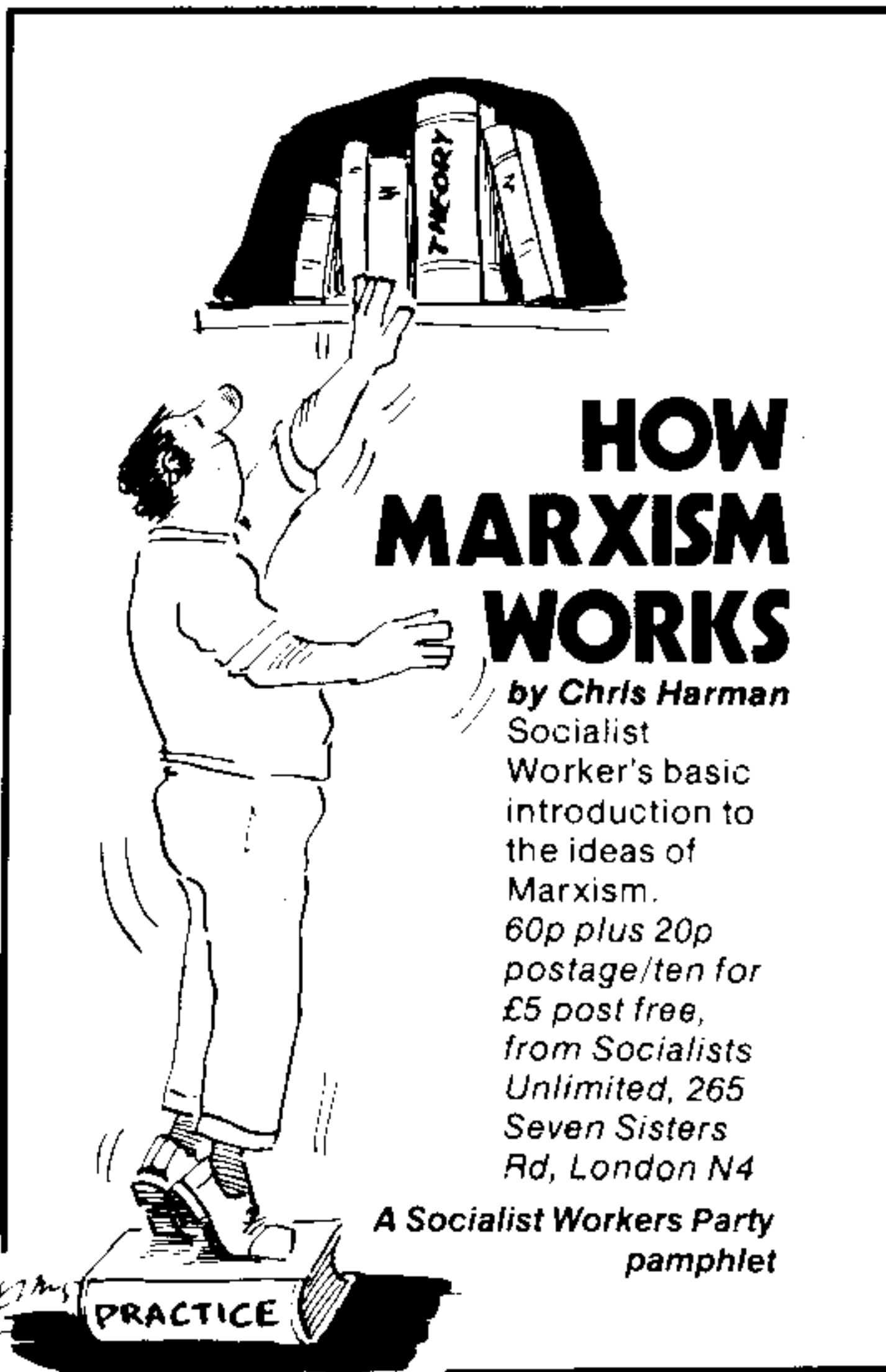
Raids and Rallies
Ernie O'Malley
Anvil Press (£10.00)

Ernie O'Malley was one of the Irish Republican Army's central leaders in its military struggle with the British Army between 1919-21. Following that he helped lead the IRA forces opposed to the 1921 settlement with Britain that ended the war and partitioned Ireland.

His accounts of each campaign were set out in *On Another Man's Wound* and *The Singing Flame*.

Both books provide some of the best accounts of those events. They show O'Malley as one of the few IRA leaders with radical views. In particular like many in the Provisionals today he saw the need to involve the majority of the Irish population as more than passive observers of the IRA's military effort.

Unlike many Irish republicans he went beyond seeing the alternative to militarism as purely electoral politics. Later in the 1930s he would co-operate with the Irish Com-



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A Socialist Workers Party pamphlet

munist Party and backed the left wing Republican Congress which won the support of a number of socialist Belfast protestants.

O'Malley wasn't a Marxist. But he stands out amongst the leadership of the IRA who were either unable to break from pure militarism or, offered a chance, plumped for comfortable careers governing what would become the Irish Republic.

O'Malley's latest book, *Raid and Rallies*, is made up of a series of essays describing various actions between the IRA and the British

Army in the west of Ireland. They were originally published in the Irish Press, the paper owned by Eamonn De Valera's family.

In 1920 the Irish Communist Party described the IRA as having a rank and file made up of workers and peasants but with a middle class leadership. The tragedy was that the middle class leadership retained control of the IRA. The separate class interests of both groups never came into conflict in the absence of a sizeable socialist party. ■

Tina Scott

False hero

Working Class Hero
Stanley Aronowitz
Pilgrim Press, 1983

In 1973 Stanley Aronowitz published *False Promises*. The book attempted to describe US working class life as a whole—community, unions, workplace conditions, culture—and not just reduce working class history to the activities of particular unions or union leaders. Reflecting the times, *False Promises* was also an optimistic book, and Aronowitz happily concluded that young workers radicalised by the counter-culture would form caucuses independent of the trade unions. These caucuses would form the institutional vanguard of the socialist movement.

Times change, and Aronowitz has come up with *Working Class Hero*. This book has a different audience in mind (or the same audience ten years older): 'The progressive wing of the trade unions and those who are concerned with building a new alliance that can transform American society from one in which the corporate imperatives dominate all other agendas'.

As we can see *Working Class Hero* has its own distinct set of politics. Aronowitz now advocates a return to the trade unions—indeed he doesn't recognise any fundamental difference between the trade union bureaucracy and the rank and file. Also, his dreams are smaller. Like many other American radicals, Aronowitz believes that all socialists can hope for is that Reagan can be defeated at the ballot box and that a liberal will be elected to the White House on a democratic programme: restore social services, trim the military budget, encourage unionism.

Finally, Aronowitz now pins his expectations on a 'new alliance'. *Working Class Hero* proposes that the labour movement join a broad coalition that includes environmentalists and the 'new social movements'.

Aronowitz would have this alliance reform the Democratic Party, pass strong environmental legislation, struggle for social equality, and expand the state

sector. This alliance would not, however, oppose concessions in contract negotiations, fight for higher wages, or break from the two-party electoral system. It sounds a little like Gary Hart without the fascination with technology.

Given these basic politics, it is no wonder that Aronowitz supports domestic content legislation (protectionism), belittles rank and file movements, praises Machinists, Union president William Wimpisinger (who has busted wild-cat strikes), recognises 'US defence needs', and wants to recruit a 'breakaway fraction of capital' to the 'new alliance'.

This wouldn't matter so much except that Aronowitz is a golden boy of the US left—vice chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, television personality, professor of labour studies, and a prolific journalist. His books are widely

read, and they tend to reflect the changing politics of the many sixties radicals.

Working Class Hero is packaged as a work of labour history, but the sources are secondary and the history is subordinated to the needs of the political conclusions. There is a need for serious labour history,

just as there is a need for good interpretations of the current crisis of American labour. Those interested in the historical material should try Daniel Guerin's *100 Years of American Labour*. For current reflection and analysis there really isn't much available. ■

Kent Worcester

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Emmanuel Farjoun and Moshe Machover

Verso £8.95

Efforts to develop Marx's ideas and apply them to contemporary capitalism are certainly needed. Unfortunately, the work by Jacques Gouverneur fails to fulfil the promise of its title. Written by a Belgian academic, most of it has the feel of a worthy but uninspired lecture-course, spelling out what Marx said, and arguing that the theory still applies.

As such books go it is clear, rigorously argued, and, up until the section on crises, accurately represents what Marx said. But when Gouverneur attempts to break new ground he goes astray. His discussion of the State is inadequate despite a timid nod in the direction of State Capitalist theory. His brief analysis of the crisis today derives mainly from the woolliest ideas of the French 'Marxist' (and Mitterrand supporter) Aglietta.

By contrast *Laws of Chaos*, written by two Marxist mathematicians, is a book for the specialist.

It is worth saying here that there are many specialists who would benefit a great deal from reading *Laws of Chaos*. The authors show clearly how the elaborate mathematical models, in which so many economists put their faith, simply fall apart once the flimsy and restrictive assumptions on which they rest are knocked away. In the process, Farjoun and Machover provide an original defence of the labour theory of value against its Sraffian critics in particular.

The alternative methodology, applying a 'probabilistic' approach to the relationship between the 'labour-content' of commodities, and prices and profits, whilst suggestive, is much more limited than they suggest. The 'law of large numbers' depends on the equally limited premise that capitalism is always composed of hundreds of small competing firms. But I do like their emphasis on the unevenness of rates of profit between different capitals. ■

Pete Green

socialist worker Review

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Socialist detectives?

October Heat

Gordon De Marco

Pluto Press, £2.95

Morbid symptoms

Gillian Slovo

Pluto Press, £2.95

The China Option

Nancy Milton

Pluto Press, £3.50

Murder in the Central Committee

Manuel Vazquez Montalban

Pluto Press, £3.50

Why should the devil have all the good tunes? Why should the bourgeoisie monopolise the production of popular literature?

The idea of socialist writers using the form of detective novels and thrillers is, on the face of it, a good one. It could represent an attempt to break out of the ghetto of middle class academicism in which many socialist intellectuals have hidden for the past decade. And the attempt would not involve a complete breaking of new ground, since one of the pioneers of the detective story, Dashiell Hammett, saw himself as a Marxist.

This is the rationale behind the new Pluto series of 'political' crime fiction. Unfortunately, the first four books in the series fail, in various different ways, to live up to these aspirations.

Hammett was, on occasions (especially in *Red Harvest*), to challenge established stereotypes about American society. The Swedish writers Sjöwall and Wahlöo have continued in this tradition—indeed putting more explicit political comment into their stories than Hammett did, although never actually managing to write as well as he did.

But three of the Pluto books move in a completely different direction. Their concern is not using a popular form to put across a critique of existing society, but rather in simply using a political milieu as the background for conventional stories.

Murder in the Central Committee by Manuel Vazquez Montalban is by far the worst. The setting is the Spanish Communist Party, wracked by factional disputes between Eurocommunists and Stalinists. But it's not the relation of these arguments to the class struggle or the fight for socialism which concerns the author, but cynical, sickly tittle-tattle about people's personal lives and political pasts. Presumably, Spanish readers are supposed to get some vicarious pleasure out of guessing who the real figures behind the fictional names are.

If it is the inside story of the disintegration of Spanish Communism you want, then the job has been much better done in Jorge Semprun's two recent autobiographical books, *The autobiography of Federico Sanchez* and *What a beautiful Sunday*. His

conclusions are cynical enough, but Montalban's are, if anything, even worse. It is not just a disintegrating Stalinism which is pilloried, but any form of serious socialist commitment. Far from providing a critique of life under capitalism, the novel embellishes some of its nastiest aspects. The hero rejoices in a scene of brutalised sexuality which could come straight out of Micky Spillane—and his main other pastime is indulgence in the most expensive of expensive restaurants.

Morbid Symptoms is not nearly as bad as *Murder in the Central Committee*. I read it while suffering from a mild dose of flu and found it vaguely interesting. But not because it presented any political ideas. It too simply uses an allegedly political milieu to act out a conventional detective plot.

The milieu is that of the trendy left new middle classes, the upper stratum of the inner city fragments. The key characters live in Hackney and Islington. But not the Hackney and Islington that thousands of working class people live in: with the deteriorating council estates, decaying streets, shut down hospitals, 20 per cent unemployment levels, and factories that long ago closed.

Instead, this is a world where people are always jumping into their Citroens, eating out at nice French and Italian restaurants, flitting across to parties in Hampstead, and earning a couple of hundred a week doing 'research' for some vaguely left-wing charity off Oxford Street (and, one suspects, writing bad books for Pluto).

This is all very interesting if what you are interested in is the cultural anthropology of part of the swamp. If, however, your interest is in the real world of exploitation and oppression, you need to go back to Hammett or Sjöwall and Wahlöo.

China Option is worth reading. Its setting is both interesting and important: present day Peking, with its repression, its deals to provide cheap labour for Western multinationals, its dissident movement and its unpublicised strikes. The book gives you a real feel for important aspects of the world's biggest country. But it's still not in any real sense a socialist novel. It belongs, rather, to the same tradition as *The Crash of 79* and *Gorky Park*: novels that provide some insight into the working of the world, but from a view which is not necessarily at all left wing.

Gordon de Marco falls into a different category to the other three. Not only are his settings political, but he aims to persuade people to draw socialist conclusions. He did this quite well in his *Canvas Prison*, which is set at the time of the anti-Communist witch-hunt of

Hollywood in the late 1940s. *October Heat* (written before *Canvas Prison*) is not quite as successful.

It is set in San Francisco in 1934. A general strike has just led to unionisation of the waterfront and the left wing novelist Upton Sinclair is running for state governor, on the Democratic Party ticket. A routine case for private eye Riley Kovacs leads him into a bloody labyrinth of right wing plots and political murders.

So far so good. But the effectiveness of the novel is undermined by two things. First is de Marco's insistence on writing in a style which parodies that of Hammett and Chandler. This works up to a certain point and then becomes simply annoying. Second, is the way he introduces real historical figures into the narrative (the longshoreman's leader Harry Bridges, Upton Sinclair, Charlie Chaplin, the imprisoned wobbly, Tom Mooney). These inevitably come across as

wooden and unreal.

George Lukacs made the point in his study, *The Historical Novel*, that real historical figures can never play more than a marginal part in a novel, as opposed to a play. Novelists have to provide some all round portrayal of their central characters and their interaction with the rest of society. They cannot reduce them to one or two dimensions so as to provide a particular angle on events, in the way that the playwright can. So even the great historical novels of a Walter Scott or a Tolstoy are weakest at those points where real figures (the Duke of Argyll or Napoleon) appear.

In de Marco's case this means that *October Heat* begins to fall flat just as it should be reaching a crescendo. But at least he tries to use the detective novel to put across socialist ideas, and that puts him in a class apart from the other Pluto novelists.

Chris Harman

Sound judgement

Charlie Gillett 'Sound of the City'

Souvenir Press Paper £6.95

Because there is so much rubbish written about music it is nice to be able to recommend a good book for a change.

It is a good and thorough history of rock and roll (as it was called in the 50s). Gillett traces its origins in rhythm and blues and gospel in black America of the 30s, 40s and 50s. Through the soul and British reworkings of the 60s, to the 70s with rock blending into folk and Country and Western. The book ends with the pre-punk mid-70s.

Though far better than most others on the subject the book does have its shortcomings. At its worst it can read like a list of names joined together with adjectives. But by and large the judgements and comments on the historical developments are sound and the book a lively and easy read.

The weakest aspect of the book, however, is its failure to incorporate changes in the outside world to developments in music. It tends to treat music as a separate and isolated phenomenon.

Gillett is a child of the 60s with a great love and knowledge of black America's music and this is reflected in the book, usually to the benefit of the reader... But it does have its unfortunate side-effects now and again. I'll take up what I believe to be the most glaring and biggest error as it is one shared by many on the left. Bob Dylan.

His reign as music style leader was short lived, if intense.

If Dylan symbolised anything at all it was part of a move away from the music and the beat to listening to the words. Away from the rough and rebellious dance music of the working classes to the carefully crafted West Coast Sound of



middle class America. Of course rough and rebelliousness do not have to go together, as some punks seem to believe, but they were linked in rock and roll. The influence of Dylan was part of a move to singer/songwriter with meaningful words. It was music to listen to in the private and isolated comfort of your home not danced to on the disco floor.

It is one of the ironies that Dylan who personified music about civil rights and struggle helped to create the move away from a collective and raw experience of rock, to it being either heard at home or in vast arranged and managed concerts.

But these disagreements over a musician or type do not detract from the overall value of this useful and thorough work. It's greatest asset is that it provides a historical framework within which music can be understood. I just wish he had extended it to include social and political events. But it is streets ahead of most other attempts. It is not the classic text claimed on the back cover but it almost is.

Noel Halifax