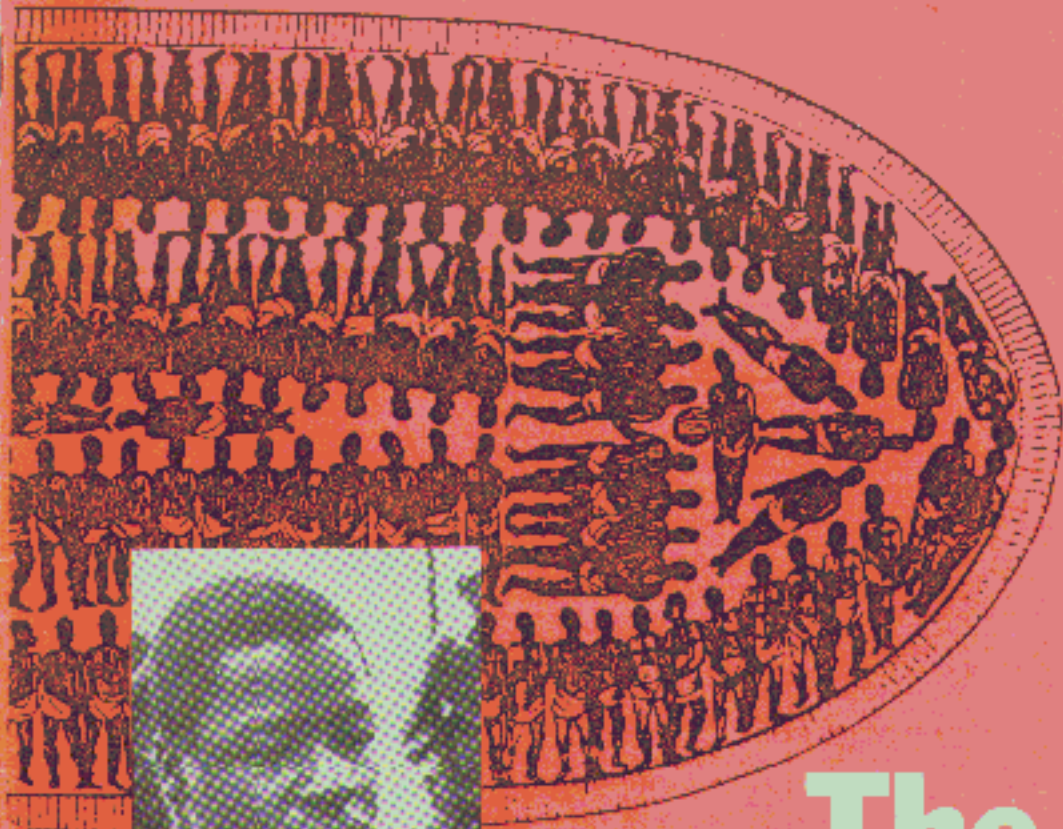


# *socialist worker* **Review**

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# NOTES of the month

## THE ECONOMY

# Cold comfort

HAS THE government performed a U-turn? The widespread reaction to Nigel Lawson's economic statement last month was that the Tories had abandoned at least some of their most prized monetarist beliefs in the interest of winning the next election. Roy Hattersley denounced them for only wanting to win votes. Certainly that is the aim of a still firm commitment to tax cuts next spring, of the trumpeting that the Tories have maintained the level of public spending and of talk about the rate of growth of British capital increasing.

Yet there are few signs that the City of London or those who really run British capital have much confidence in Lawson's predictions. In fact the economic statement—which has received very mixed reactions from different sections of the press (partly because they don't altogether believe Lawson's figures)—may turn out to be another damp squib.

Lawson has certainly abandoned some of the sacred cows of monetarism which he and Thatcher have declared absolutely inviolable for the past six years. He is dropping the claim that the way to control inflation is to restrict the measure of the money supply.

He is boasting about the level of public spending that the Tories are allowing. But the increase in the level of public spending is not mainly in the area of capital spending. New hospitals, schools or other major works are not to be built.

Lawson is also claiming that the rate of growth for British industry is 3 percent. Virtually nobody believes this figure. The *Observer* estimated growth at nearer 1 percent (excluding north sea oil). The *Economist* puts it like this: 'The Treasury's forecast of 3

percent real growth in GDP next year is roughly a third more bullish than other forecasters. If the 3 percent does not happen, bang goes the Treasury's hopes for revenue—and spending on things like unemployment pay will be higher than is at present expected.'

What is the reality? Firstly, the projected rate of growth is going to be nowhere near as favourable as Lawson predicts. Therefore all his calculations based on it are likely to be too optimistic.

Secondly, the long term prospects for British capitalism give little cause for comfort to the ruling class. The trend is towards stagnation. The recent House of Lords report stressed the dangers in the lack of renewal of the infrastructure (the roads, sewers, etc) of British capital. And the trend is for imports into Britain to grow much faster than exports. This is shown in Lawson's economic statement. As Samuel Brittan in the *Financial Times* puts it, his figures show 'export growth falling sharply from 7 percent in 1984 and 1985 to 2 percent in 1986, while import growth rises to 4 percent'.

Finally, Lawson's own figures show that the government doesn't have wages under control to the extent that it would like. The projection is that wages will rise by 3-4 percent on average next year. But fears in the City are that the level of pay rises—for teachers and some civil servants, for example—will go far beyond that. They don't want increases in public spending to go in this direction, but rather in the direction of capital investment. And they fear that such pay increases will be paid for by borrowing rather than absorbed through higher productivity.

What the situation shows, and what the economic statement can't hide, is exactly what a mess the government is in. It has followed monetarist policies for years now, with precisely no improvement in the situation of British industry. Unemployment is unlikely to go down. It can only claim that the level of public spending is under control because of unprecedented sales of assets through privatisation.

The City is frightened that the government, having held the lid on the economy for six years, will now drop all restraints on public spending. This, it fears, will have the disastrous effect of the Heath-Barber inflationary 'booms' of the early seventies.

What does it mean politically?

Those who indulge in reading political tea leaves saw the number of senior Tories and cabinet ministers at AUEW leader Terry Duffy's memorial service as not simply a sign of respect for the old class collaborator. It represented a change in the government's attitude to the union leaders. What we have seen evolving over the last year is a new consensus between government and union leaders. The old consensus was wrecked in 1979 by the winter of discontent on the one hand and Thatcher's hardline approach on the other. The consensus this time, however, is far to the right of any previous agreements.

What we face in the run up to the election is a certain convergence, with all three parties arguing a degree of right wing consensus politics. Last month we saw Kinnoch's confidence in pulling Labour rightwards (he has continued on this path with his recent witch hunting speech to, appropriately enough, the Fabian Society). Lawson's economic statement is an attempt to push the Tories too towards a form of consensus—but very much on their terms. ■

## AFTER THE SUMMIT

# Back in the USSR

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV had worries of his own as he met Reagan. At the centre of them is what is happening to the Russian economy.

The problem is that its rate of growth shows no sign of increasing. And all of Gorbachev's talk of 'reform' in the last year doesn't seem to have made any difference.

The most recent proofs of this are to be found in the recently published draft for the next five year plan and the proposals to be put to next year's Party congress.

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The five year plan draft calls for a very modest average rate of growth of only 4 percent. If this were achieved it would be much lower than that of Stalin's heyday in the 1930s and early 1950s, or even of Khrushchev's in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But, in fact, it is very unlikely to be attained.

At the centre of the plan stands a call for increasing industrial investment and defence spending.

The growth in defence spending is clearly a reflection of the increased pressure of military competition with the US as Reagan boosts the American arms budget. Defence is estimated to account for 13 to 14 percent of total output, showing the burden on Russia of trying to match the arms spending of a US economy which is nearly twice its size. It has only grown slowly in recent years, but it due to increase by 12 percent this year.

It is 'the aggravation of the international situation', argues a document for next year's party congress, *The Major Options of Economic and Social Development of the USSR Until the Year 2000*, that 'obliges the USSR to make additional efforts to maintain its defence at the required level'.

The growth in industrial investment is necessary, Gorbachev has said in recent speeches, to upgrade existing equipment in order to produce higher quality goods. Again, in the background is the pressure of world competition: what is produced in the USSR often lags behind what is produced in its main Western rival in quality as well as quantity.

Yet if defence and investment spending are both going up, it is difficult to see how the other targets of the plan are to be met.

Even a 4 percent growth rate would be higher than that of recent years, and more than planning officials originally thought possible.

The document for the congress argues that 'higher productivity' is the solution to the discrepancies. But its call for a 150 percent increase in productivity over 15 years seems completely unobtainable.

So the most likely outcome will be for consumer goods production—and therefore workers' real wages—to be held back. As so often in the past, the myth of 'planning' would actually conceal a situation in which targets for arms and investment were exceeded and those for workers' living stan-

dards ignored.

At this point, both Western economists and proponents of reform in Eastern Europe come forward with another solution to the discrepancies in the figures.

They say that relaxing the central planning mechanism and allowing increased room for the state run enterprises to compete with each other, as in Hungary or China, could produce an upsurge in productivity and the quality of output.

Gorbachev himself has made the occasional nod in this direction. His support for the Hungarian regime's economic policies has caused some unease to the more 'orthodox' rulers of Czechoslovakia. And he recently complained that Russia's planners were not 'psychologically prepared' for change.

Yet reform cannot deliver half of what its proponents promise. It is not only that for the mass of workers it means a continuation of low living standards—as any honest observer of Hungary must admit, the fact that shops are fuller than in most of the rest of Eastern Europe is little compensation for workers who cannot afford the goods which are on display.

It is also that reform does not automatically lead to higher growth rates and productivity.

Even Hungary, a smallish economy which was able to find a niche for itself in the interstices of the world system (as the Irish republic did in the 1970s and Austria still does), is experiencing economic stagnation and downward pressure on the living standards of those outside the car owning 10 percent of the population who make up the new middle class.

And China has been finding that loosening the controls leads to an upsurge of investment and imports which the economy just cannot sustain, leading to a very inefficient pattern of abandonment of new large scale investments while they are still only half finished.

There is no reason to believe that things would be any better for the huge Russian economy. For reform would not remove either of the two forms of external pressure that have made nonsense of the pretence of 'planning' in the past—the pressure of military competition with the US and of direct economic pressure with the giant Western multinationals.

So where does that leave Gorbachev?

For ten years the ageing Brezhnev effectively let the Russian economy drift on, relying on sheer inertia to keep it going despite a declining growth rate. The interim rulers, Andropov and Chernenko did not have the time to do any different. Gorbachev has been promising change.

But one thing he must be a little afraid of. That is the reaction of workers in Russia as it becomes clear that it is their living standards that are going to be under pressure. Because the pressure has been increasing slowly and will continue to do so, no one can tell if and when workers will react as they reacted, for instance, in Poland in 1970, 1976 and 1980. However the mere possibility of that happening must give Gorbachev considerable nightmares as he contemplates the prospect for the years ahead. ■

## IRELAND

# Rocky road to Dublin

THE Anglo-Irish Agreement is being hailed as a major initiative which could lead to a breakthrough in the stalemate within Northern Ireland. This is certainly the view of the media. Every major British daily newspaper has welcomed the Agreement with fulsome praise. So too do all the major political parties, with only a fringe group of Tory right wingers opposing.

But the Agreement is also being taken seriously in quarters where there is not usually quite the same reaction to 'new deals for Northern Ireland'. At their *Ard Fheis* (conference), Sinn Fein certainly took the British proposal seriously. Gerry Adams outlined the dangers it represented for the Republican movement. Meanwhile, the Southern Irish media have given the proposal a warm welcome.

What is all the fuss about? The starting point has to be what the Agreement does not do. It does not in any way, shape, or form represent a challenge to the existence of the sectarian Northern Ireland state. The first article of the Agreement affirms 'that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland'.

In other words, the aim of the Agreement is not to get to the roots of the problems in Ireland. Rather it is to isolate one of the major protagonists in the Irish struggle, the Provisional IRA. This is something that both the British and Irish ruling classes are anxious to do.

In order for them to be able to do so, they have to appear to be doing something significant in terms of reforming the Northern Irish state. This means they have to be seen to be involving the Irish government, and, more importantly, giving the Catholic constitutional party, the SDLP, a role in the North.

The Agreement as it stands does not yet have the facility for this to take place, but does state its aim for devolved government in Northern Ireland on a basis 'which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community'—in other words power sharing in some form.

In the meantime the Agreement sets up a 'conference concerned with Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations, to deal on a regular basis with political matters; security and related matters; legal matters including the administration of justice; and the promotion of cross-border co-operation'.

These meetings would be on regular and frequent occasions involving government ministers, leading civil servants, and top policemen from both governments.

The deal is clearly designed to undermine Sinn Fein and the IRA in two ways. One is straightforward repression. It is hoped that

there will be higher degrees of co-operation between the British and Irish security forces, more frequent use of extradition, and that the IRA will be physically weakened by more arrests and more convictions. The deal is more about security co-operation than anything else.

The second and more important way that it seeks to isolate the Republicans is political. If it can persuade large sections of the Catholic population that progress can be made without violence, then it would hope to restrict support for the Republicans to the poorest inner-city ghettos of Derry and Belfast.

By giving the Irish government a role, it is hoped that Catholics will feel such progress is being made. But to do this Thatcher has been forced to stand up to the Loyalist and Unionist politicians.

The response of Loyalists to the agreement was predictable. It was a 'first traitorous step on the road to a united Ireland'. Thatcher has had to show a willingness to bypass them to introduce the Agreement. This she has done.

This is the way Thatcher and Garret FitzGerald have chosen to play things.

Will they succeed?

It depends what is meant by success. If it means, can the Northern Ireland state cast aside all its contradictions and be reformed into being just another part of the British Isles, then the answer is no. But if the aim is to undermine support for the Republicans then the deal must be taken seriously.

The war in Northern Ireland is a marginal event in the minds of the vast majority of British workers. The same is true (though to a somewhat lesser extent) for workers in Southern Ireland. If the struggle in the North can be shown as something existing almost exclusively in the ghettos, this could do real damage to the Republicans.

However, the strategy faces a number of serious obstacles.



Garret FitzGerald

Firstly, both prime ministers have to be seen to be achieving very different objectives. Thatcher has argued that the Agreement actually strengthens the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. She has to convince the Protestant population of the North that their leaders are panicking and scaremongering.

The trouble is every time she makes such a

reassurance she makes life that little bit more difficult for Garret FitzGerald. He is in a rather invidious situation, as one Irish pundit described him, having responsibilities without power. He must try to show that he is making progress and not just doing deals on security.

What's more, Charlie Haughey, leader of the opposition party Fianna Fail, opposes the Agreement. He is likely to become prime minister within the next 18 months, so his opposition has to be taken seriously. However Haughey is not getting the sort of support he might have hoped for from sections of the SDLP or from those newspapers normally loyal to his party. FitzGerald nevertheless has to perform a delicate balancing act, and has to hope that Thatcher doesn't rock his boat too much.

The second problem the deal faces is that of the Protestant population. All the leading Loyalist figures are bitterly opposed to the deal. As yet, however, it is not clear how much of this opposition is just bluster and constitutional games and how much is serious determination to try and unleash real forces on the ground to wreck the deal.

The Unionists have pledged to boycott joint meetings with British administrators and to resign as MPs in order to force by-elections. The British government is unlikely to be worried about such tactics in the short term, although if maintained they would make all power sharing impossible.

The type of resistance that would represent a serious threat to the Agreement would have to be similar to the Ulster Workers Council strike in 1974 which brought down the Sunningdale Agreement. As yet there is no sign that Loyalist leaders are going for this. Paisley for instance stated their determination to stay within the law when he said, 'Mrs Thatcher will find the Ulster people are not miners or Argentinians but have grit, courage and strength.'

What isn't clear is whether Paisley fears unleashing a movement he couldn't control or fears that he can't unleash the movement at all. In some Loyalist circles there is talk of a unilateral declaration of independence, but it remains to be seen whether this is just talk.

But the Unionist establishment is in a much weaker position than it has been in the past. It has not held political power now for over a decade. It has no say in the running of the army. Its influence over the RUC is far, far weaker than in 1974. Even the UDR is directly answerable to the British government. The Unionist establishment does not control a highly profitable section of the British economy as it did in the past and as a result has lost much of its support within the Tory Party.

Any campaign against the British will therefore have to confront the state machinery and could have all sorts of dangers built into it for the Loyalists.

What is certain is that the Loyalist opposition remains a difficult obstacle for the Agreement's initiators.

There then remains the question of the Catholic population. They will go on living in a society where they are treated as second-class citizens. The Agreement will not materially alter the lot of all but a very few Catholics and therefore may fail to make any

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dent in the support of the Provisionals. The RUC, UDR, Long Kesh and Diplock courts will all remain. They will be used mainly against the Catholic population.

Unemployment will remain disproportionately high amongst Catholics, and certain routes out of the ghettos remain closed. A desire for peace, a rest from the troubles, and the encouragement of nationalist and Dublin politicians, plus the anger of the Loyalists are what Britain must hope will make these cosmetic changes seem enough to further isolate the Provos.

What is clear is that, whatever the deal does or doesn't do, as long as Britain remains in Ireland and props up the sectarian state there can be no real or lasting solution to the problems. Socialists have to continue to call for the withdrawal of the troops and the smashing of the sectarian state. ■

### LIVERPOOL

## Lost opportunities

THE CONFRONTATION in Liverpool over the city's cash crisis has reached an impasse as we go to press.

The council are quite rightly refusing to make the cuts contained in the Stonefrost Report. And the government are refusing to cough up to stop the council running out of money.

But the council and their supporters in the council unions have offered nothing by way of fighting their way out of the deadlock.

The truth is that they are paying the price for a history of threats followed by retreats.

The best opportunity to fight was last year, when the council could have done what the Tories feared most—fought alongside the miners. Instead they settled.

This year as the conflict loomed again there was a chance to move onto the offensive. But the opportunity was thrown away.

We said in September that the decision by the council stewards to call off the strike against the Tories was a catastrophe. By calling the strike off the fight was called off.

And the door was opened to all the attacks that Kinnock and the Labour and trade

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union leaderships have relished since then.

In a disgusting display of back-stabbing they have gone out of their way to portray the council's rejection of Stonefrost as 'unreasonable'.

At a mass meeting of TGWU members to discuss the Stonefrost report, Jack Dromey, the 'left' union leader of the TGWU's public services sector, gave a blow-by-blow account of negotiations between the council and the eight general secretaries of the council unions.

His version of events was unchallenged because the union leaders had refused admission to any of the councillors to put their case.

He later told *Socialist Worker*, 'Up until yesterday the council and the unions were proceeding down the same path, but now their paths have diverged.'

In other words, the council should make cuts.

This is all music to Kinnock and the Labour Party leadership's ears.

Their aim is simple—make the council climb down, and use it as an example to the rest of the party that resistance does not pay.

In these circumstances it is pie in the sky for anyone to expect these people to help find a solution to the council's cash crisis.

But the council continue to look to the Tories, Labour and trade union leaders to put up the money they so desperately need.

Without a strike, however, their position is hopeless. Since September they have lurched from one disaster to another.

First of all, in an attempt to secure more loans, they issued redundancy notices to their entire workforce.

Instead of giving the council an extra three months breathing space as the council hoped, the notices divided the workforce right down the middle. The bitterness and anger which followed gave those union leaders who had always opposed a fight the opportunity to break away from the council stewards committee to form a more right wing alternative.

It also gave Kinnock and the Labour Party leadership the chance to decry the council for the 'grotesque chaos' they had created.

Then, after the most vicious attack upon the council at Labour Party conference, Derek Hatton said that he would welcome the intervention of the Party leadership and the eight general secretaries of the council unions 'in the interests of party unity'.

The Stonefrost cuts package and more

tirades against the council resulted from their intervention.

This was followed by an announcement from the council that they would lay the workforce off throughout January in an attempt to balance the books.

Quite rightly, this was denounced as an attempt by the council to do what every other council does—make the workforce pay for the cash crisis.

As the money runs out, the councillors are facing disqualification and the workforce are being left to stew in their own juice.

Ian Lowes, chair of the council stewards committee, argued that when the money runs out it is a Tory lockout and that workers should not have to work for nothing to pay for it.

But since then all the unions except the GMBATU have voted for a settlement on the basis of the Stonefrost report.

A *Militant* supporter explained his view: 'The situation is unique. We are not in dispute with our employer. There is just no money,' he said.

This argument just does not even start to address the problem. The support which existed in September has been eroded. Of the 1,500 NALGO members who voted to strike then, only 399 voted against Stonefrost this month.

And the TGWU, who voted overwhelmingly in favour of the strike in September, voted almost unanimously for a solution based on Stonefrost.

The council quite rightly say the government is to blame. But in the absence of a strike, a lockout—albeit caused by the Tories—will result in anger directed at the council.

In September *Militant* supporters argued that it would have been wrong to go ahead with the strike when only a minority voted for it. They argued that you can't 'dragoon workers into action'.

They were wrong to suggest that the most active minority giving a lead to the more passive majority is 'dragooning'.

If the miners had accepted this argument they would never have had a strike last year.

Yet *Militant* were right to say you can't dragoon people into action. But that is precisely what talk of a lockout is about.

It is undoubtedly true that the council have lost support. The question is why?

The problem is that the council have done what every other left council has done. They have used their workforce as a stage army.

At the end of the day they have only involved their workforce in a series of one day strikes. This is no way to run a campaign.

They falsely believed it was inevitable that the workforce would fight. Week after week in *Militant* the message was pushed that the working class in Liverpool was ready to fight.

This attitude meant the council constantly wound the workforce up for a fight that never came off. This demoralised people.

The tragedy is that the fight in Liverpool could have been won. Because the councillors were prepared to stand firm when all the others collapsed, support for them was much greater than anywhere else in the country.

The lesson of Liverpool is that this is what

happens if you elect councils to change things without a clear view about where power lies. ■

## BRAZIL

# The time to organise

THE HONEYMOON period for the new civilian government in Brazil did not last long. Even as it took office in May, a wave of strikes was sweeping the country. The focus of the action was, as in every year bar one since 1978, the car and engineering workers of Sao Paulo. But strikes spread among postal workers, bank guards, miners, airline and bus workers and others. There were actions in cities from the north east to the south of the country.

That wave of strikes died away. Organised by unions adhering to the left wing federation, CUT, it showed what could be achieved by militancy in the best organised factories, where a programme of rolling strikes was organised. The union hit component factories first and then, after a month, organised a return to work and pulled out the main assembly plants.

It was a measure of the union's depth of support that these tactics were a partial success despite the obvious dangers of disunity involved. The union even managed to suspend the strikes on the death of Tancredo Neves (the incoming President who died as he took office) and to start them up a few days later.

The left's main demands last spring (or rather the Brazilian autumn) were the 40-hour week (from 48 hours); monthly, or three-monthly, increases in line with inflation; and an increase in real pay. A host of other issues were put forward as well—including important demands on union rights—but the key issues were more frequent pay rises to protect workers from the effects of 200 percent inflation and the cut in hours 'para viver melhor'—for a better life.

Neither of these main demands was won. The long-drawn out action achieved some success in some plants, but the employers held firm on the major issues.

There then seems to have been a rethink. The CUT leadership—in which the main political tendency is the Workers' Party (PT)—appears for the first time to have come to some agreement for unity in action with the unions organised under the umbrella of the right wing federation, CONCLAT.

The dominant political force here is the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) which is now essentially the governing party in Brazil. The PMDB includes various shades of opinion, ranging from populist, to right wing social democrat, to the Communist Party. Many of the union leaders involved with the PMDB owe their positions to corrupt practices and sweetheart arrangements with political bosses and friendly companies. However, the PMDB

also represents a genuine current within the working class and it still commands the allegiance of the majority of Brazilian workers and the rural proletariat as well as sections of the middle class.

The joint platform agreed between the CUT and CONCLAT was a watered-down version of the left's previous demands. It included three monthly cost-of-living rises, and the 44-hour week.

The CUT/CONCLAT strike took place in the second week of November and was immediately devastatingly effective. The Sao Paulo membership of both unions, in all some 600,000 workers, were called out, and although it is uncertain how many actually struck, the employers conceded the key demands in less than a week. A real wage rise was agreed, as well as the three-monthly rises and, astonishingly a 45-hour week.

In economic terms this is the largest single gain won by the Sao Paulo working class since the first strikes of 1978 broke the stranglehold of the military dictatorship.

In the municipal elections, which took place a matter of ten days after the strike, the PMDB was defeated in Sao Paulo by the right wing. The right had as its candidate the former Brazilian president, Janio Quadros, who resigned in 1961 in a move which led eventually to the military seizing power three years later. Now, more right wing than ever, Quadros based his election appeal on straightforward red-scare tactics.

But the other side of the defeat of the PMDB was the performance of the left. The PT doubled its support, taking 20 percent of the vote compared to the previous elections in 1984. Far from swinging to the right, the politics of Sao Paulo has polarised, with the middle class shifting away from the PMDB, but the workers moving to the left. The PT has almost certainly won an overall majority of the working class support in key industrial areas, and has begun to break down its isolation from the rest of the working class.

For the first time in many years (in some cases, ever) large numbers of voters broke decisively with the right wing political bosses. The PT won in the north eastern city of Fortaleza (a city with a strong 'left-Christian' base) and very nearly took two other state capitals.

One can foresee two major consequences of the events of the past few weeks. The first is that the electoralism within the PT will be strengthened. The tendencies represented by the Sao Paulo candidate, Eduardo de Suplicy, will be inclined to go for the idea of electoral pacts with the PMDB and to soft-pedal some of the militancy. But on the other hand, there will be those who recognise that the outcome of the appeal for militant unity in action with the rank and file supporters of the PMDB had been to shift the struggle to a new level.

There are revolutionaries within the PT, but the overwhelming tendency on the left is left-reformist or centrist. The best of the leadership recognise the need for a militant struggle, but are very unclear about what this means in terms of workers' organisation.

One of the leaders of the Sao Bernardo (Sao Paulo) engineering workers, Vicente Paulo da Silva, expressed the position clearly in an interview with a Trotskyist newspaper

last May:

'It's one thing to make a speech calling for an end to the military dictatorship. It's another to deal properly with the new situation... We need to talk about the perspective of a new society. Because a 40-hour week, quarterly pay rises and other demands such as land reform could be won but the dominant class could manipulate public opinion and get the credit for our victories. The essential things like power, the distribution of profits, control of the machines won't be conceded. We'll be calling "Comrades, fight for the 40-hour week..." and then after it's won? Does it all end there? We would be like the union leaders of the European social democratic societies who don't have any perspective of changing the status quo. That's not enough for us. We want a new society, we want to control production. We've got to get this over to our workers.

'That does not mean to say that we go around saying "We want a revolution now" because this frightens a lot of workers. We have to open up the perspectives towards a new society.'

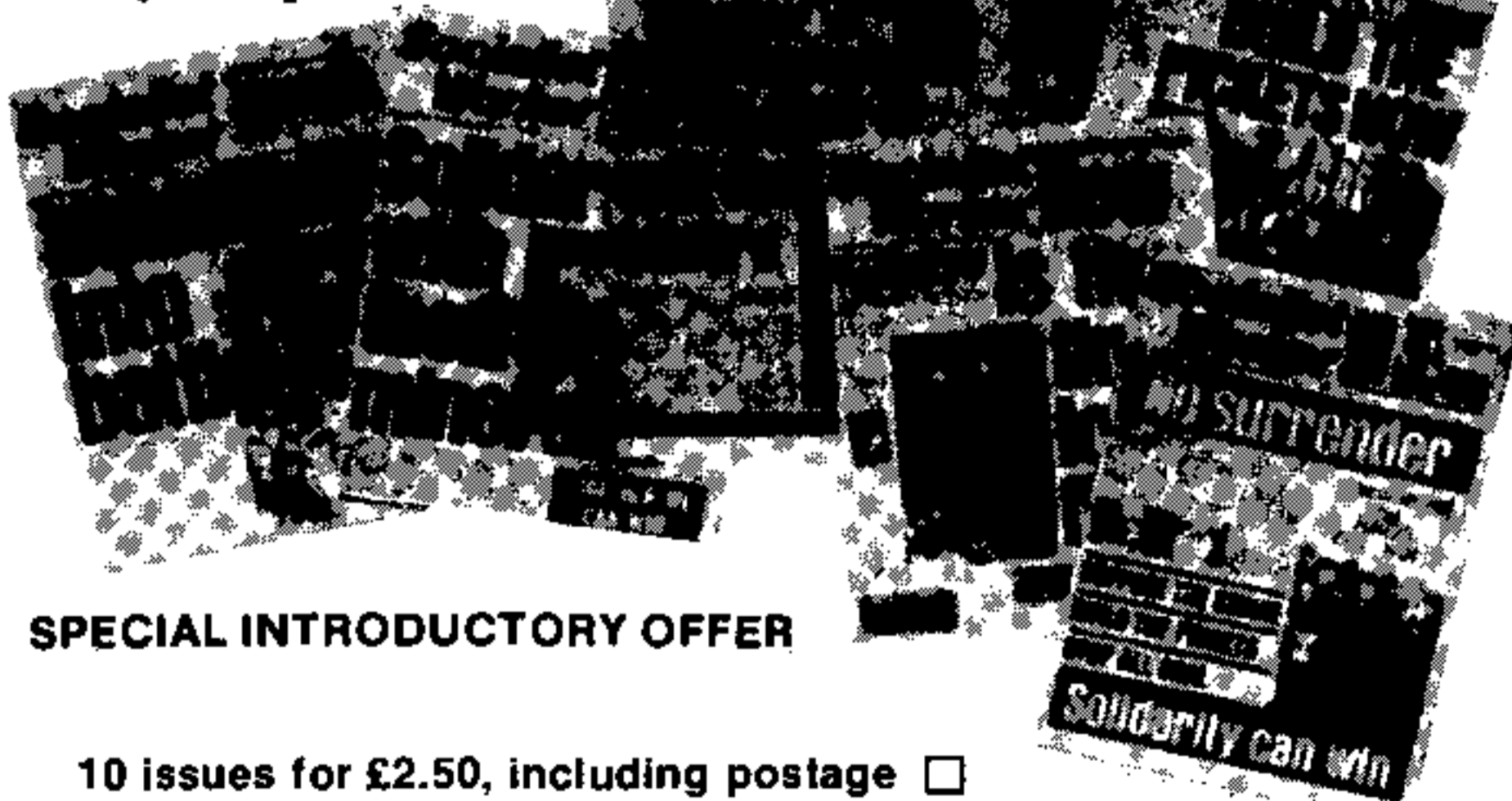
The strength of the PT has always been its insistence on a *class* solution to the question of power in Brazil, and so far it has not wavered. But at the same time, the organisation represents an amalgam of

different ideas, some pointing towards the development of a mass insurrectionary party and some looking to take over the existing institutions.

The revolutionary groups inside the PT have not faced up to this dilemma. They publish papers with revolutionary ideas, but they do not organise politically to build a revolutionary party inside the working class. The result, as far as one can tell, is that they have been *losing* members, while the mass of the workers has shifted to the left. In Brazil it is almost certainly the case that revolutionaries have to organise inside the PT—but they have to *organise*, not just hold debates. ■

# NOTES of the month

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NIGEL HARRIS

# The killer from Manila

**President Marcos of the Philippines has called an election to pre-empt opposition to himself. What is the background to this?**

HOW LONG can the Philippines hold? All the reports suggest a relentless decay in the cities—unfinished buildings, pot holes in the roads, queues, waves of violence, assassinations, police shoot-outs. Inflation (at 25 percent) is pushing the unemployed into starvation.

Like South Africa, the mass of the population—including the business class—are pitched against their rulers in an apparently unending struggle. Unlike South Africa, the army is seriously divided, incompetent and corrupt.

The Philippines was one of the first less-developed countries to pursue export promotion vigorously from the mid-sixties, solidly backed by the World Bank. In 1972, President Marcos introduced martial law and ran the country as a dictatorship, which he still does (although martial law was ended in 1981)—no politics were allowed to get in the way of expanding exports. All the tricks were tried—generous concessions to foreign companies, liberalised imports, export processing zones, deliberate lowering of wages (wages fell between 20 and 30 percent in the late seventies). There was a ban on strikes, picketing and assembly.

## Fall in growth

Export promotion included labour, the 'export of warm bodies' as the Filipinos call it. Some two million workers abroad now contribute about two billion dollars to the country's foreign exchange earnings. Maids and cleaners in London, Cairo, Lagos and many more places contribute, as did the women discovered imprisoned in a textile mill in Rochdale (for two years) by the millowner a few years ago.

Imports always increased faster than exports. For a time, borrowing abroad covered the gap. But as the debt rose—to 26 billion in 1983 (with the highest servicing ratio in Asia)—Marcos was obliged to cut imports. Growth fell and finally went into reverse.

Consider the vivid index of the growth rate, running at 6 percent per year in the seventies: -2.5 percent (1981), -2.8 percent (1982) 1.4 percent (1983) (or 6.8 percent in dollar terms if you allow for the devaluation of that year); -5.5 percent (1984), -2.5 to -3.3 percent (estimated official for 1985; others estimate between -5 percent and -6 percent).

Marcos tried to protect himself politically by increasing public spending, but that only fuelled inflation. He also protected his friends, the 'cronies' as they are known (or 'crony capitalism') by taking

into the public sector their businesses when they were faced with bankruptcy—to the fury of the mass of businessmen outside the charmed circle. The big state banks freely financed the cronies. By 1984, 75 percent of the loans of the two leading banks were said to be dud.

What those bare figures mean for the poor emerge from time to time.

A 1984 survey showed that 29 million Filipinos (out of 54 million) suffer from malnutrition, and 70 percent were below the local poverty line.

On the island of Negros, the heart of the sugar industry, there has been a sharp rise in the infant mortality rate, with an estimated 7 percent of children suffering from third degree malnutrition. There are 300,000 cane cutters unemployed.

The British ambassador, Robin McLaren, recently delivered £30,000 aid to feed 140,000 children that were starving, remarking, 'The crisis in the sugar industry has caused real problems of adjustment for the poor.' He did not mention that one of the reasons for the low world price of sugar was because the world's largest sugar exporter, the European Common Market, massively subsidises exports, dumping them on the markets for Filipino sugar exports. In July 1984, the cost of production of European sugar was £346.50, and its export price £93.50 per tonne (the subsidy of £253, provided by the European consumers, is the source of the starving Negrenses).

The economic decline has gone with a rising scale of opposition. Most recently, officially the most destructive massacre has taken place—27 demonstrators were killed and 24 injured in the Negros town of Escalante in September. Many more are murdered on the streets individually—some 700 in Davao City on Mindanao island this year (six of them in the general strike in September).

The deaths are part of the government's attempts to retain power, particularly against what must be at the moment the largest guerilla movement in the world. The National People's Army, according to the CIA, has 12-15,000 full time guerillas and 35,000 part-time, and controls about 13 percent of the 41,000 local government units in the country. The NPA, military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (with, on American estimates, 30-60,000 members and one million supporters), has existed for ten years.

The more hysterical accounts argue that, at its present rate of growth, it will be able to confront directly the national army of 210,000 troops within the next five years.

The CPP's politics are homegrown Maoism, a mixture of populism and nationalism.

## Murdered by military

Simultaneously, the old parliamentary opposition has been revived and is racing to get power before the NPA. But despite much support—it won a third of the seats in last year's election—it has little unity, and very little to say about the material problems facing most Filipinos. The most likely leader, Aquino, was murdered on his return from exile in the United States in 1983. A section of the military, including Marcos' former chauffeur-bodyguard, Ver, were implicated.

The third strand of opposition, the strike waves, has no independent political leadership. But it has made some striking advances. Examples include the assaults that shut down the Bataan export processing zone in 1982 (and revealed that since Marcos had promised foreign companies they need pay only 75 percent of the national minimum wage for the first six months of employment, the companies sacked their workforce every six months), to the wave of Manila strikes last June.

In Washington there is mild hysteria. This is no Central American mini-state, but a second Vietnam. It contains the two largest US bases outside the United States, employing 39,000 Filipinos. The Philippines, a former US colony, has been a satellite of Washington since it became independent. Successive emissaries from Reagan have failed to achieve reforms.

Senator Paul Laxalt, chairman of the Republican Party, brought a private letter from Reagan to Marcos in mid October to warn that, if Marcos reinstated Ver, Congress would cut off aid to the Philippines.

But what can be done? Marcos is corrupt and incompetent, surrounded by his cronies and his wife, Imelda (the power in the government and 'Iron Butterfly' as she is popularly called), with an army paralysed by incompetence and corruption.

Reagan could not tolerate the move to power of the NPA, and yet must know increasingly that Marcos is the main obstacle to the survival of the Filipino ruling class. Perhaps the deal—between the more conservative elements of the opposition and a segment of the army (under the new chief of staff, Ramos)—to murder Marcos and instate a reforming regime that will get rid of the cronies—is already in place. But surgery of this kind is very dangerous and has been known to kill the patient.

Watch out for world crises. ■



# Down but not out

*What is happening in the mining industry? What are militants' attitudes to the Union of Democratic Miners, the shift rightwards of the Broad Left leaders and developments since the strike ended? Mike Simons talked to miners in several coalfields.*

ALL COMPLAINED that their area and branch leaderships had made no effort to explain the importance of the situation in Nottinghamshire to the rank and file, let alone try to mobilise activists to campaign in Nottinghamshire in the run up to the ballot on the breakaway.

A Barnsley miner said: 'Most men don't give a damn about Nottinghamshire, one way or the other, it is really only the militants who understand its importance.'

A South Yorkshire miner repeated the same point: 'The first reaction of most men is still "kick them out", "who cares about the split", "cut the cancer out".'

'That attitude from some of the best lads has allowed the area and branch leaderships to do nothing.

'It's been down to a few of us to argue and explain what the UDM means.'

## Stop the spread

Yorkshire miners in particular complained that the area and branch leaders don't seem to realise that the UDM is extending its tentacles into other coalfields.

A Doncaster miner explained:

'There are people who will try and affiliate to the UDM. The Area didn't do enough to stop Lynk's organisation taking off. We were never sent to Notts to help campaign.

'Now it's going to be down to the rank and file to stop it spreading. That means refusing to work with anyone who leaves the NUM, making sure we win the arguments with everyone in the pit so that everyone walks out.'

He had an answer to the coal board's attempts to keep Notts miners sweet by offering them more money on the bonus than other coalfields. 'We'll have to push for parity. Ideally we should be saying that we won't give them any coal, that we work to rule, if we don't get parity. But of course, we haven't got much clout, at the moment. Nevertheless, we've got to argue for parity, and to defend the bonus.'

Such talk is anathema to many area and branch leaders who seem to be thinking along the same lines as the TUC and have given up resistance.

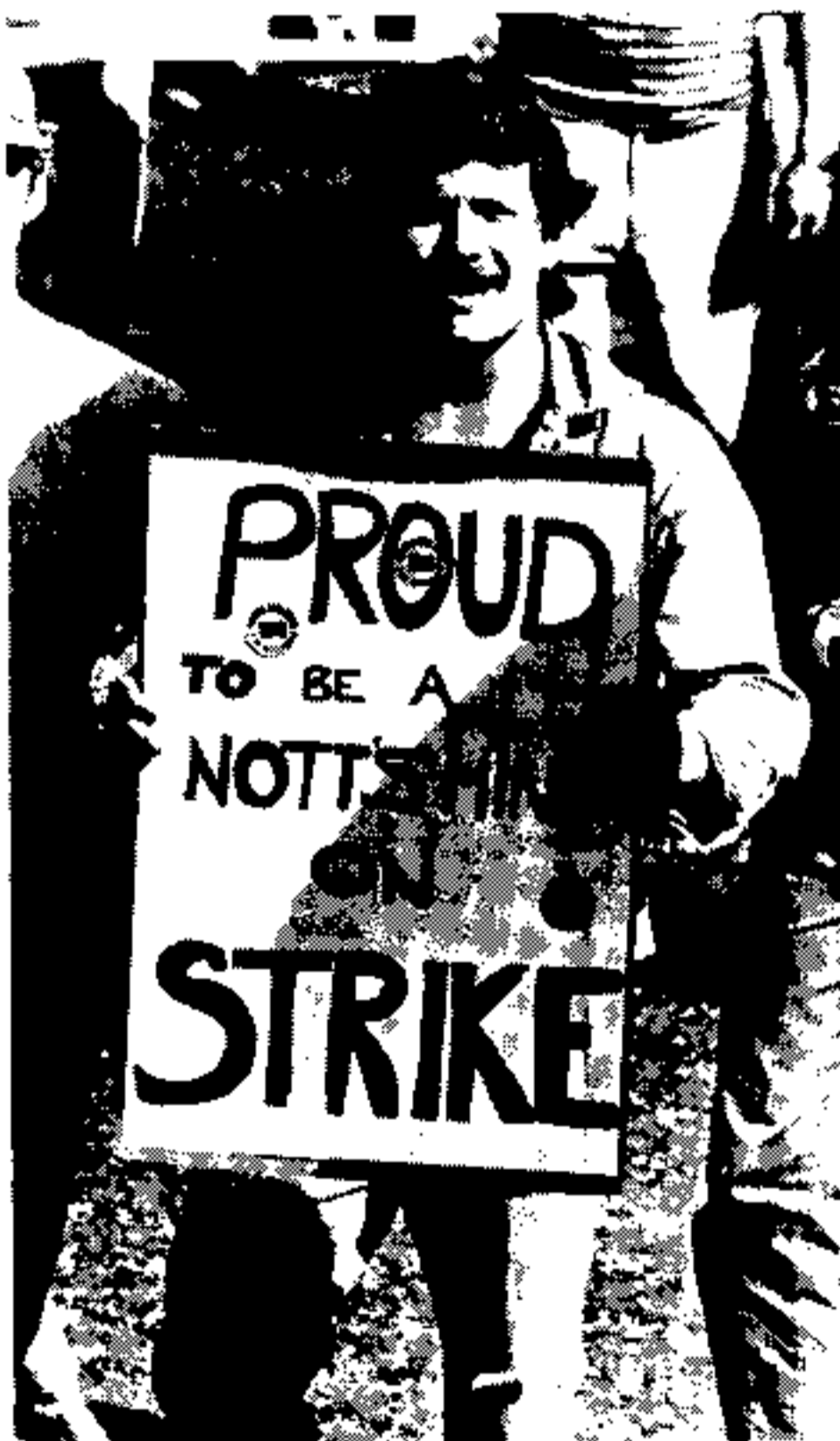
At pit level, the coal board's reign of fear has hit branch officials as much as ordinary miners.

A miner at one of Durham's largest and traditionally most militant pits complained bitterly how the branch officials were keeping the rank and file in the dark. Worse, how they opposed efforts to beat back a management offensive.

'Management are on the rampage with the bonus. We've been fighting to get the bonus back to its pre strike levels. The norms, before you start earning bonus are nearly at the maximum the machines can produce. The rank and file have been fine. We're fighting for three weeks, but then the union came down and told us to give them coal.

'It makes it hard for the rank and file. You get two shifts that won't give them any coal then the third one goes for the target. The rank and file get no support. The union is backing off all the time.'

In Yorkshire, things are similar. One miner from Barnsley described how his branch officials had gone to the area director to discuss expansion of production into a new seam, only to be told that the pit was suddenly threatened with closure unless productivity increased.



The branch delegate, who prided himself on being left wing, urged his members to cooperate and boost output.

A miner from another Barnsley pit explained that this abdication of leadership by the branch officials *did* correspond to a mood among rank and file miners. 'Lads are saying if we don't pull our socks up and give them some coal, we're closing the pit ourselves.

'People are trying to put their heads in the sand. It's hard when you've got to remind them that the pit down the road is closing.'

There are enormous problems, the UDM and the constant attacks on Scargill and, more importantly, what he represents—militant trade unionism. 'Redundancy fever' is sweeping some pits, with young miners,

including militants, trying to get out, while many area and branch leaders believe that by cooperating with management, rather than fighting, jobs can be saved.

However, despite this, the scale of the coal board offensive in the pits is such that the miners are being provoked to fight back. The pages of *Socialist Worker* record some 20 strikes in the pits since March over bonus, safety, water money and victimisations. This is the ground upon which militants can rebuild.

'You've got to walk a tight rope' explained one South Yorkshire miner. 'The management at our pit have had to drop their full frontal assault on the militants, now they're trying to catch us out on time keeping and the like.'

## Outside issues

'It's not 1974, we mustn't give the management an opportunity to get rid of us.'

The miners who spoke to *Socialist Worker Review* emphasised that it's not enough for socialists in the pit to argue and fight over immediate bread and butter issues. Indeed, there was still an audience for political ideas and 'outside issues'.

A Durham miner explained his amazement when hundreds of miners and miners' wives turned out to listen to a South African trade unionist recently.

A Yorkshire miner reported: 'The reaction to the Tottenham riot was brilliant at our pit. There are a few things people will never forget—like what the media and the police did to us.

'There is racism in the pit but, because the coppers were getting it, everyone was saying "it served them right" and "we should have had the police like they did in Tottenham." People were saying that they agreed with Bernie Grant.'

At another Yorkshire pit, where the level of activity during the strike was far lower, and as a result, the police behaviour less vicious, the response was very different. Socialists in the pit did manage to push an anti apartheid resolution through their branch. However the same mood which has led branch officials to drop their opposition to the coal board is reflected in a shift to the right politically and they ensured no action was taken.

Things are hard in the pits in the immediate future. Nevertheless, there is much for militants to do.

One miner summed up what was needed to be done. 'We've got to hold together the militants in the pit, built up their confidence and morale, until we find an issue that we can fight, and win on.'

'You've got to keep the arguments going, keep the ideas of solidarity alive.'

The attitude of the national and local union leaders can help or hinder this process, but they certainly cannot substitute for it.

The sharp end of the coal board offensive is down the pit, and that's where resistance must be centred.

Time and again, the coal board are going to provoke bitter defensive reactions from miners. The tasks of militants in the pits is to give these outbursts of rage effective direction and to generalise from them. ■

# Standing up, fighting back

RACISM is on the increase in Britain, of that there is little doubt. While Government ministers like Waddington try to stir up immigration scares, the police fail to give the black and Asian community any protection against murderous racist assaults. Instead they continue to harass, attack and arrest young blacks in Britain's inner cities.

A whole series of serious attacks on blacks and Asians have gone completely unpunished. A fire bombing in Ilford, East London, which killed the Kassam family was not, according to the police, a racist attack. Their reason for stating this was that a local fascist claimed he saw four Asians drive away from the scene of the fire.

Also in East London, a young black man was attacked by a gang of racists and stabbed to death. The killer of Eustace Pryce was not, however, deemed a murderer. Instead he was found guilty of manslaughter, while Pryce's brother Gerald was found guilty of affray and treated by the court as a greater criminal than his brother's murderer.

Yet while the police are apparently incapable of protecting blacks, they are more than capable of terrorising the residents of Broadwater Farm in Tottenham or Brixton, or Handsworth in Birmingham. They are more than capable of wounding or killing two black women in violent and unnecessary raids, and more than capable of battering and arresting those who wish to protest against the racist regime in South Africa.

## Honeyford Out

Meanwhile, 'respectable' racism has reared its head. There have been increasing instances of head teachers and college principals warning that blacks and Asians are lowering educational standards for whites. Behind them is the benign silence of Thatcher who as we all know is rather worried herself about being 'swamped by an alien culture'.

To be black or Asian, then, is to be a victim of racism in a whole number of forms and guises in modern Britain. However, what has characterised many recent incidents is that young blacks are increasingly refusing merely to sit back and endure the racism which is thrown at them.

The campaign over the Newham 7, the demonstrations against racist attacks in areas like Walthamstow in London, even the riots—which in the main were spearheaded by black youth—all show the determination and anger amongst blacks. So too, do a number of campaigns against racists in schools and colleges.

The most well known of these cases has been the one in Bradford involving the notorious racist headmaster Ray Honeyford. In a series of articles in various publications, most notably a right wing publication, the *Salisbury Review*, Honeyford attacked Asian kids for lowering educational standards, and denounced Pakistan as the

heroin centre of the world. All of this is filthy stuff in itself, but made worse when you take into account the fact that 90 per cent of the pupils at Drummond Middle School, where Honeyford is head, are Asian.

The Asian community in Bradford were determined not to let Honeyford get away with his remarks, and his generally unfair treatment of Asian kids at the school.

One young Asian school student Hazeed summed up the attitude of his headmaster: 'Honeyford is terrible. He just doesn't like Asians and blacks. He treats the white kids better than us. He's always caning the Asian kids.'

Over a period of two years the local community had shown their determination not to be pushed around on a number of issues. A 'stay away' had been organised throughout Bradford demanding the right of the kids to be served Halal meat at school. It was an enormously successful tactic in terms of turnout and was used again in March 1984 as a protest against racist attacks in the city.

A Drummond Parents' Action Committee was set up almost immediately following the *Salisbury Review* article. It has now been in existence for roughly 18 months. The committee's public meetings have consistently been well attended, by about four to five hundred. Pickets of the school have been of a similar size, and for a period the pressure brought to bear did result in Honeyford being suspended by the local council. But a high court ruled that he should be reinstated. This was complied with by the hung local council, pending an appeal.

The Court of Appeal has since ruled that the council has the power to dismiss Honeyford, but it is not clear as we go to print what the council will do.

The school board of governors—a wholly unrepresentative and largely appointed body—has shown complete contempt for the school students and their parents by backing Honeyford all the way.

These events have, however, only strengthened the resolve of the Asian community. A recent return to the 'stay away' tactic saw something like a quarter of all Bradford's schoolchildren failing to attend their respective schools.

Unfortunately, this determination has not been taken to wider sections of the community or local workers. For instance their stay aways have not been backed by workplace stoppages, and some, like the previously militant bus drivers, both Asian and white, could have helped bolster the campaign. More importantly the National Union of Teachers has failed to come out clearly on the question. Although one statement was made by the NUT calling for Honeyford's dismissal there has been little concrete solidarity. When teachers at another Bradford school, Grange School, took solidarity action they were, and are still, threatened with disciplinary action by their union leaders.

The local NUT could have linked their pay dispute to the Honeyford one. This could only help both sides. But they have done exactly the opposite. They have warned their members that the Honeyford dispute could damage their pay campaign. They actually called a demonstration over pay on the same day that the Parents' Action Committee called for a stay away and demonstration. Teachers marched not alongside the anti-Honeyford protestors, but in the opposite direction. NUT members have also been instructed to cross the parents' picket lines.

As we go to press the campaign continues, and the outcome is not clear. What is however clear, is that the Asian community in Bradford are not prepared to take racism in any form lying down.

If Bradford is the best known example of such a struggle it is certainly not the only one.

In Waltham Forest College, East London, a dispute not unlike the Bradford one broke out. Here the principal of the college—a man called Fuller—wrote a disgusting letter to *The Times* following the Tottenham riot. In it he denounced West Indians as workshy thieves who had invaded 'our country'. He also attacked Jamaica as a lawless and brutal country full of the 'same sort of young troublemakers...as in Britain'.

## Local support

The reaction of the black (and indeed most white) students at the college was swift. They called pickets hundreds strong, and refused to attend classes. This was a real achievement given that many at the college were on YTS day release courses and the like, and therefore much more difficult to organise. The students had a lot of local support. One of the most popular slogans on the demonstration against racism in Walthamstow was, 'Black and white unite and fight to kick Fuller out.'

Unfortunately the National Union of Students' executive intervened to take the steam out of the campaign. They were embarrassed by the mass action and defiance of the law by the campaign against the racist Harrington at North London Poly last year. They were determined not to have a repeat this year over Fuller. With so many students on day release and part time courses, occupation of the college was clearly a better tactic than asking students to strike. Yet the NUS bureaucrats denounced the move for occupation, and began a witchhunt of 'outsiders infiltrating' the college and campaign.

Instead they called for, and are getting, an inquiry by the local Further Education Committee, an entirely toothless body that can have no effect on Fuller. It is a shame that so much real anger has been dissipated.

Whatever the outcome, the anger of the local West Indian students was a clear message that the college principal could not



'Honeyford is terrible. He just doesn't like Asians or blacks...'

make such remarks and expect students to let them go unchallenged.

Perhaps the most significant of the responses to racism however has come in the Tower Hamlets area of East London, centred around Daneford Boys School.

The roots of the conflict are in the area itself. The council had a policy of racial integration which meant in part moving black and Asian families onto what had previously been, in the main, white estates. Local nazis and hard-core racists began organising 'welcome committees' which would abuse, insult and terrify the newcomers. Pig's blood would be daubed on doors; pig's feet hung over doors. Swastikas began appearing along with messages like 'We'll get you'. The council set up race liaison groups to try to help the newcomers survive, but for some the fear was too great and they left.

The events at Daneford are set against this background. The school was until three years ago almost exclusively white. The influx of Asians to the area meant that the racial composition of the school changed rapidly. Because the Asian families were in the main quite young, their children have tended to be concentrated in the lower forms. The result was that a small number of organised racists in the school began to systematically bully the Asian kids.

The climax of all this came when a young Asian boy nearly lost his ear in a brutal attack involving razors. To the horror of staff and students alike the headmaster refused to expel or even suspend the four who attacked the Asian. The bullying was now reaching such proportions that many Asian kids were afraid to come to school. The refusal of the headmaster to act was made worse by his general attitude to the Asians. Although there is a Bengali speaking teacher at the school, the language classes are not properly timetabled. There is no provision for teaching the language, religion or culture of the Asian children.

The failure of the authorities and the headmaster to act enraged both the older school students, and many of the teaching staff. The older Bengali kids began arguing for the need to defend the younger kids from the racists and argued that self defence was no offence. They set out four demands, adding another two later on. The demands were:

- All racist boys to be thrown out of the school.
- All racist teachers to be sacked.
- Head to do something to fight racist attacks and not ignore them.
- Bengali lessons to be made available to all

The two later demands were that the head be sacked and that Bengalis can actively intervene to stop fights.

A public meeting of the newly formed Campaign Against Racism in Schools, which unites teachers, parents and pupils, was attended by four hundred local Asians. Many teachers support the kids and eleven teachers were arrested on the demonstration supported by teachers and schoolkids and directed against the Inner London Education Authority, which despite the left rhetoric of its leader Francis Morrell, has sat on the fence throughout the dispute.

The campaign has continued to grow. Now at least one other school in the area is following on from Daneford and the Asian kids are organising. The Inner London Teachers' Association has called a half day strike in support of the Daneford teachers. It aims to link up with the pay claim, and picket the court where the arrested teachers appear. The racists have not been able to go about

their nasty business unchallenged.

The events in Bradford, Walthamstow and Tower Hamlets show the determination of blacks and Asians not to sit quiet and put up with racism. They are an indication that if racism does grow it will be met with resistance by its potential victims every inch of the way. This is absolutely crucial to any challenge to organised racism.

However blacks still make up a small percentage of the population of Britain. Successful resistance also requires the active participation of white workers uniting with their black brothers and sisters to defeat the common enemy. Racism not only terrorises and discriminates against blacks, but also divides and weakens workers' strength as a whole.

It is true to say that any struggle which united both black and white workers can only strengthen working class organisation.

As we go to press, management at the huge Fords plant in Dagenham have been forced to suspend two foremen for five days and then move them to another plant. The foremen circulated a 'joke' questionnaire asking, for example, what your favourite hobbies are—mugging, prostitution or pimping? It was headed *Application for Employment (Minorities Division)*.

There were 17 stoppages on the shift and more stoppages were to follow. The workers, half of whom are black, demanded their removal from the plant. Management were forced to concede defeat.

As one Fords worker said, 'It is a victory...hopefully it will give people confidence to fight over other things, like pay.'

It is worth therefore saying that by and large the three struggles talked about in this article have seen steps towards such unity. There have been white parents involved in Bradford. There were white school kids on the Daneford demo as well as mainly white teacher involvement. At Waltham Forest, Fuller and his supporters on the staff tried to at least neutralise the white students, and failed to do so. In all three cases black and white have united and most importantly they have fought back. ■

Pat Stack

## Send 'em something revolutionary this Xmas

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# The roots of racism

THE INCREASING confidence of the right and the retreat of the Labour and trade union movement in the wake of the miners' defeat, plus the insolubility of the unemployment crisis and the blight on the inner cities have all conspired to, once more, move racism back into the mainstream of politics.

The tactic of playing the racist card has a long and dishonourable tradition from the orchestration of anti-Irish backlashes in the 1860s, to the restriction of immigration from new commonwealth countries in 1962 and the recent speeches by David Waddington.

The trick works because the ruling class is able to convince at least a section of workers that immigrants are somehow different from 'us' British.

Their ideologists back them up by producing libraries to prove that adherence to one's 'own' race or one's 'own' nation is something which is inherent and natural in every human being.

Yet for most of human history the idea that human beings belonged to a particular race—that is a particular group which could be defined by a certain unique set of physical characteristics—did not even exist. To an ancient Greek, or a Chinese mandarin, to a Celtic chieftain or a medieval pope, the notion that they were better than other groups because of the colour of their skin or their facial characteristics would have appeared to be so strange as to be completely ludicrous.

Such was the 'race blindness' of most ancient civilisations that it is impossible for us to tell just what race certain leading historical figures were.

## Pre-capitalist

For example, Saint Augustine, several Roman emperors, and Hannibal were certainly African and probably black.

But there is other evidence of the unimportance of race in pre-capitalist societies. The Romans, for example, regularly intermarried with the peoples they had conquered. A Roman could quite easily marry an Anglo-Saxon or a Gaul. Yet in later empires, in the age of capitalist imperialism, the idea of similar marriages was utter anathema to the ruling class. For a British citizen to marry an Indian during the Raj, for example, was to invite social ostracism of the most extreme kind.

Of course most of these civilisations considered themselves superior to the people they held in subjugation. But they did not believe that their superiority lay in their race but in their culture. Thus the Greeks believed that their language lay at the root of their superiority. The ancient Chinese believed that anyone who did not have the Chinese culture was a barbarian. Later in medieval times the Christian religion was the touchstone of superiority.

The idea of race has always been closely tied to the idea of nationhood. Pre-capitalist

peoples were not racist in the modern sense because they did not live in societies where the nation functioned as the primary economic unit. Thus the power bases of the ancient civilisations of Greece and China were cities which controlled and dominated the countryside immediately surrounding them. They shared a language and culture with neighbouring cities but were more or less independent of each other in terms of production.

Foreigners who managed to acquire the culture of the civilisation could very quickly become assimilated into the dominant culture.

Thus in Alexandria under the Roman Empire the Jews of the city were essential to trade in one of the great trading posts of the Empire.

Such was their importance to the economy that the Romans actually appointed a Jewish governor of the city. The Jews became assimilated very quickly, speaking Aramaic, the dominant trading language of the region, rather than Hebrew. Most eventually stopped practising the Jewish religion altogether and converted to Christianity.



*Jews fleeing the pogroms in Europe*

In areas where the economic role of the Jews was less central they tended to maintain their distinct culture. But here we sometimes find the phenomena of conversions in the other direction; merchants and traders converting from Christianity to Judaism.

It appears then that the concept of a national culture or a national language in the modern sense just did not exist. The particular characteristics and even the language of a group was a direct reflection of their economic position, not of their race or nationality.

If a nation or race did not exist in the ancient world, did it exist under feudalism? Those who wish to argue that race is not a product of capitalism but a fact in all

societies have one seemingly good bit of evidence. In Europe in the middle ages Jews formed both a distinct culture, although dispersed all over Europe, and were the victims of some appalling pogroms. But a closer look at the economics of the feudal era, and the distinct role which Jews played within it, tells a different story.

Feudalism was based upon an agricultural economy in which the trading of goods played only a peripheral role. But although commerce and money lending were peripheral they nevertheless became an indispensable part of the feudal political scene.

Yet the dominant ideology of medieval Europe was one designed to justify the dominant mode of production—agriculture on the manors and estates. In order to keep this agriculture supplied with labour, laws were formulated and ideas were propagated which prevented Christians from engaging in commerce. Thus serfs were forbidden to leave the land, trading was condemned as cheating and usury (money lending) was regarded as a mortal sin.

The Jews of Europe provided all these services and were indispensable to the monar-

chies of Europe.

Such was the importance of these services that Jews were forcibly prevented from converting to Christianity.

But as feudalism proper broke down and more and more peasants became wage workers, the Jewish moneylenders began to lend to them as well as to the ruling class. It was from this role that the first attacks on the Jews arose. Usually spontaneous, they were the outcry of anger of the poor peasants who, lacking the power or the class consciousness to attack the real enemy, turned on those they saw as the source of their problems—the moneylenders to whom they owed interest.

In a sense these attacks mark the first

cracks in feudalism as the dominant social system. By the 15th century, a new and vibrant economic system was emerging in Western Europe, mercantile capitalism. Trade and money lending were ceasing to be peripheral areas of the economy and becoming the harbinger of the future. Some Jews were drawn into this emerging merchant class but most found themselves under attack.

It was in the areas where capitalism began to grow that Jews found themselves persecuted or expelled. Spain, on the threshold of founding its empire in the Americas, expelled its whole Jewish population. The magnificent new German towns of Augsburg and Cologne did likewise. The Jews of Western Europe moved eastwards, to countries such as Poland which were nowhere near to beginning the transition to capitalism.

There they continued to play the economic role they had played in Western Europe. It was not until the 18th century, when capitalism began to blossom even in the backward east that wholesale persecution of Jews began there.

### Dehumanising

As Jews were being persecuted in Western Europe so the people of Africa and the Americas were starting to feel the lash of colonialism. Slavery was re-appearing on the world stage, and with it an ideology which condemned most of the world's population as sub-human.

The story of modern racism begins with this rise of mercantile capitalism. The rush of the emergent European nations to carve out empires, especially in the Americas, meant a new social organisation and a new ideology. In particular it demanded slaves.

It was slavery that led to the development of a fully-fledged racism, not the colour of the people concerned.

Large scale slavery involved total dehumanising of the slaves. Yet just as slavery was booming in the colonies so the new doctrines of human equality were growing up in the heartlands of capitalism.

The idea developed that every man was free and equal before God: only his ability to make money should determine his social position.

It was under the banner of these ideas that the English and French revolutions took place. But a vast chunk of the wealth which had enabled capitalism to conquer political power had arisen from the sweat of the slaves' brow in colonies stretched around the globe. The slave was not free to accumulate wealth. He was not even free to earn a wage. So how did he fit into the scheme of things?

The answer was simple. Black people were to be thought of and treated as if they were an inferior sub-section of human kind.

The laws and customs surrounding this belief did not develop all at once. It was not until the 1680s that European colonists began to refer to themselves as 'white'. Sexual relations between black and white were not outlawed in the American slave state of Maryland until 1692. But the vast hunger of North America and the West Indies for labour meant the use of black



**Under emerging capitalism, all men were held to be equal before God. In order to justify the important slave trade, black people were to be treated and thought of as an inferior sub-section of humankind.**

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 5. EDWIN, 22 years old...  
 6. JOHN, 24 years old...  
 7. JANE, 24 years old...  
 8. MARY, 24 years old...  
 9. EDWIN, 22 years old...  
 10. JOHN, 24 years old...  
 11. JANE, 24 years old...  
 12. MARY, 24 years old...  
 13. EDWIN, 22 years old...  
 14. JOHN, 24 years old...  
 15. JANE, 24 years old...  
 16. MARY, 24 years old...  
 17. EDWIN, 22 years old...  
 18. JOHN, 24 years old...  
 19. JANE, 24 years old...  
 20. MARY, 24 years old...

slaves steadily increased. By 1720 warriors for the ruling class such as Daniel Defoe could write (in a best selling collection of short stories) of Africans as an 'ignorant, ravenous, brutish sort of people.'

The characterisation of whole races as stupid, lazy and brutal more and more became a justification for colonialism. People as 'backward' as the 'coloured races' of the world could not be expected to govern themselves successfully, therefore Europeans must do it for them.

Because the evolution of the economy made slaves unnecessary, it was only in the extremely labour intensive agriculture of the southern states of America and the West Indies that slavery persisted.

Like an ever-growing monster racism developed into an ideology of quite monumental absurdity: scientific theories were developed to prove that black blood was different from white blood. By the eighteenth century some scientists were driven to pretending that the negro's bones were black. One Edward Long even claimed that black people carried only black lice.

Such beliefs were not confined to the lunatic fringe. Philosophers such as David Hume could assert that no one of non-European descent had ever contributed to the achievements of civilisation. Awkward individuals such as 'one negro in Jamaica who is reputed to be a man of learning' were





**A black trade unionist addresses the Knights of Labor**

dismissed out of hand. Of the Jamaican, Hume had this to say, 'Tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot who speaks few words plainly.'

Famous scientists who are generally regarded as having swept away the dark ages believed all this rubbish as well. Benjamin Franklin asserted the superiority of the English and the Germans, saying that every other race was 'tawney' in greater or lesser degree and therefore inferior.

The heart of growing capitalism was competition, each nation state caught in a fight to establish the dominance of its own capital over other capitals.

Empire building was a central component in this process. Every capitalist enterprise expected the protection of its own nation state for its activities abroad. By the nineteenth century the trading companies which had dominated the early colonial adventure, such as the British East India Company, were being disbanded. The right to order such economic intervention passed into the hands of the state. The capitalist needed the protection of the army should the natives rebel. They needed the bureaucracy of the imperial civil service to provide the infrastructure which would smooth the road to profit making.

Thus nationhood was not just an idea, it was a material reality which became ever more important for ensuring that profits continued to be made abroad.

Nationalism and racism ran hand in hand. The Indian was oppressed and exploited in the interests of an entity called Britain, to which all white British workers were told they belonged. The slaves on the sugar plantations of Haiti and Martinique were

shipped to work and sweated to death for the good of France. The economic system born in Europe, capitalism, held dominance over the globe and the European ruling classes fostered the idea that this meant that all Europeans were somehow born to rule.

And the idea of the superiority of the white races of Europe served the ruling class well at home. Capitalism had created a beast which would prove difficult to control, the urban proletariat. The nation would serve as a means to control that beast. Colonialism meant that the workers in London or Paris

could feel that they were privileged compared with the dark peoples of the world. Nationhood meant that the ruling class could mask class divisions by stressing the similarities workers and bosses shared.

Of course this type of ideological skulduggery did not always work. In periods of high class struggle, where the class divisions in society were forced right in front of the worker's nose, then ideas of nationhood were pushed into the background as was the flip side of the nationhood coin, the idea of race.

But the role of racism as dividing the working class at home, rather than justifying imperialism abroad was to become more important as capitalism aged.

From the period of imperialism workers from the colonial countries have suffered the worst oppression and exploitation. An ideology which propagates the idea that blacks are inferior is used to justify this.

### Shifting workers

But when labour is needed in times of boom these black workers are moved into the heartlands of the old imperial powers, as happened in Britain in the 1950s. But the shifting of workers around the globe, although it ultimately breaks down cultural differences between workers, does not get rid of racism.

Instead the ruling class attempts to win white workers to the system by telling them they are better than black workers. And, for many backward workers, this idea appears to be true. For as black workers are given the roughest end of the education system, the housing stock, the jobs, their lot is in reality inferior to that of most white workers. For workers who lack class consciousness it is a small step from this to the belief that blacks are naturally inferior.

A rise in the level of class struggle, because it forces workers to confront the real nature of the system can break these ideas down.

It was in the United States, which had a labour force of emancipated slaves to call



**Black Panthers in the United States**

upon, that racism amongst the working class ran rife.

The history of labour struggle in the US is bloody, and nowhere more so than when the bosses chose to use racial divisions to smash resistance.

As early as 1863 Irish immigrants of New York rose up and actually took control of the city for a few days. At the roots of the uprising was the increasingly heavy taxation which workers were having to pay to finance the North in the civil war and the fact that they were being conscripted.

The bosses managed to divert the Irish workers' anger onto the blacks. The Irish were told that their troubles were caused by the struggle to free the black slaves in the South. The bosses' attempts at division were successful, there was a bloody pogrom against the black workers in New York which resulted in many years of black workers refusing to join with Irish workers to fight a common struggle.

Some white labour leaders did clearly understand the dangers of leaving the black working class unorganised. In 1869 the National Labor Union said, 'Either we shall make them [black workers] our friends or capital will make use of them as a weapon against us.'

But the racism of white workers ran so deep that most were unable to see beyond their hatred of blacks to the real enemy. Black workers were left largely unorganised by the unions and discriminated against by the employers.

### White unions

Betrayed by the labour movement and discriminated against on the labour market it is hardly surprising that many black workers became strike breakers—they felt no allegiance to the white unions which excluded them from membership and often strike-breaking was their only chance of getting a decent job.

Even labour leaders who claimed to be socialist did not see that they had to actively fight discrimination and racism if they were to attract black workers. Eugene Debs, the American socialist, said, 'We have nothing special to offer the Negro... The Socialist Party is a party of the working class regardless of colour.'

This was arrant utopianism. For the black worker could never forget his colour. It was this which kept him in the unskilled sweated trades, which meant he suffered higher rates of unemployment, which meant he was more likely to be picked up by the police.

Capitalism didn't treat all workers as equal. Any socialist party which pretended that there were not specific problems for blacks which socialists would have to fight was doomed to remain a white party.

Yet the few attempts which were made to organise black workers showed clearly that they would join trade unions. The Knights of Labour, an organisation which welcomed workers irrespective of creed or colour, had 60,000 black members by 1886.

By the 1920s black organisations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, were demanding to be allowed to join unions. It appealed to

the American Federation of Labour saying: 'If we allow the formation in America of a powerful bloc of non-unionised black workers, workers who would be entitled to hate the trade union idea, all workers, both black and white will suffer the consequences.'

The AFL, an organisation firmly committed to elitism and business unionism, did not even deign to reply.

It was largely the elitism, one aspect of which was racism, of the AFL which led to the formation of a union federation based on industry not craft, the CIO which threw open its doors to black workers and demanded equal pay for blacks.

Yet the CIO still made that fatal division between politics and economics. Although it would fight for equal pay for equal work inside one factory it rarely challenged the discrimination by the bosses which still kept blacks in the unskilled jobs and the racism within wider society which still denied the sort of education which could open up access to skilled jobs.

Just one terrible result of this failure was seen in the 1960s, when blacks who were prepared to challenge the state such as the Black Panthers, turned to the streets rather than the factories as the terrain of battle and were massacred.

In Europe the post war boom saw mass immigration into the advanced economies of Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. By the mid-1960s there were 11 million immigrant workers in Europe.

The colour of the immigrants was at most a minor factor in determining how they were treated. Italians in Switzerland, for example, could expect exactly the same sort of petty racialism as Asians in Britain.

The situation was not helped by the attitude of some European trade unions. The Communist-dominated CGT in France

argued against immigration right through the 1950s. The trade union federation in Switzerland publicly denounced the government when, in 1970 they gave in to a militant strike of Spanish workers in Geneva.

### Contradictory effect

But, although the idea that immigrants were inferior to indigenous workers was always lurking in the background, the ruling class was anxious to keep organised racism on the margins of politics. After all, immigrants were necessary to do the jobs which native workers wouldn't take.

It is only with the onset of recession and mass unemployment that organised racism has begun to grow again, just as the fascists were able to grow in the recession of the '30s.

But the existence of large numbers of immigrant workers has a contradictory effect. On the one hand it makes it easier for the ruling class to blame the immigrants for the problems of unemployment and housing shortages.


But on the other hand large scale immigration means that increasing numbers of indigenous workers will actually work alongside people of Asian or West Indian descent in Britain, or Algerians in France or Turks in Germany. This opens up much better possibilities for arguing that racial differences are irrelevant and that what matters is class solidarity, than if immigrants were a tiny ghettoised group who had no contact with the indigenous population.

Even as it uses racialism to divide workers, capitalism has, by the fact that it shifts people around the globe in its intense scramble for profits, opened up new possibilities for destroying the ridiculous notion that skin colour counts for more than class. ■

Ann Rogers

# THE WESTERN SOVIETS

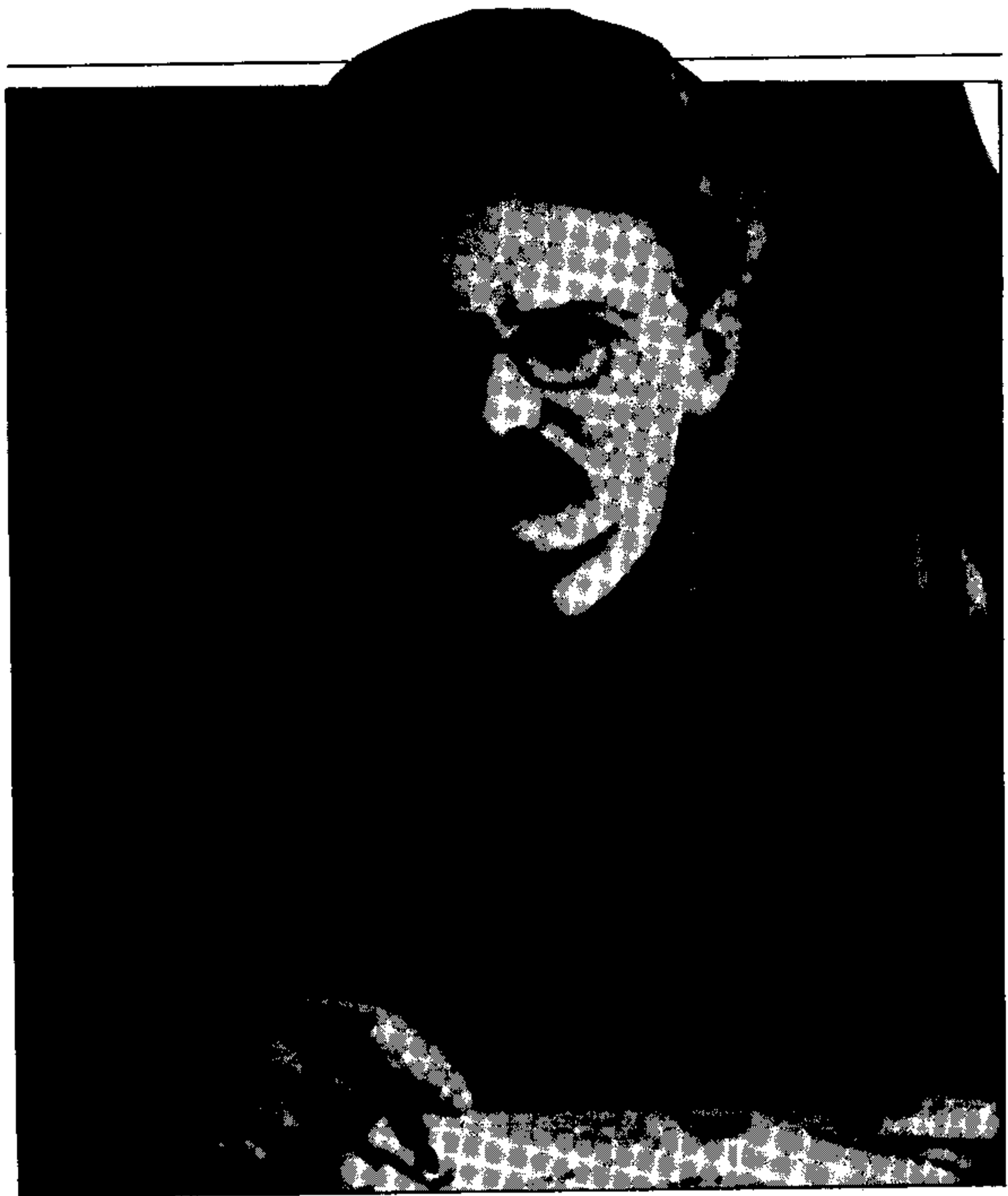
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# The relevance of Trotsky today

**LEON TROTSKY** was a revolutionary socialist throughout his politically active life—leader of the Red Army in Russia in 1917, Marxist theoretician, historian and leader of the Left Opposition in Russia against Stalin's tyranny. On the left he has been held up by some as the custodian of revolutionary socialism after the death of Lenin. By others he was vilified as a counter-revolutionary.

At Marxism 85 this summer John Molyneux of the SWP and Monty Johnstone of the Communist Party discussed the relevance of Trotsky today. Here we reprint their introductions to the debate.



## John Molyneux

**T**ROTSKY'S life of over 40 years of struggle covered the most momentous years of the twentieth century, if not the most momentous years of the whole of history. His achievements mean that I can only cover the bare essentials.

The first essential is the question of Stalinism. On all the central facts of the nature of the Stalinist regime—the role of the KGB, the suppression of workers' rights, the Moscow trial frame-ups—Trotsky has been vindicated by all the historical evidence. This will not be argued against by Monty Johnstone. (I might say that he and his Eurocommunist friends are about 50 years too late in recognising it!)

Trotsky's central political conclusion from his critique of Stalinism was that to remove Stalinism, and for the USSR to progress towards socialism, would require a workers' revolution. This has also been vindicated by history and experience.

The reform movement within the USSR has failed to bring more than the most mild liberalisation. And the experience of Eastern Europe, from Hungary to Czechoslovakia and most recently to Poland, makes it clear that the Stalinist state will use the most extreme repression against any movement which challenges its power.

Therefore we're talking about progress towards workers' democracy and from there to full socialism only through revolution, as did Trotsky.

Monty Johnstone has argued that all we can realistically hope for is a young person, preferably Gorbachev, and a programme of reform from above. We in the Trotskyist tradition argue that what we hope for and will see is a mass movement of workers to liberate themselves in the USSR as we saw in Poland—and that this time it will be successful.

But the main point is that Stalinism not only destroyed workers' power in USSR but also discredited and distorted socialism on a world scale by the image it offered to workers of socialism. The fact, therefore, that Stalinism was resisted on a principled Marxist basis by Trotsky, one of the revolution's pre-eminent leaders, is of tremendous historical significance.

Of course, Trotsky's critique of Stalinism and his struggle against it is only one aspect of Trotsky's revolutionary value.

In my opinion, his greatest contribution—greater even than his organisational leadership of the October revolution and his leadership of the Red Army—was the fact that he maintained an all-round defence and development of genuine revolutionary Marxism in the 1930s.

This period, to quote Isaac Deutscher, was 'hell black night'. Victor Serge described it as 'Midnight in the Century'. It was a period in

which the pressures to capitulate to Stalinism on the one hand, to social democracy on the other, were enormous. And Trotsky was basically alone in defending the basics of Marxism and Leninism in that period.

**W**HAT WERE the fundamental principles of Marxism that Trotsky defended? First, the core, the key role of the working class as the agents of socialist change. For Trotsky that was the starting point.

It was the principle he adopted when at the age of 18 he separated himself off from the Narodniks and became a Marxist in 1897.

It was the heart of his theory of permanent revolution that he developed in 1905-6—the notion that the working class could take power not only in the advanced countries but also in backward Russia and later also in what we call today the third world.

It was at the heart of his theory of the struggle against fascism—how to beat fascism by uniting the working class. It was at the heart of Trotsky's transitional programme of 1938 which, despite its mistakes, showed that only the working class can solve the crisis of capitalism, only the working class can solve the crisis of humanity.

Is this idea relevant today? Some argue that it is an outdated view. If you look around the world today you see a working class growing, living and struggling. You see it in the far east in South Korea, in the far west in South America, in the far north in the general strike in Denmark, in the far south in South Africa. The working class is not on the way out—it remains the agent of socialist change.

Meanwhile, *all* attempts to create socialism with forces *other* than the working class have failed miserably.

That is why we disagree with Trotsky on his analysis of the Soviet Union. Trotsky's view of it as a degenerated workers' state was based on the criteria of the nationalisation of the means of production and a planned economy. What subsequent historical events have shown is that if you stick with those criteria alone you are led progressively away from the view that only the working class can make a socialist revolution.

You are led to believe that other social forces can substitute for the working class.

We in the SWP argue that it was necessary to break from the letter of Trotsky on that question in order to remain faithful to the real spirit of Trotsky's political writing and activity—the centrality of the working class.

The second fundamental principle of Marxism that Trotsky defended was internationalism. This is true through his theory of permanent revolution which took as its starting point the development of Russia as part of the combined



Militia member in Barcelona, 1936

and uneven development of the world economy; through his revolutionary opposition to the First World War; through his participation in the early years of the Communist International when he drafted its manifestos; through his opposition to the theory of socialism in one country from 1924 onwards; and through his struggle for the Fourth International. Trotsky, more than any other Marxist since Lenin, embodies this principle of internationalism.

But Trotsky's internationalism was never simply a moral standpoint. It always had a materialist foundation. It was based like Marxism on the fact of a capitalist world economy.

Is that internationalism relevant today? It is more relevant than ever.

Capital is more international. The interconnections of the different economies are closer, more developed than they ever were before.

Any notion of socialism in one country, *The British Road to Socialism*, or any other national road to socialism, is more of a pipe dream, more of a reactionary utopia than ever in the past. Conversely, the internationalisation of capitalism means the possibilities of spreading the revolution from one country to another are similarly enhanced. Therefore Trotsky's internationalism is vindicated.

The third fundamental principle—revolution rather than reform. The necessity to smash the existing capitalist state rather than to take it over and use it. This principle was established by Marx after the civil war in France as a result of

the experience of the Paris Commune. It was re-discovered and reinforced by Lenin in his great work, *State and Revolution*. It was the principle upon which the British CP, like every other CP in the Communist International was founded. Trotsky always defended that principle.

Is this idea relevant today? Look at the experience of the miners' strike. Look at the force which the state was prepared to use to beat the miners. And that was on the question of whether some pits would close. What would they be prepared to use if the issue was not the closure of pits, but the closure of capitalism? Would they sit back and allow a parliamentary road to socialism, a peaceful road? The question answers itself, and therefore Trotsky is vindicated on that question too.

On the question of reformism, Trotsky is the author of one of the most brilliant and devastating attacks on the tradition of British reformism and British labourism that has been written in the twentieth century.

If people had read his writing on Britain in the 1920s, on the likes of Ramsay MacDonald or George Lansbury, I think we would have had much less surprise with the behaviour of Neil Kinnock or Ken Livingstone.

The fourth principle—the revolutionary party, Lenin's great contribution to Marxism. Trotsky was wrong on this question prior to the revolution, but in 1917 he learnt his lessons well and from that period on, he never deviated from the essential role of the revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party there can be no victory for the socialist revolution.

Above all, following Lenin, Trotsky defended the independence of the revolutionary party from all reformist, middle class, bourgeois parties and social forces. He defended it in relation to Britain at the time of the general strike when the British Communist Party was led into a position of dependence on the trade union leaders as a result of the Anglo/Soviet Trade Union Committee.

He defended the independence of the revolutionary party in relation to China in 1925-7. He defended it again on the question of the independence of the whole working class movement from bourgeois forces in the period of the Popular Front in the 1930s.

**T**HE ASPECT of Trotsky's thought which has the most immediate relevance to British politics now is his critique of the whole idea of cross-class alliances against the right wing. In relation to the Popular Front in Spain and France in the 1930s, Trotsky argued that an alliance of all democratic forces, all progressive bourgeois forces with the working class against fascism would—far from strengthening the working class and weakening the fascists—simply succeed in holding back the working class and enabling the fascists and the right wing to win.

He wrote:

'The theoreticians of the popular front do not essentially go beyond the first rule of arithmetic, that is, addition. "Communists"

and socialists and anarchists and liberals add up to a total which is greater than their respective isolated numbers. Such is all their wisdom. However, arithmetic alone does not suffice here. One needs as well at least mechanics. The law of the parallelogram of forces applies to politics as well. In such a parallelogram we know that the resultant is shorter, the more the component forces diverge from each other. When political allies tend to pull in opposite directions, the resultant may prove equal to zero.'

He goes on to say:

'The political alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, whose interests on basic questions in the present epoch diverge at an angle of 180 degrees, as a general rule is capable only of paralysing the revolutionary force of the proletariat.'

In other words, the price of establishing an alliance of the working class on the one hand, and sections of the middle class and political parties linked with the bourgeoisie on the other hand is always a dampening down, a holding back, a restraining of the fighting strength of the working class.

An alliance which is meant in theory to isolate the ruling class ends up delivering the working class to that ruling class on a plate. That was Trotsky's analysis of Spain in 1936, and it proved right then. It is still relevant today.

In fact, Trotsky's words fit the thinking of large sections of the left of the Labour Party and the CP like a glove. It certainly fits Neil Kinnock. Kinnock's thinking does not go beyond arithmetic—the arithmetic of counting votes and seats in parliament. It fits the CP whose arithmetic does not go beyond the counting up of movements.

The political price of such an alliance is also the same—the price of an alliance with Kinnock is stabbing the miners in the back and abandoning the struggle against ratecapping. The price of the Broad Democratic Alliance is reduced to the claim that the miners picketed too much and too vigorously. Always the price is that the working class must hold back and moderate its struggle. If Eric Hobsbawm has his way the price may well be Dr David Owen—which is too high a price for any of us to pay.

To conclude. Trotsky, in the 40 years of his life as a revolutionary, made many mistakes. We, in the SWP, have not been reluctant to point out, to disclose and expose those mistakes. But those mistakes pale without any doubt into insignificance when one compares them with his extraordinary achievements—the achievement of maintaining and developing revolutionary Marxism.

Trotsky is not only relevant for revolutionaries today, he is in fact indispensable.

## Monty Johnstone

**T**HERE IS no doubt that Trotsky was one of the major socialist figures of the 20th century. His life and works should be studied critically from the standpoint of Marxism. This was the framework within which Trotsky worked and fought from his first years in the Marxist socialist workers' movement, in 1897 until he was murdered by an agent of Stalin in Mexico in 1940.

When assessing Trotsky it is necessary to get away both from the demonology of Stalinism and the Moscow trial frame-ups, which persists in certain small circles around the world, as well as from the uncritical cultism of the bulk of his followers.

It should be said that the SWP did take the first steps of getting away from uncritical Trotsky cultism when they disputed Trotsky's characterisation of the Soviet Union. It is only unfortunate that they were wrong on that point!

I want to start by going to the crux of the disagreements between us—the conception of revolution to which most of his supporters and semi-supporters attach the greatest significance.

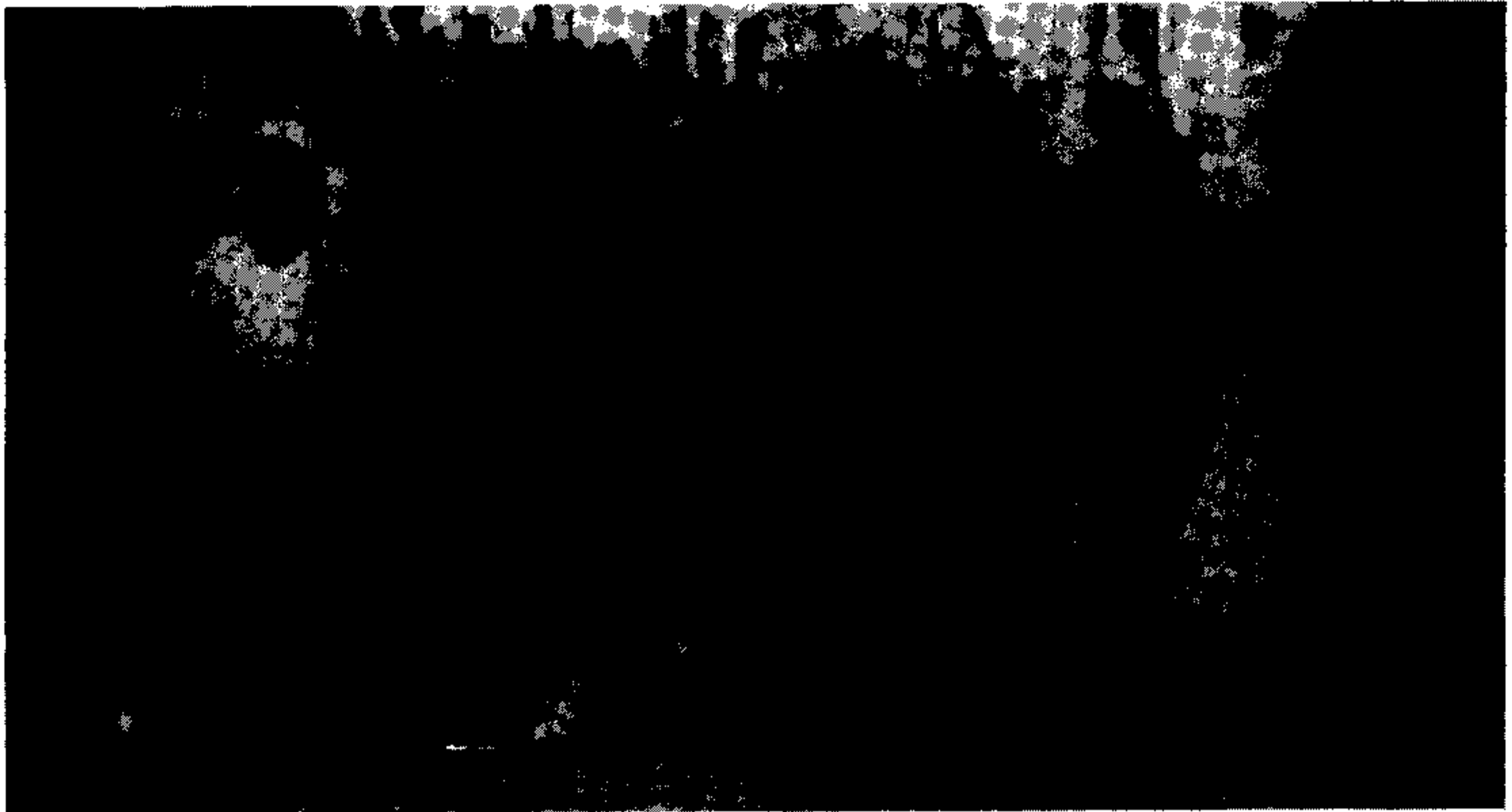
The trouble is that while he was a very great revolutionary leader, he saw the strategy for Western revolutions through the prism of the October revolution, believing that Western Europe would, of necessity, take the same road

as Russia did in the soviet insurrection.

Even when in the 1930s the new phenomenon of fascism threatened to atomise the working class movement (as he recognised in his correct criticisms of the Comintern's line in the Third Period), his conception of the alliances needed to defeat fascism was frozen in the experience of 1917 and in the line of the first four congresses of the International to which he urged a return.

He stressed, quite rightly, the need for a workers' united front, but he failed to understand that the emergence of fascism, with its threat to the very basis of democratic liberties that had been won over a century by the working class, necessitated broadening that unity in order to prevent a victory of fascism—broadening it into a people's front around the unity of the working class as the core of such a unity.

And he misrepresented the efforts of the working class movement, which succeeded in the case of France and Spain for a certain period, in developing a working unity with anti-fascist sections of the petit bourgeoisie, of the peasantry, and of the bourgeoisie itself. Trotsky designated this as an alliance with the bourgeoisie. In fact, in the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International* he makes the extraordinary statement:



**Armed workers in Spain: prepared to fight to defend the revolution**

‘“People’s fronts” on the one hand—fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.’

To equate fascism, which seeks to destroy the very basis of the democratic liberties won under capitalism, with the popular front, which sought to defend them, seems to me to be utterly and totally unrealistic and irresponsible. In fact, when you are faced with the danger of fascism, as they were in Spain in the 1930s you want to *split* the class enemy and, under the leadership of the working class, ally with those sections of the middle strata, and even of the bourgeoisie itself, which are prepared to oppose fascism.

The simple fact is that you would have had a right wing government in France and Spain in 1936 had there not been a popular front which had united the workers’ parties with the left wing Republican parties. The victory of the popular front unleashed an enormous revolutionary enthusiasm which carried forward the whole momentum to the left—something which Trotsky totally failed to recognise.

The weakness in Trotsky was well summed up by Krupskaya in 1924 when she wrote:

‘When Comrade Trotsky speaks of Bulgaria or Germany, he concerns himself but little with the correct estimation of the moment. If we regard events through Comrade Trotsky’s spectacles, it appears exceedingly simple to guide events.

‘The capacity for a deeper, more subtle, Marxist analysis in all its national specificities was never Trotsky’s strong point.’

Trotsky’s writings on Spain 12 years later provide a most eloquent confirmation of Krupskaya’s words.

On 30 July 1936 Trotsky produced his simple formula guaranteed to bring results within a day.

He wrote:

‘The Spanish revolution can even take the army away from its reactionary officers. To accomplish this, it is only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the programme of socialist revolution... The fascist army could not resist the influence of such a programme for 24 hours; the soldiers would tie their officers hand and foot and turn them over to the nearest headquarters of the workers’ militia.’

Just two weeks later he was to write to the representative of the Trotskyist movement in Barcelona: ‘The level of information reaching me from Spain stands at zero!’ He could thus not make what Lenin emphasised was the essential thing for every Marxist revolutionary—a concrete analysis of a concrete situation. He was proceeding from assumptions derived from the situation in the October revolution of 1917 and assuming that policies based on what happened then would be appropriate under totally different conditions—fighting fascism in Spain.

And it was from the same position of isolation and ignorance (which was certainly not his fault) that he proclaimed on 9 June 1936 that ‘the French revolution has begun’ and he claimed to know the way it could be won on the basis of the slogan ‘Soviets Everywhere’.

Trotsky’s analysis rested, in the case of his positions taken in the 1930s on a sort of extremism, voluntarism, which admittedly was accentuated by the conditions he was in. But there was a deeper basis for this sort of voluntarism, which goes back to Trotsky’s outlook before the First World War and which Trotsky only temporarily overcame with the more realistic positions taken with Lenin in the early years of the Communist International.

Trotsky, at the end of his life, would refer to

the 'fatalistic optimism' responsible for his opposition to the Bolshevik party before 1917. He assumed that the masses would find their way to revolution without the hard graft of building up a centralised working class party. There was in Trotsky a strong element of economism—an assumption that the development of capitalism would inevitably lead the working class to take these positions.

There was also (Trotsky was not alone in this) a failure to understand the importance of other movements, not class-based movements—feminism, anti-racism, ethnic, community and peace movements of the greatest possible breadth.

**O**N THE question of the party, John Molyneux said that Trotsky moved after 1917 to an absolutely correct Leninist position. I don't believe this is true at all. Although the form of his fatalistic optimism changed after 1917, it is reflected in a different way in the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International* of 1938, in which he assumed that spontaneously 'the multi-millioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution'.

When such revolutions failed, Trotsky deduced that 'each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines,' including the CPs. He concluded: 'The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.'

It seems to me that anyone who analyses the real working class—in Britain today, with all its class struggles, must recognise that there is *not* a socialist consciousness. Socialist consciousness needs to be developed and worked for by a revolutionary party. We need to understand that conditions in Western European countries with a developed civil society are different from the conditions in Tsarist Russia.

It's a question of moving towards revolution, but it's a question of moving towards it in ways which correspond to the realistic opportunities that exist in Western Europe, which are quite different from those which existed in Russia. Neither Trotsky, nor his followers, nor his semi-, or three-quarter followers in the SWP, adequately understand this.

I agree that there is much in Trotsky's critique of Stalinism which is important and valuable. But at the same time that critique was put within a framework which was incorrect in terms of the understanding of the dynamic of development. The idea that it is impossible to go forward in countries like Russia except by some kind of political revolution fails to understand the dynamic of development in countries which produced, for example in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Prague Spring. This was not a political revolution in the Trotskyist sense. It was an example of the working people, led by the CP, insisting that the revolution which they'd made after the war matched its practice to its theory giving a great extension of democracy combined with the existing socialist ownership of the means of production. It seems to me that is the kind of

perspective which was not recognised by Trotsky and the whole process of de-Stalinisation could not take the form that Trotsky envisaged.

However, I do believe that his criticisms of Stalin gave important elements that we can learn from. These include his emphasis on criticising the nationalistic elements which manifested themselves in Stalinism—his deep commitment to internationalism. Unfortunately these took forms which failed to analyse the specificity of the national within the international framework.

This is shown by John when he dismisses *The British Road to Socialism*—as though there were some kind of contradiction between attempting to outline a strategy of advance within a given country in keeping with the specific historical conditions of that country, and the internationalist perspective of socialism which is a crucial part of our whole socialist heritage.

**F**INALLY, on the positive side I do believe that the evolution of Trotsky's views in the 1930s on socialist pluralism are of importance and of relevance to Marxism today. The October revolution and its Bolshevik leaders did not have any intention of establishing a one-party system in Russia.

However, in the period from 1921 when you had the banning, under particular historical conditions, of other political parties, Trotsky was the person who defended this with the most brutal frankness.

Nonetheless subsequent events and experiences in the USSR in the 1930s led him to adopt, to his credit, a new analysis. In his pamphlet, *Stalinism and Bolshevism*, of 1937, he wrote:

'As far as the prohibition of the other soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any "theory" of Bolshevism but was a measure of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country.'

In *The Revolution Betrayed* he strongly criticised Stalin's conception of a one-party system as a necessary feature of socialism and he replied (20 years before this approach was taken by the CP when it amended its programme after the 20th Congress):

'In reality classes are heterogenous; they are torn by inner antagonisms and arrive at the solution of common problems not otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties.'

In this and other articles he showed himself in this respect to be a sort of early 'Eurocommunist'.

Trotsky's heritage is a rich and varied one which combines both strengths and weaknesses. My impression is that the politics we have all suffered over recent years have tended to make more people prepared to approach matters in the spirit of trying to get a balanced view. And seeing that it is not a question of taking all of Trotsky or of rejecting all of Trotsky, but approaching matters from the point of view of a more Marxist approach and seeing what is positive and also, from the point of view of Marxism, what is negative.

# Austerity socialism



Police attack rioters in Athens

FOUR months after its triumphant re-election the PASOK (the Greek Socialist Party) government has faced two 24 hour general strikes in three weeks. The PASOK trade union front has lost control of the Greek TUC, and as a result of legal attempts by PASOK to regain control, the TUC now has two general sections—one pro- and one anti-PASOK.

A wave of strikes is spreading through Greece. Most of these have been short,

symbolic strikes. Electricity workers struck for two days, as did communication workers and airline workers. Teachers have struck three times for two days, lawyers have been on strike for two months, bus drivers have staged three hour stoppages at rush hours, even taxi drivers have been on strike.

Behind all this are the new economic measures of the government. Faced by large foreign debts of over \$12 billion, many of which are due for repayment in 1986, and a

large trade deficit (\$3 billion), the government announced on 11 October a series of austerity measures. All of them were directed against the working class.

The most vicious attack is the virtual freeze in the automatic indexation of wages introduced when PASOK came to power in 1981. Since then, the value of the indexation has been progressively reduced by various 'arithmetical adjustments'.

This steady reduction in real wages has however not been sufficient for the ruling class. The two year wage freeze will now lead to a massive and sudden drop in workers' living standards.

Other measures include a 15 percent devaluation of the drachma, large cuts in public spending including cuts of up to 25 percent in local authority spending, the dismissal of tens of thousands of workers employed on temporary contracts in the public sectors, and the abolition of a freeze on rent rises. The government has also announced that it will stop nationalising 'lame duck' companies.

## Thatcherite

At the same time price rises of 15 percent were announced for water, electricity and telephones. Local transport went up 50 percent three months ago.

A new word has found its way into the Greek language to describe the measures: 'Thatcherite'. Certainly there are many similarities in Greece with the way the British ruling class is trying to make workers pay for the crisis.

The measures brought an almost immediate response. Athens and Salonika trades councils and a number of large unions called a 24 hour stoppage for 21 October. The public unions sector were in the forefront of the struggle. Ironically, public sector unions have been under PASOK control for the last few years.

The strike was successful, with a high turnout. The retaliation of the government was swift and dramatic. All those PASOK trade union leaders who had supported the strike call were expelled from PASOK! The General Secretary of the Greek TUC, Raftopoulos, remained faithful to PASOK. Those who had been expelled, together with CP members, were the majority on the General Council. They voted 27 to 18 to sack Raftopoulos and replace him as General Secretary with an expelled member of PASOK. As a result the PASOK faithful went to the courts and predictably won the reinstatement of Raftopoulos.

In response to the expulsions and the legal interference with the TUC, there was a second 24 hour general strike in November. There were a series of sectional strikes preceding the general strike, but they attracted less than total support. In many cases this is because the sudden conversions of the ex-PASOK bureaucrats carried little conviction with their members. However, the general strike was solid and effective.

PASOK has always talked of socialist principles. It has always considered itself too left wing to join the Socialist International. Papandreou, the leader of PASOK, has always maintained political links in Britain

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with Tony Benn. PASOK has had links with the PLO and stood for election promising withdrawal from NATO and the removal of all US bases from Greek soil.

By 1985 it was clear that they had failed to carry out many of the 1981 promises: the US bases were still there and Greece was still in NATO and the EEC. In 1985 those promises weren't even mentioned and the 1985 election campaign was run as an America-style marketing exercise, with a very low political content.

The turn to austerity after the elections was very quick. The lack of democracy inside PASOK allowed the rapid turn around. In the 11 years of its existence under the autocratic leadership of Andreas Papandreou, PASOK has only held one congress. Papandreou has made sure that all the entrism groups in PASOK (including the tiny Greek equivalent of the *Militant* tendency) have been expelled or forced out. The only faction fights in PASOK have been over the division of the spoils from the government gravy train. So the leadership faced no problems inside the party.

The PASOK trade union bureaucrats, however, are not in such a fortunate position. They are forced to respond to the demands from below or lose their grip altogether. That is why they had to make a stand. The bureaucrats who were expelled from PASOK did not have a particularly left wing or militant record. In fact, they were, in general, the advocates of suppressing economic demands in the interest of gaining 'participation'. Papandreou had no compunctions about ditching them altogether.

In the 1985 elections the KKE (pro-Stalinist CP) took 10 percent of the vote, down from 12 percent in the Euro-elections. Yet despite their electoral and organisational strength there is no chance that the KKE will organise effective resistance to the attacks on workers. Their response to the electoral losses was to start shifting to the right!

## Devaluation

The KKE have very much adapted to being a left tail of PASOK. PASOK's election slogan was 'change', the KKE's was 'real change'. It has supported one of the austerity measures, the devaluation of the drachma. In a small economy, where many essentials are imported, the devaluation was a direct attack on workers' living standards. On other measures, the KKE is trapped by its own politics. It accepts that there are 'too many' imports.

The KKE's nationalism traps it over the issue of defence spending. The PASOK government, in what is known in Greece as 'The Sale of the Century', is buying \$1 billion of French and American military aircraft. This is to be followed by other purchases of tanks and warships. The KKE has restricted its criticism to the *source* of the weaponry! They suggested that the planes should be bought—no, not from Russia, but from Sweden instead.

When the KKE are forced to argue an alternative to the PASOK measures, as they were in a recent debate on Greek TV, they simply say that the matter should be discussed between the union leaders and the

government. The KKE's alternative to government-imposed austerity measures is a social contract.

Unfortunately the working class has been left without effective leadership to face this onslaught. The extreme left is a divided rump of Maoists and Stalinists and has no real influence on the political struggle. Yet despite all this there are possibilities. Large numbers of people have clashed head on

with the 'socialist' state. The youth are increasingly looking for a genuine way out. For the few revolutionary socialists in Greece this is an opportunity, if there ever was one, to give the real Marxist tradition a foothold in the country. The conditions are excellent for starting the building of a revolutionary party. ■

Written by members of OSE in Greece

# Rage at regime

SINCE we received the article from Greece, there has been a further challenge to the ruling Socialist Party.

Greece has been shaken by riots following the death of a demonstrator at police hands.

The yearly demonstration called by the National Union of Students to celebrate their uprising against the military dictatorship in 1972 was baton charged by the police, leaving a 15 year old schoolboy dead.

The police waded in on the pretext of 'anarchists' being behind 'all the trouble'. The following day thousands of people rioted through the centre of Athens after a mainly peaceful demonstration was, once again, attacked by the police.

The head of the government, Papandreou, panic-stricken, immediately sacked three police chiefs, calling the death 'wilful murder' in a bid to head off the riots. Two government ministers concerned with 'law and order' immediately tendered their resignations—which weren't accepted.

PASOK blamed the action on 'muddle-headed, quasi-fascist elements', and warned that no-one should misconstrue their 'democratic susceptibility' as weakness.

The large and influential Communist Party issued a statement about the death saying that they 'regretted' it, but didn't call for any action.

They blamed 'anarchists' and have consistently bleated on about the 'accountability' of the police. They say if PASOK had real control over the police there would be no trouble.

The effect of this was to let PASOK off the

hook. It allowed Papandreou to charge the policeman with manslaughter, not murder.

When students, who had been occupying the Polytechnic, called a mass demonstration for Tuesday 19 November, the Communist Party demanded that they call it off. They did. Over 10,000 people still demonstrated.

This is another example of the Greek Communist Party refusing to use the strength of feeling against the government to build workers' confidence and smash PASOK's austerity measures.

Like Mitterrand in France and Gonzales in Spain, Papandreou was elected to government on a wave of socialist promise. In Greece there were to be *real* changes for workers and *real* opposition to American military strategy.


The reality has been somewhat different.

The Socialist Party have been forced to hit their own working class and drop nearly all opposition to 'outside forces' as the world economic crisis has hit Greece as much as anywhere else.


The tragedy is that the power to smash the government and bring a fundamental change for workers in Greece lies in the hands of the Communist Party. Unfortunately they are only interested in the first part of the equation. They want the downfall of the government—so they can step in. They do not want workers in Greece to decide their own fate.

The Communist Party, at the end of the day, will do little else but cover-up PASOK's mistakes. ■

A diary for 1986 that celebrates the year 1936, the year of workers' revolution in Spain and mass strikes in France, a year of courage and hope in the midst of a decade dominated by the rise of fascism, the year of the Popular Front and of betrayal by those who claimed the leadership of the workers' movement — all in, a diary with plenty of space for the socialist events of your year, 1986.



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# If you can't beat them...

IN THE summer the press was full of headlines to the effect that President Mitterrand was losing control of the French Socialist Party. The aspiring arbiter of its destiny was the ex-Agriculture Minister, Michel Rocard, a right wing theoretician, whom opinion polls showed to be the most popular politician in France.

Predictions were confidently being made that, come the conference in October, Rocard's faction in alliance with others would control the SP, Mitterrand's faction having lost its overall majority. It seemed likely that Rocard, who had opposed Mitterrand before the 1981 presidential elections (describing his policies as 'archaic') would become the next presidential contender for the left.

## Rightward march

How wrong the predictions were. Far from Rocard getting himself crowned as the heir apparent, it was Fabius, the prime minister, and—to a lesser extent—Jospin, the party secretary, who emerged as the victors.

Rocard, once a member of the centrist Unified Socialist Party that played an important role in the May 1968 events, is the French equivalent of David Owen. He is an ambitious right winger determined to reshape the SP along Social Democrat lines. Did his eclipse at the conference represent a reversal of the shift to the right in the SP?

Unfortunately not. The rightward march continues, but along a less doctrinaire line than Rocard would have wished.

With the general election only four

months away, France is already gripped by election fever. Only one thing is certain: the SP will, as a result of its austerity measures over the last three years, lose its majority. What happens after that is far from certain.

The right wing parties may gain an absolute majority. That will provoke a major political crisis since Mitterrand remains president till 1988. The constitution of the Fifth Republic does not allow for a situation in which a left wing president heads a right wing government. The conflict of constitutional powers could prove explosive.

On the other hand, the government's introduction of proportional representation may deprive the parliamentary right wing of an absolute majority (incidentally, the fascists seem set to gain a fair number of seats). In which case, some kind of coalition government may emerge.

A further complication arises in connection with the right wing parties. If implementation of their Thatcherite policies alienates public opinion, it may well be that a socialist president is re-elected in 1988. Since constitutionally he has the power to dissolve parliament, he might then do so in order to re-establish the SP as the governing party.

So not everything is gloom and doom for the Socialist Party.

It was these kind of considerations which dominated the SP conference. The calculation in everyone's mind was, given the party's inevitable defeat at the polls, what is the best strategy? Should the party adapt even further to the centre, in order to keep for itself a role in government? Or should it keep its present course (in truth, right wing enough), and rely on the opposition parties'

unpopularity in government to come back to power on its own after 1988?

In the run-up to conference the differences between Rocard and his rivals appeared insuperable. Rocard's resolution for conference gained 29 percent of the votes cast by local socialist federations, while Jospin's, representing the leadership, took the rest. In desperate last minute negotiations between the two, Rocard held out for the maximum number of amendments to be accepted in order to strengthen his bid to become Mitterrand's successor as socialist nominee for the presidency. A major damaging split was on the cards.

## Centre party

But in the event the differences over policy were narrowed. Jospin blandly agreed to 'modernise the party's theories'—as long as it did not become a centre party. Fabius could talk about the 'respiration' of the public sector (a fancy term for partial denationalisation) and of the need to protect the individual against the state (in other words, abandoning any pretence of the state being an instrument of reform). None of this, by the way, could be said to be a departure from current practice.

Rocard, for his part, preached the necessity for industrial 'competivity' and for French society to be freed from 'the rigidities and straitjackets in which it is imprisoned'—all of which is code for worksharing, job flexibility, and so on. And he attacked the inflationary policies of the government's first year of power, policies which in practice the SP has long since repudiated.

So what real differences exist between his views and those of his rivals? At conference they boiled down to obscure distinctions—such as whether the SP should turn itself into a Social Democratic party on West German lines and whether it should publicly specify terms for governmental coalition in advance.

Against Rocard, Jospin could plead for a definition of the party sufficiently broad (a 'party of wage earners') for it not to repel CPers for whom Rocard's reformulation might stick in the throat. And Fabius, in many ways to the right of Rocard, would prefer to keep his coalition options open. (The flexibility would give him, as prime minister, an advantage over Rocard.)

A right wing consensus reigned at the conference. It may have been Rocard who inspired it and who threatened disruption; but it was Jospin and Fabius who achieved it by stealing his thunder. Gone was any reference to the class war, to breaking with capitalism and all the other meaningless phrases the SP leaders used to adorn their speeches with. Even the 'Internationale' wasn't sung. 'It is the end of one party,' a left winger sadly remarked, 'and the beginnings of another.'

The *Economist* smugly concluded that the conference was dominated not by doctrine, but by how France should be governed. Sadly they were right. ■

Peter Williams

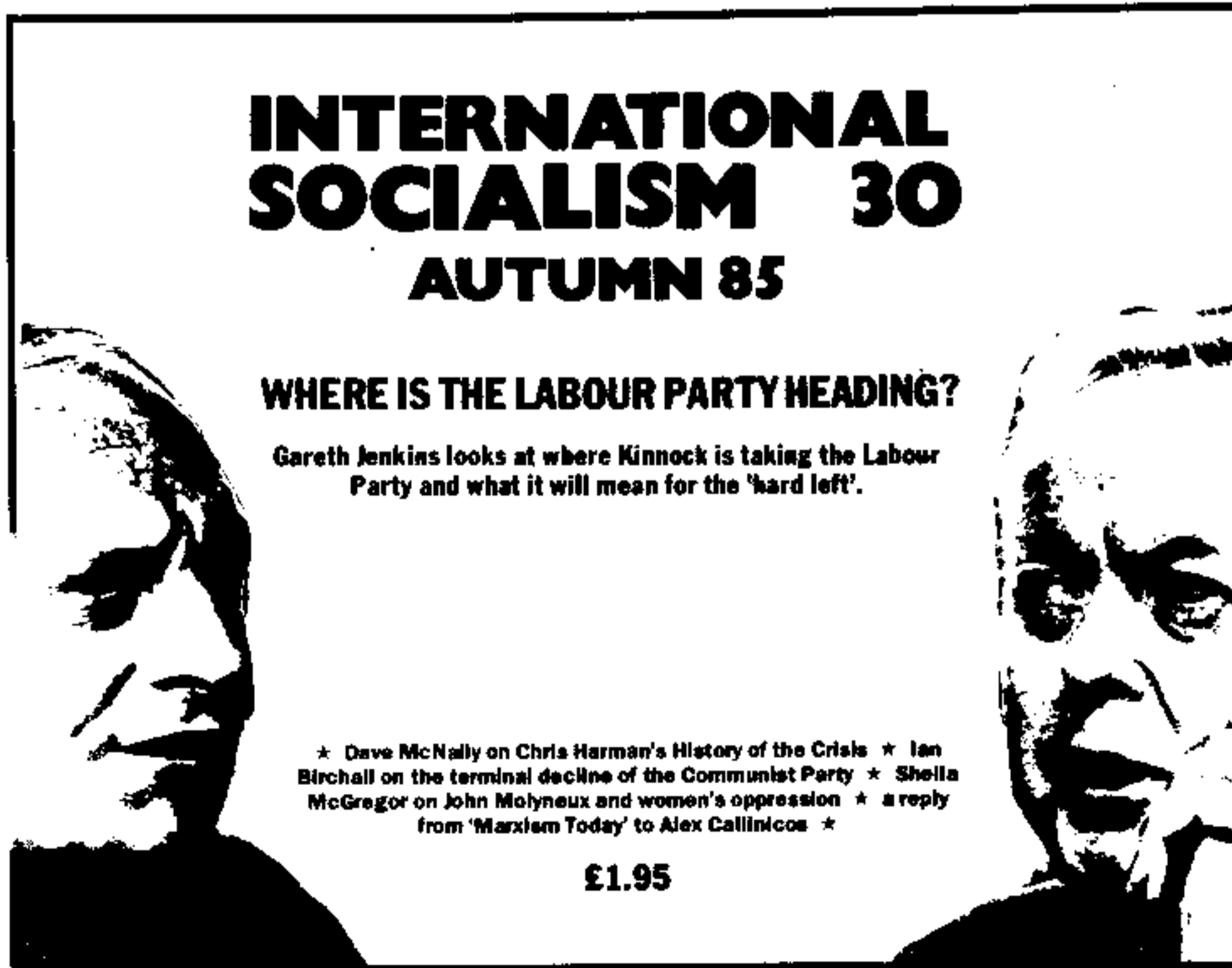
## INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 30 AUTUMN 85

### WHERE IS THE LABOUR PARTY HEADING?

Gareth Jenkins looks at where Kinnock is taking the Labour Party and what it will mean for the 'hard left'.

★ Dave McNally on Chris Harman's History of the Crisis ★ Ian Birchall on the terminal decline of the Communist Party ★ Sheila McGregor on John Molyneux and women's oppression ★ a reply from 'Marxism Today' to Alex Callinicos ★

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# Cult comes a cropper

IT IS A fair assumption that most members of the SWP have had little contact with members of the Workers Revolutionary Party. A fair assumption because in workplaces, in union organisations at local, district and national levels, on workplace and street sales, in colleges and universities, on demonstrations and so on, their presence is very much the exception rather than the rule. Equity apart, of course.

Their claim, solemnly repeated in various organs of the capitalist press, to be 'a party of 1,000 members' is manifestly absurd. Six hundred tolerably active members before their present split would be a generous estimate. Daily paper notwithstanding, their operation has been largely a bluff for many years.

It was not always so. Leaving aside membership claims, always difficult to check, there is no doubt that for about 20 years the WRP's predecessor organisations ('the club' till 1959 and then the Socialist Labour League) were the most influential Trotskyist organisations in Britain.

Their influence was, overall, an adverse one. They were our rivals and for a long time they overshadowed us. The political reasons for this state of affairs and its reversal from the early seventies onwards are worth a brief discussion.

Naturally, this is not what interests Fleet Street. Sex and sport and celebrities sell newspapers. Headlines like 'Randy Red Supremo Stole My Wife' (*News of the World*, 3 Nov) and 'Exit Left: The Two Redgraves' (*Daily Mail*, 1 Nov) indicate their concerns. Anyone who looks for further 'revelations' along these lines in this article will be disappointed.

## Revolutionary situation

Whatever truth or lies are behind the various allegations and counter-allegations is not easily discoverable and, in any case, hardly explains the politics of the organisation.

The WRP's forerunner emerged from the disintegrating British Trotskyist organisation in 1947. Its main characteristics were a fervent belief in an imminent economic crisis that would precipitate a revolutionary situation in Britain and internationally, a conviction that 'there was no time' to build an open revolutionary party in the short space of time before the final crisis, and that therefore it was necessary to be in the Labour Party and, finally, a resolute refusal to accept that Trotsky's pre-1940 analysis of Stalinism was in any way defective.

The argument about the Labour Party went like this: it is the traditional mass organisation of the working class and 'when the crisis comes' the workers will flood into the wards 'demanding solutions'. The Trotskyists, 'correctly positioned' in these wards etc would be able to give a correct lead to a postulated 'mass centrist current' and so

create a mass revolutionary party.

Two points about this. First, it was not a local aberration. The Healy group was energetically supported by the then leadership of the still-united Fourth International, including the figures who subsequently entered into the demonology of the WRP—Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and so on.

Second, although the perspective was absurdly wrong, it did give the group a confidence and coherence in the short term. The vastly more realistic perspective of the little group around Tony Cliff (and, indeed, of the little group around Ted Grant too) offered a long, hard slog. Healy seemed to offer the prospect of big successes in the near future. And his group grew on that basis.

## Of course, the oft-predicted crises and mass radicalisation of Labour Party members did not appear.

They ran a paper, *Socialist Outlook*, jointly with some left Labour MPs and a few union officials, and it was a modest success. Success enough to bring a sharp reaction from the Labour Party's leadership and the eventual banning of the paper in 1954. 'The club' recruited on some scale in the Labour Party youth organisation.

Of course, the oft-predicted crisis and mass radicalisation of Labour Party members did not appear. The long boom of the fifties and sixties was gathering strength.

However, 'the club' had the forces to intervene vigorously in the crisis in the Communist Party in 1956-57 (after the Hungarian revolution and Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin) and gained some significant recruits.

The politics were the same. When the SLL was founded in 1959 its paper, *The Newsletter*, declared: 'If there is one word to describe the situation in which the SLL is born, that word is crisis.' In 1959!

Certain new elements, however, appeared, or at any rate became more and more prominent, around this time. The first, an extreme voluntarism and grotesque exaggeration of the importance of the organisation. Second, the growth of a demonology.

What was holding back the growth of the revolutionary forces was, it appeared, 'revisionism' and especially 'Pablo-ite revisionism'. The two things were obviously connected. The grandiose perspectives were not being realised. Why not? Obviously the perspective could not be wrong.

Therefore, the machinations of the

villainous revisionist groups were to blame. Thus the International Socialists (our fore-runners) were denounced, in a pamphlet called *The Class Nature of the International Socialists*, as 'a specialised counter-revolutionary detachment of the ruling class'!

Pabloism, by the way, meant the line of that section of the FI (Mandel's) from which Healy's group (together with the US SWP and the OCI in France) had split in 1953. The fact was that all these groups (IS included) were very weak at a the time and in no position—supposing (absurdly) that they wanted to—to prop up an allegedly crisis-ridden capitalism.

In short, by the early sixties the SLL had become a cult, increasingly remote from reality, increasingly a caricature of a revolutionary organisation, increasingly venomous and untruthful about rivals on the left. In 1964 the SLL-dominated Young Socialists were expelled from the Labour Party and maintained as an independent 'mass' organisation with grandiose recruiting drives and a massive turnover of members.

In 1969 the long-heralded daily paper (*Workers' Press*, now *Newsline*) was launched, a tribute to the organisational drive and self-sacrifice of the members, but a political stupidity because it had no real basis. So the members were forced to drive themselves to sell at the expense of practically everything else. In the same period the All Trades Union Alliance was launched—a paper organisation, another fiction, like Healy's 'International Committee of the Fourth International'.

One final ingredient became conspicuous from around 1970. Healy discovered 'philosophy'. Its operational function—whatever may have been in the heads of Healy and his 'expert', Slaughter—was to give the cult a special esoteric 'knowledge' which 'explained' the gulf between the organisation's real weakness and its grandiose claims and predictions.

## Ultra-left

From then on, the deterioration was rapid. The loving up to various dictators in the Middle East, the 'imminent danger' of 'bonapartist' police dictatorship in Britain, the grotesque 'Security and the Fourth International' campaign—aimed at the now deceased Joseph Hansen and the SWP US—and the combination of gross opportunism (uncritical support of Ted Knight and, until yesterday, Ken Livingstone) with ultra-left idiocies, the splits with various 'renegades' and so on. With all of this, both wings of the now split organisation were completely associated. After all, Healy and Banda have been together since the fifties.

The WRP has visibly declined in the last decade and is now scarcely of even marginal significance. A tragic waste of the efforts and sacrifices of many well-intentioned revolutionaries and a most salutary warning about the dangers of mistaking wishes for reality, of false perspectives uncorrected by experience, of virulent sectarianism and political dishonesty. ■

Duncan Hallas

# Top of the class

JEFFREY ARCHER was in the political wilderness for ten years before he was rehabilitated with the announcement in September this year, that he was to become deputy chairman of the Conservative Party.

In the intervening decade he has written five best selling novels, reaching sales figures of 25 million copies. All of them perpetuate the myth of the Tory entrepreneur. By hard work and endeavour, any individual, no matter how lowly born, can succeed in society, make a fortune, and at least play with, if not wear, the coat tails of power.

There is no room in an Archer novel for the poverty and misery of everyday life that afflict a large proportion of the population. He is absolutely fascinated by the idea of power, and by '...the people who get to the top and why they do.'

Jeffrey Archer is fond of himself. So fond, in fact, that he has written five books about himself, all of them bestsellers. He writes potboiling thrillers, and to Jeffrey Archer, nothing is more thrilling than money power and ambition.

## Liberal fundraiser

The son of a former consul, he shone at school, and progressed to Oxford University. Here he achieved a diploma in education, joined CND and made a name for himself as a fundraiser for liberal causes such as Oxfam. He also started boasting to friends that one day he would be prime minister.

From Oxford he went on to start his own firm, Arrow Enterprises, which concentrated on raising money for the United Nations Association and the European Movement, (a pressure group pushing for a yes vote in the EEC referendum). He rapidly amassed a fortune,

by taking 10 percent of everything he raised. As he raised an awful lot of money, his share was obscenely large.

By the age of 27 he was the youngest ever GLC councillor, and three years later he made it into the House of Commons. He was an MP for four and a half years until he was faced with bankruptcy proceedings and forced to stand down as a candidate in the 1974 election. This period in his life produced the recent quote, 'I was unemployed with £400,000 debts, I know what being unemployed is like.'

However he has also been recently quoted as saying, 'I never worried about losing money, and I knew I could make it again.' With his ruling class position according him the confidence he needed, together with financial donations from famous friends and connections, he cannot possibly have understood the real despair and hopelessness of being unemployed.

He likes writing about himself to such an extent that he usually places himself as at least one of the main characters in his novels. These characterisations are of a type to be relished by the Tory faithful. Strong, attractive, upstanding, well educated, enterprising, top of the class, men (Jeffrey Archer does not write about women) of principle, who inevitably make (and sometimes lose) a fortune.

Archer's first book, *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less*, is about high financial dealings and quick money. It concerns the loss and subsequent recovery of one million dollars from an American con-man. The topic of the book sounds an echo in Archer's past.

He lost £200,000 of his own and £200,000 of someone else's money. As he was expecting to make a quick killing, probably at someone else's expense, I'm not sorry to

inform you that he didn't get his money back.

His latest book, *First Among Equals*, is an insider's view of the House of Commons. It is a saga stretching from 1964 until 1991, and is centred around the rise of four MPs to the positions of leaders of the Tory, Labour, and Social Democratic parties, and Speaker of the House of Commons.

Once again Archer places himself right in the action, as one of the main characters, Simons Kerslake. In the book Kerslake is shaken by financial scandal (as was Archer) and leaves the House due to boundary changes abolishing his seat. His wife Elizabeth is the gynaecologist who delivers the babies of Louise, the wife of the future SDP MP (in reality David Owen's wife Debbie is Jeffrey Archer's literary agent).

## Primitive Tory

There is little of a political nature in the book of much worth to us. Archer does, however, use it as a vehicle to vent some of his rather primitive Tory political philosophies. Thus he allows the trade unions to be dismissed with: 'Commie bastards'... 'Lock them all up until they learn to do a day's work,' and Militant as '...sour faced men who had never helped him win the seat in the first place'.

There is an amusing little cartoon accompanying this, with the MP surrounded by *Militant* supporters dressed up in Cromwell's Roundhead uniforms and wearing CND badges. One is obviously Peter Taaffe, one Ted Grant, while surprisingly one looks extremely like Roy Jenkins. (No, I didn't understand it either.)

Archer employs diversions in his book. There is a Falklands factor, in which a royal navy ship is taken over by Colonel Gaddafi's mercenaries. While the tension builds slowly (very slowly), the ship is briskly retaken by the SBS (the maritime equivalent of the SAS).

With his new job Archer is once again stalking the corridors of power. He is thought of as a crowd puller by the Tory hierarchy. Consequently he has been entrusted with the job of raising Tory morale (a kind of smiling face or public relations supremo of Toryism). He may, however, be more ambitious and wish to get back to what he sees as the centre of political power, parliament, and to further his ambitions of becoming prime minister.

Since he started his new job, some of his gaffes have been extraordinary. In a Young Conservatives broadsheet at the recent Tory party conference, he was quoted as saying, 'You would not buy a used car from this government, would you?' And the week prior to the conference, on BBC radio, 'Many of the young are unwilling to put in a day's work'.

Remember, these are the measured statements of the man given the job of communicating the government's policy through to the party rank and file and eventually through to the electorate.

Whether or not he will be satisfied with his job or return to 'a £1 million a year job as a writer', only time will tell. ■

Roger Carberry



# Born again Xmas

WELL, here we are again. Christ has reached the grand old age of one thousand nine hundred and eighty-five, and the whole of Christian civilisation is all set to celebrate once more.

I have always found it odd that Christians should make such a big deal of a birth. Nothing unique about being born, even if a stable is a slightly unconventional place to do it. But Easter would seem to me to be the time of year when all good Christians should really go on the razzle. After all being born and dying is pretty run of the mill stuff, but coming back from the dead is something few of us can claim to have done.

The real reason for our celebrations of course is that Christmas has little to do with the birth of anybody and a hell of a lot to do with good old capitalist profit. Toys, sweets, cakes, nuts and fruit are all bought in abundance. All sorts of things you'd never dream of buying any other time of the year now become essentials. Cosmetics, gloves, scarves and ties all become presents for people you feel you really ought to buy something. These presents are usually instantly forgettable and often totally inappropriate (for years I wore a beard and yet every Christmas received at least one bottle of aftershave).

And of course huge amounts of alcohol are consumed.

Even the origins of Christmas have little to do with Christ or Christianity. It started, in fact, as an old pagan festival of northern Europe held every mid winter. Good pragmatists that the early Christians were, they took it over and announced that Jesus just happened to be born at the same time as the pagan rave up.

Bits and pieces were then taken on board from the old traditions. Christians—that much more boring than their pagan fore-runners—turned an orgy into a kiss under the mistletoe. Good old tree worship (better than moving statues in my opinion) became the Christmas tree. As for Saint Nicholas giving presents, there were precedents, and of course as Santa Claus today he brings cheer to the heart of profit makers everywhere.

For two months running up to Christmas, toys will be advertised on television all through the day and the early evening. Toys that are ridiculously expensive will be flaunted across the screen in front of wide eyed young children. For many parents this process can be heartbreaking. If you're on the dole how can you possibly afford the more expensive presents your kids want, and that their friends will get? For many it means real financial hardship, and for others the bitter feeling of failure as you watch the disappointment in your child's eyes as they open their presents.

This process is no better if your kids are still young enough to believe in Father Christmas. Thinking back, I am now convinced that I became a class conscious (if not a fully developed revolutionary) socialist at

the age of three when I realised that 'Santa' gave rich kids better presents than he gave us poor kids.

Christmas also gave me a short, sharp shock in coming to terms with the abolition of the family. Every year the extended family would descend upon us; aunts who all seemed to be religious lunatics, and uncles who worshipped the bottle (occasionally it was the other way round) and trod on your brand new toys and broke them.

Now the uncles and aunts have largely passed on, but there are numerous brothers and sisters, husbands and wives all straining every muscle to be nice to each other. They usually succeed until the drink hits the head, when all hell breaks loose. Christmas also seems to be the time of year for reflection, always bad news when the family get together. Old wounds, the disappointments that parents have suffered, and more all come to the surface.

## Human failure

Yet those who cannot be part of such festivities are made to feel even worse. 'Think of those spending Christmas alone' says the TV presenter in a sad and hushed voice that's bound to send every person spending Christmas alone in a desperate search for the razor blades, or a shilling for the gas. Being alone at Christmas is the ultimate proof of your failure as a human being.

Having worked out that you can't win at Christmas—whether with the family or alone—you then decide to drown yourself in booze, TV and the radio. Let us leave the question of booze to one side (suffice it to say that the joy of the night before is usually ruined by the illness of the morning after).

TV, however, excels itself with films we've all seen a hundred times and light entertainment shows that are just awful. No doubt Eric Morecambe will emulate he whose birthday we celebrate by returning from the dead. Unlike Jesus, he actually does do it at Christmas.

For those who hope to find peace for the



## MARXISM & CULTURE

soul in music Christmas is not a good time. Those who run the record companies seem to believe our musical tastes go into terminal decline at Christmas. We are then submitted to the 'Christmas song'. It was bad enough when you had to listen to Bing Crosby singing *White Christmas* or Harry Belafonte singing *Mary's Boy Child* every year. Now we are subjected to hundreds of the bloody things. Slade, Paul McCartney, John Lennon (it really *should* be Easter) Elton John and many, many more sing stupid songs to 'catchy' tunes. Any soul aficionado who believes their particularly 'right on' musical form is exempt should listen to the Phil Spector Christmas Album.

If all this sounds like 'Lenin sings Scrooge' it must be said that capitalism is a horrible system from which we all need to escape from time to time, and there will be those who capitalism will not allow to enjoy anything. For the blacks in South Africa those socialists and trade unionists still in jail in places like Chile and the many political prisoners in Britain, for the homeless and those literally starving to death their will be no escape in Christmas festivities.

For the rest well, we'll all try to escape in our own ways. Me? Oh, I'm going home to the family, watching *The Wizard of Oz*, drinking lots of beer and whisky, and when I've had my fill, I will burst into a chorus of *Happy Christmas war is over*. ■

Rick Hay



Yet again the *Wizard of Oz*

What do  
we mean  
by.



# Centrism

CENTRISM is not something we're terribly familiar with in British politics. We are accustomed to dealing with two currents in the labour movement—the majority one of reformism and the tiny minority one of revolutionary socialism.

Each is relatively easy to define. A reformist believes that change comes through parliament; a revolutionary that change can only come through mass activity from below. The two ideas are not compatible.

But what of a socialist who talks revolutionary politics but whose deeds are reformist? Such individuals are not uncommon and in certain periods whole working class organisations have been based on this kind of confusion. These we can label as centrist. The question then is what attitude should revolutionaries take towards them? The answer is not straightforward.

For one thing such organisations are inherently unstable and subject to contradictory pressures. Many rank and file members take the revolutionary talk for real. The leaders use the revolutionary talk as a smokescreen for reformist practice.

Depending on whether the class struggle is rising or declining, organisations are pulled to the left or to the right. Workers in these organisations may be groping towards revolutionary socialism; conversely, they may be falling back into the orbit of reformist politics in a period of defeat.

In short, centrism contains all the colours of the rainbow (in Trotsky's vivid phrase). That alone makes it notoriously tricky to define and to deal with.

## Third International

Historically, centrist organisations have emerged in periods of very sharp ideological crisis, when all the ideas in the working class movement are put to severe test. One such period was the First World War and its aftermath. The pre-war tradition of the Second International (with its faith in socialist advance via parliament) was discredited; the new ideas of the Third International (with its faith in soviet power) very much fitted the revolutionary mood sweeping across Europe.

But between discredited reformism and victorious Bolshevism a third camp came into being. Some of the pre-war socialist leaders had broken with out-and-out reformism as the mood of the masses had begun to swing against the war. These leaders were not internationalists; they did not believe (as Lenin did) in turning the imperialist war into a civil war. Their opposition was pacifist, a desire to turn the clock back to the era of 'peace' (ie normal capitalist exploitation) that had existed before the war.

These leaders were forced sharply left-



*The notorious centrist Karl Kautsky*

wards in order not to lose supporters further to the left than themselves. But for all their revolutionary phraseology their instincts were thoroughly reformist.

The Third International had, as Lenin put it, become fashionable. The problem now was how to get revolutionary workers in centrist parties into the Third International while excluding their treacherous leaders.

It was in Germany that centrism achieved its most complete expression. The Independent Social Democrats (the USPD), led by such notorious centrists as Karl Kautsky, dwarfed the infant Communist Party. It talked left but acted right, simultaneously participating in semi-insurrectionary activity and the setting up of the bourgeois Weimar republic. This reflected the fact that in its ranks were many thousands of workers who had broken with reformism but still trusted their old leaders rather than the unknown quantity of the untried Communist Party.

The USPD were compelled to call a special conference in 1920 to discuss affiliation to the Third International. The 21 conditions (which the USPD leadership rejected) demanded that organisations wishing to join had to expel not only the right wing but also centrist leaders.

After a brilliant speech by Zinoviev, the president of the Third International, a majority opted for affiliation and the USPD immediately split. Its left wing formed a joint organisation with the existing Communist Party of some 350,000 members, making it the biggest and best communist organisation in Western Europe.

One point has to be underlined. Contrary

to the belief of many on the left (*Militant* supporters notably), this evolution of the best elements of the German working class towards revolutionary politics was not dependent on the internal development of the mass parties. It depended on a pole of attraction *external* to reformist politics and organisations, that being the immense prestige of the Bolshevik revolution and the existence of an independent communist organisation (the Third International and its German section).

## Intervention

Without that pole of attraction and without the conscious intervention of the Third International, it is unlikely that leftward moving workers would have completed the break with reformism. In the absence of an alternative, the power of the right wing to demobilise and confuse would have tied the left's hands and pulled workers away from revolutionary politics.

The second case of centrism we have to deal with concerns a very different historical period. In this instance centrist groupings arose under the impact not only of working class victory, but of its opposite—the major setback the international labour movement suffered in the early thirties (principally, the catastrophic defeat fascism inflicted on the German working class).

The forces involved were much weaker. Two factors prompted the emergence of centrist groupings. First, there was the failure of reformism to deliver the goods. In Britain, MacDonald's 1929-31 Labour government turned on its supporters to make workers pay for the crisis in capitalism. In Germany, the Social Democrats not only played a similar role in the Weimar republic. They also failed to mount any fighting campaign against the rapid rise of the Nazis.

Secondly, there was the lunatic policy of the by now thoroughly Stalinised Third International. The communist parties, in their 'ultra-left' phase, maintained that the social democratic parties were no different from fascist parties (on the grounds that both were a block on the road to revolution).

That meant that social democratic workers in Germany, who might have been won to a joint, successful struggle against Nazism, were written off as 'social-fascists'. It also meant, as Trotsky pointed out, that if there was no difference between these twins, fascism must have already conquered. So for all its apparent leftism, the German CP was in practice passive and abstentionist.

The terrible consequence was that Hitler destroyed the working class movement in Germany without a shot being fired in its defence.

Under the impact of major ideological crisis, some minor working class parties

began to move leftwards towards the kind of revolutionary internationalism that Trotsky and his small band of supporters represented.

Centrist groupings flourished—for example, the Independent Labour Party in Britain, which disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932. Disgusted by reformism, repelled by Stalinism, they flirted with Marxist ideas.

There were also similar German, Dutch and Norwegian groups, to name the most important, though in truth all were small. They were linked in a loose federation, a kind of centrist International, and later joined by the POUM in Spain, a centrist party that played a crucial role in the Spanish revolution—a role Trotsky submitted to searching criticism.

They were also confused. Some of their leaders were pacifist-inclined or couldn't bring themselves to break with Stalinism or were reluctant to abandon their cherished parliamentary methods. Conditions were unfavourable at the rank and file level as well. In a period of defeat, the way forward for workers breaking with reformism and Stalinism was by no means clear (in the way it had been after the First World War). Nor was the pole of attraction (Trotsky's isolated grouplets) very powerful.

Some of these groups were right-centrist, others left-centrist. Trotsky urged his supporters to take the latter seriously. If he couldn't offer size he could offer a revolutionary tradition and clarity of ideas. He considered that, unlike reformist organisations, the weight of revolutionary politics inside these organisations might push them to revolutionary politics and the perspective of founding a new International.

He therefore set out either to win existing leaderships (as was the case in Holland) or to have his supporters enter openly and by dint of their theoretical and practical superiority take over from the existing leadership.

This kind of entry, it should be noted, was quite different from the entrism into reformist organisations he urged on his supporters a short while afterwards. Left centrist organisations might be secured for revolutionary politics almost in their entirety. They were too ramshackle for the old apparatus to maintain the centrist leaders' grip on workers whose ideas were rapidly developing under the influence of revolutionaries within their ranks.

No such possibilities existed with mass

reformist organisations. There the old apparatus had a firm hold over a majority of the membership. The purpose of entrism would not be to pretend that the organisations as a whole could be won to revolutionary politics but to detach a minority while it was moving leftwards under the impact of social crisis. Given that perspective, entrism was necessarily a short term tactic, to be completed before the gravitational pull of reformism reasserted itself and sucked revolutionaries behind it.

Needless to say, in both cases, Trotsky insisted on the need for absolute political independence for his supporters. At the same time, he had to overcome a sectarian inertia among those of his followers who failed to see that the radicalised workers of these centrist groups had to be won to revolutionary politics before reformism and Stalinism recovered credibility.

### Militant

Trotsky had some success with left centrist groups, though less than he expected, which was not surprising in view of the increasingly unfavourable climate for revolutionary politics in the 1930s.

Still the experiment was worth trying. It yielded a very modest crop of new recruits and a rather richer crop of polemics.

Is it possible to generalise the characteristics of centrism? 'Centrism', wrote Trotsky, 'is a general name for the most varied tendencies and groupings spread out between reformism and Marxism.' Consequently, its ideas are a mish-mash, an amorphous amalgam of different political traditions reflecting the different pressures put upon it.

Thus a centrist shies away from the uncompromisingly sharp formulations of Marxism.

Conversely, a centrist borrows Marxist arguments in order to criticise reformism (for example, that reformists fail to appreciate the power of the state in preventing change via parliament), but fail to draw the obvious conclusion—that the state has to be smashed. Thus a centrist's opposition to rightwing ideas and leaders tends to be more platonic than real.

A centrist can be hostile to reformism but because of the unwillingness to break decisively with reformism 'is inclined to cringe before those who are more moderate, to remain silent on their opportunist sins and to cover their actions before the workers'. A

centrist prizes 'unity' with reformist leaders above anything else.

Above all, in Trotsky's characteristically cutting phrase, a centrist 'views with hatred the revolutionary principle: *state what is.*'

Does any of this apply today? Since we are in a period neither of revolutionary upsurge nor of catastrophic working class defeat, centrism in its classic form does not at present exist.

Yet elements of centrism certainly exist. The defeat of the miners has produced a general shift to the right, with an accompanying boost for reformist politics of the Kinnockite variety. But it has also resulted in a move to the left by a much smaller layer of people disgusted at the antics of the trade union and Labour Party leaders.

However, although this layer has moved to the left, it has not moved outside the orbit of the Labour Party. It rejects Kinnock but not the Labour Party itself. It wishes to fight the system but thinks the Labour Party can be made to do that.

Undoubtedly it is people in this contradiction who find themselves attracted to *Militant*. *Militant* is the only group inside the Labour Party which offers any resistance to Kinnockism. And the arguments employed by *Militant* to justify this contradictory mood are undoubtedly centrist.

*Militant* fudge the nature of the Labour Party and of parliament. They obscure the revolutionary tradition which states quite baldly that neither can bring about socialism. They duck the Leninist notion that a revolutionary party must be built outside and independent of reformist politics.

*Militant* are also reluctant to *state what is*. Any realistic assessment of the balance of class forces is jeered at as pessimism, lack of faith in the working class or the product of sectarian isolation. Hence *Militant*'s tendency to take the view that things are forever on the up, appearances notwithstanding. The implications for practice are a drift into fatalism and a failure to prepare for confrontation (as in the example of Liverpool).

However, it would be foolish to see *Militant* as a fully blown centrist organisation. A better assessment of *Militant* would be to say that they are a group of revolutionaries who are submitting to centrist pressures that are making them lose their way. What we must do is try to help them find it again. ■

Gareth Jenkins



A demonstration in Berlin, many workers broke with reformism

# Master of moderation

**John Hume: Statesman of the Troubles**

Barry White

*Blackstaff Press £5.95*

AS THE results of the Anglo Irish talks unfold it is worth looking at the life of a man who will be central to Britain's plans, and for whom (along with his party) the initiative has been largely created. The publication of this book gives such an opportunity.

John Hume, leader of the constitutional Catholic party, the SDLP, has long been Britain's favourite 'Papist' and clearly enjoys the admiration of his biographer Barry White, a journalist who worked with the pro-Unionist *Belfast Telegraph*.

White describes Hume as a 'statesman of the troubles'. A 'reformer of the irreformable' might be a better description of a man whose keen political ambitions have been held back by the peculiarities of Northern Irish politics and the sectarianism of the Northern Ireland State.

Hume was brought up in Derry City in the midst of that sectarianism. His father worked as a clerk and as a riveter in a Derry branch of Harland and Wolff shipyard during the Second World War. Once the war was over he was never able to find work again, in a society where your religion disenfranchised you from so many jobs.

Hume began to make his name in the turmoil after the first Civil Rights march.

1968 was the point when Northern Irish society and its British masters were forced to face up to the corrupt, undemocratic and brutal situation which had existed throughout the life of the Northern Irish state since its creation in 1921.

A number of predominantly young Catholics took to the streets demanding civil rights, an end to religious discrimination and the undemocratic practices of the state.

The response of the Northern Irish rulers was to try to drive the demonstrators off the streets. Far from the movement being crushed it grew, both in size and determination.

## Paltry Reforms

The movement had at its head two sets of people with very different approaches. There were those who wanted to avoid breaking the law at all costs. They greeted each paltry reform as a huge victory which meant that people should go home and abandon the streets.

The second group took completely the opposite approach. They recognised that to have any chance of success, the state, its brutal laws and police forces would have to be confronted. The movement had to be able to break out of the Catholic ghetto. Each reform the state was begrudgingly giving was on the one hand 'too little too late' and on the other a sign of the success and potential of political militancy.

Hume belonged firmly to the first camp.

Yet he still managed to make capital out of the situation created by the militants.

Hume founded a political party which reflected his ambitions. It was an unprincipled assortment of politicians drawn together because their electoral chances would be enhanced by being in one party. It seems that the founding members of the SDLP loathed and mistrusted one another.

Yet they sought from the beginning to undermine first the more militant socialist wing of the civil rights movement, and later the Republican movement which grew out of the inability of the Northern Ireland state to solve its internal contradictions.

Hume has ever since been the champion of various 'solutions' to this contradiction. He favours some form of power sharing, with some form of all Ireland involvement. In his quest to achieve this he has looked to Southern Irish governments, 'moderate Unionists', American politicians, the EEC and just about anybody else who's prepared to listen to his latest brainwave. White quotes his efforts approvingly but fails to notice that the net result of all of them is nil.

Yet it would be wrong to portray Hume as a buffoon. He is a shrewd career politician

with a much better sense of survival than his erstwhile colleague, the notorious scab Gerry (now Lord) Fitt.

Hume can sound militant. He will abstain from involvement in British initiatives, and he refused to confront the Republicans he loathed during the hunger strike.

The Anglo-Irish initiative represents in large part a desire to undermine the Republican movement. Hume has to be seen to deliver something.

In British politics Hume would have made a good right wing Labour/SDP politician and probably a cabinet minister sooner or later. It is his misfortune that he lives in a society where such ambitions cannot be fulfilled. Yet he is precisely one of the figures who continues the myth that the state can be changed peacefully and that there can be 'normal' political life.

Socialists have nothing in common with John Hume. A book about him is hardly likely to come top of our shopping list. Certainly this one shouldn't.

White talks of his subject in glowing terms. Whatever criticisms he does have are from the right. He uses the book to snipe at those socialists and Republicans who have sacrificed most in the troubles.

The best book on Derry in the period when Hume's career began to take off is *War and an Irish Town* by Eamonn McCann. Better to have nine or ten spare copies of that about the house than one copy of White's book. ■

Pat Stack

# The monolith cracks

**City in Revolt**

John Gray

*Blackstaff Press, £6.95*

TWO positions dominate the left's analysis of Northern Ireland.

On the one hand there are those like *Militant*, the Communist Party and the Workers' Party (the old 'Official' Sinn Fein) who argue that opposing partition and the Orange state increases division among workers. Protestant and Catholic workers can only be united around 'bread and butter' economic issues, or in *Militant's* view by transporting the British Labour Party to Northern Ireland.

On the other hand the Provisionals and many of the former revolutionaries now in the Labour Party argue that working class unity is only possible after Ireland is united. Gerry Adams argues clearly that class politics don't apply in the current situation in the north.

But both views impose a static view which ignores how on a number of occasions Protestant and Catholic workers have fought together, confronting the Orange state. A minority of Protestant workers have on a number of occasions broken from Unionist ideas.

The Irish socialist, James Connolly, argued because of these examples that not only could the Irish working class be united in

pursuit of full independence but this was the only way Ireland's problems could be solved.

Unfortunately the Provisionals make no attempt to address that minority of Protestant workers. Those like *Militant* do not attempt to raise the whole question of sectarianism and British imperialism with them.

*City in Revolt* tells the story of one of the high points of working class struggle in Belfast—the 1907 dock strike.

## Massive involvement

The strike united Protestant and Catholic workers against the Unionist bosses, British direct rulers, the official Orange Lodge and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. It was a strike which showed a massive degree of involvement by workers and even sparked a mutiny in the Belfast police force.

The Orange monolith—which united worker and boss—was for a moment, split. The man identified with the strike was Jim Larkin, a Catholic supporter of Irish independence.

John Gray tells the story of the strike magnificently. Every *Review* reader should make an effort to read it. He pinpoints some crucial elements which indicate how the Protestant working class can be won to opposition to their Unionist rulers.

The first thing Gray does is disprove the

traditional view that Orangeism was largely based on skilled workers—a labour aristocracy.

At the turn of the century Belfast's shipyards, engineering and linen plants were booming. For skilled workers, wages were higher than on the Tyne and the Clyde. Trade union organisation was by and large limited to craft unionism. Most skilled workers were Protestant—Catholic workers had largely emigrated to Belfast as unskilled workers.

But the majority of unskilled workers were Protestant and their conditions contrasted to their skilled counterparts. In the area surrounding Belfast there was a plentiful source of cheap, Protestant rural labourers. In Antrim and Down wages for rural labourers were nearly half that of Britain.

### Women workers

In the shipyards, labourers earned three or four shillings less than on the Tyne or Mersey. Most families would only make ends meet by relying on the wages of wives and daughters, either through working in the linen plants or through outwork.

For women workers conditions were horrific. An unskilled carder in the linen mills had a life expectancy on average of under 17 years.

In this situation sectarianism was strongest among the unskilled—and in particular among those Protestants who lived cheek by jowl with Catholics in areas like the Shankill or Sandy Row. Access to a job through the Orange Lodge was something to be treasured.

Skilled workers not only looked down on the unskilled but tended to stand apart from open sectarianism. They were the mainstay of the trades council which adopted Liberal policies—reflecting the tradition in Britain.

Sectarian violence was largely confined to areas like Sandy Row.

In 1907 conditions undermined much of this sectarianism. Inflation had mounted until people talked of near starvation as food prices rocketed. Belfast's economy was stirring after years of recession but the Unionist bosses wanted to smash outposts of trade unionism among the unskilled. The strike began with an attempted lockout in the docks. Under Larkin's leadership it grew into an all out dockers' strike with the carters joining them.

The level of involvement and support was immense. While 3500 workers were on strike there were daily meetings of 5,000. 10,000 attended public rallies and 100,000 demonstrated in supporting the strike. Women in Catholic and Protestant areas attacked scab carts. Direct attempts to stir sectarian violence failed. Skilled workers rallied to the strike. Lining up against the strike were businessmen who'd become key organisers of the armed Ulster Volunteer Force, set up to oppose home rule a few years later.

The strike was led by Larkin. While he regarded himself as a socialist he was unable to develop from the unity of the strike a genuine left wing organisation which could continue to undermine sectarianism.

Larkin was a member of the Independent Labour Party. The ILP's Belfast branch was



Strike meeting in Belfast. Larkin is seated second from right



Police guard scab deliveries

dominated by union officials, among them William Walker of the joiners. While privately most backed Irish home rule, publicly, in order to gain Protestant votes, they opposed it.

In 1905, Walker even filled in a questionnaire issued by a sectarian group where he stated 'Protestantism is synonymous with Labour.'

Many radicalised Protestant workers joined the ILP. But the ILP did not challenge the ideas they were up against.

Larkin himself, despite his militancy, was a union official. When his general secretary marched in and gained a partial return to work, thus weakening the strike, Larkin went along with him in claiming it was a victory.

The strike was defeated because the union would not organise solidarity in Britain. Larkin went on to form the Irish Transport Union. The bulk of the Belfast members did not join the split which only attracted support among Catholic dockers, weakening organisation and opening the door for sectarianism.

As John Gray points out, defeat always brings bitterness and an undermining of class identity. In Belfast, with its sectarian traditions, this proved even greater. Walker happily retreated away from militancy (he had never fully backed the strike) into a mild form of municipal socialism. Even worse the

likes of Walker ensured Belfast's labour movement was isolated from a growing upsurge in Britain and in the south of Ireland.

### Sectarian violence

In 1912 amidst the home rule crisis sectarian violence flared. Some 2,400 workers were expelled from the shipyards—most were Catholics but 600 were 'rotten' Protestants. That is testament to the existence of a militant minority. The tragedy was they were left leaderless and directionless.

Today this can all sound as something which lies in the past. But the events of 1907 were repeated in 1919, 1932 and 1944. Today class struggle is not dead in Belfast. This year we've seen ambulance workers take all out action over privatisation. In recent years we've seen outbursts of mass strike action among low paid hospital workers and civil servants.

The tragedy is that those socialists active among Protestant workers fell into the tradition of William Walker—concentrating fire on the Provisionals by accusing them of creating sectarianism.

As in 1907 what is missing is an organisation which unites the struggle against the sectarian state with that over pay, jobs and union organisation. ■

Chris Bamberg

## A very rum deal

**The Cutlass and the Lash**  
Jonathan Neale  
Pluto £4.95.

WINSTON CHURCHILL described the great tradition of the British Navy as 'Rum, Sodomy and the Lash'. Rum and the lash, as Jonathan Neale's excellent book shows, were two of the ways that the officers kept control of the lower deck. Sodomy, punishable by death, was one of the ways seamen survived a world of unbelievable brutality.

The lash was the everyday weapon of terror. Its use ranged from the almost casual blow to the savage ritual of 'flogging round the fleet'. Rum, consumed in vast quantities, softened the edges of life. To quote Neale:

'A man-of-war was a community of 600 chronic alcoholics.'

Men loving men, which is what Churchill meant by 'sodomy' was an accepted part of naval life.

Neale again:

'Of course many sailors preferred men to women. Then as now, many must have been drawn to the sea because it provided a more supportive environment for homosexuals.'

This book is very good at painting a picture of life in Nelson's navy that is far removed from the romantic lies of *Captain Hornblower*. But the real focus of the book, and its real strength, is that while it shows the horrors and the ways people coped with them, its central concern is the revolts which shook the structure.

One of the many insights in this book is that the naval sailing ships of the 1790's 'were among the largest workplaces in the world' surprisingly similar to a modern factory.

The sailors who made up the fleet, many of them 'press ganged' into the service, were often in touch with the most advanced ideas of their times. The number of republicans leading mutinies in this book is interesting evidence of the extent to which sailors were part of a general mood of working class discontent with both the emerging world of industrial capitalism and the corrupt ruling class that presided over it.

Because of those two facts, Neale makes out a very convincing case for regarding the mutinies as much like strikes, with victories and defeats, measurable in terms of gains and losses. Because of the hot-house atmosphere of the warship there was no possibility of permanent 'trade union' organisation, and the stakes in any battle were very high. How high is best illustrated by his first mutiny, aboard the *Hermione* in 1797.

Most of the officers were killed immediately, but the most popular were spared. This was an error: they lived to help the Admiralty hunt down those of the mutineers they could get their hands on. Thirty three were caught and 24 hanged out of 150 men and one woman. (She had been the boatswain's wife. He was killed by the mutineers, but she chose their side).

But, as Neale points out, this was *victory*. Had the people stayed loyal the casualty rate, from disease not French guns, would have been very much higher.

This is one of those books that everybody should read. Well researched and brilliantly written it is a piece of revolutionary history that will fascinate the socialist and will inform and perhaps help change, the non-socialist friend who gets it for Christmas. ■

Colin Sparks

## The wandering poet

**A Long Way from Home. An Autobiography**  
Claude McKay  
Pluto Press £4.95

THIS autobiography of a forgotten black poet and writer was originally published in 1937. Claude McKay was born in Jamaica but made his name in America after he settled there in 1912.

He started in America at the bottom, working on the railways as a waiter and writing poems in his spare time.

He met both Frank Harris and Max Eastman and moved in the lower social end of the Harlem 'cultural renaissance' of the twenties. His poems in *A Long Way from Home* and his later novels received an audience in the left and

liberal world of Greenwich Village.

This book is full of the excitement of the period. He left New York and lived in London where he worked with Sylvia Pankhurst on the paper *The Workers Dreadnought* in 1919.

He hated Britain where he found the racism far worse than in America, but the episode set the tone of his life in the 20s and 30s. He worked with left activists but always saw himself as outside of the movement because he was a poet. This makes the book unreliable from the point of view of political judgement but fascinating for vivid descriptions of the people he met and the times.

The book really comes alive in his descriptions of soviet Russia which he visited in 1921 and where he stayed for a year. Again he met and

describes all the leading revolutionaries of the time and the overwhelming feeling of hope and excitement. In Russia he found himself a centre of attention, hailed as a great poet and greeted with cheering crowds wherever he went. The contrast with the racism he found in London could not have been more extreme. But again he never joined the Communist Party, always keeping himself 'above' politics.

After the times in Russia the remainder of the book is a bit of an anti-climax. He wandered through France and the American exiled artist community (again he met

everyone, Hemingway included), through Morocco and finally back to Harlem.

It is a book of the period, of a wandering left artist describing the turbulent times of Moscow, Berlin and Paris. Perhaps there are too many such books around (Isherwood, Stephen Spender and Co have made a living off that type of book for decades) but it is different in that McKay was black and all his insights have the hidden theme of dealing with racism. It is not a great book but it is a fascinating one. ■

Noel Halifax

## What a waste

**The Pit Village and the Store—The Portrait of a Mining Past**  
Linda McCullough Thew  
Pluto Press £4.95

LINDA McCULLOUGH THEW worked for a large part of her life for the Co-op in a pit village. This is a description of that work, which covers the late 1920s and 30s. The book is in the tradition of recorded vocal history.

The main problem with it is that the history recorded is so boring. Class struggle is hardly mentioned and the descriptions are not personal enough to count as an autobiography. It therefore falls be-

tween two stools. It is neither history describing interesting events nor insights as to how the author felt. So what you have is detailed accounts of how the Co-op stocked its cans of peaches.

The book is partly published by the Co-operative Union and part of the story being told is the story of the biggest attempt yet to create an island of socialism inside capitalism. The co-operative movement has lost nearly all of its old pretensions but if nothing else the book records the tedium and wasted effort involved. ■

Ray Cox

## Science and humanity

**Marxism and Modernism**  
Eugene Lunn  
Verso £7.95  
**Reactionary Modernism**  
Jeffrey Herf  
CUP

BOTH of these books have the term 'modernism' in the title and both are concerned with German intellectual life in the years of the Weimar Republic and its aftermath—roughly the 1920s and 1930s.

Lunn looks at the left wing and Herf the right wing responses to the massive social upheavals of the period. The Weimar republic came into being in the dual aftermath of Germany's defeat in the First World War and the failed working class revolution which followed it.

Intellectual life was polarised by those events to a profound degree. 'Modernism' is a loose term, most often used in the arts, which describes an enthusiasm for the advances of industrial capitalism and a wholehearted rejection of previous techniques. The tower block is an example of 'modernist' architecture as against the mock-tudor suburban semi.

This modernist attitude has often been associated with the political left, and some writers have identified its various manifestations as

left wing in themselves. Three of the writers in Lunn's book, Adorno, Brecht and Benjamin fall roughly into that camp.

His fourth writer, Lukacs, was a firm opponent of modernism in literature, arguing in favour of the progressive potential of traditional realist forms.

Lunn provides a fair introduction to the high-level debates between these four thinkers but does not add much to our knowledge of a very familiar area.

Herf's book is much more interesting since he looks at those thinkers who attempted to combine an enthusiasm for modern techniques with reactionary values and politics. This is a much less well explored area and is of some importance.

The problem, put at its crudest and most horrible, is this: the gas chambers were the result of the most careful and scientific planning. If we believe that science is part of human enlightenment, then how was this ultimate barbarity possible?

One explanation is that scientific thought was first developed by the bourgeoisie during the course of its struggle for power against the aristocracy and there was then no fundamental difference between



natural science and moral science: both were part of the 'enlightenment'. After the bourgeoisie became the ruling class they continued to be interested in natural science because this was and is needed for profitable production, but they lost interest in scientific explanations of the social world since these might threaten their continuing rule.

What developed was a sharp division between those sorts of thinking needed to solve problems and those concerned with human goals. This mode of thinking is obviously still influential, for example in advertisements aimed at recruiting scientists for weapons manufacture, in which preparing for mass slaughter is transformed into 'interesting scientific work'.

Herf's distinctive contribution is to highlight another strand of thinking that was influential in Nazi thought although often neglected by historians.

This saw the urge to master the natural world, and thus to develop science and technology, as expressions of the 'Nordic soul'. As he put it:

'They claimed that technology could be described with...slogans celebrating immediacy, experience, the self, soul,

feeling, blood, permanence, will, instinct, and finally the race, rather than what they viewed as the lifeless abstractions of intellect, analysis, mind, concepts, money, and the Jews.'

In this view, even roads were expressions of the 'race'. As the leading Nazi engineer Todt put it, the autobahns were 'highways bound to the land'.

We might want to dismiss all this as nonsense, but it is important to remember that it was once very powerful and might become so again. Herf argues that it is already influential in third world countries which see modernisation as the central goal of life. That, I think, is a mistake.

What is important is to be clear that to free questions of science from considerations of human needs leads to reaction, but so too does the subordination of science to the needs of narrow groups, like some supposed 'race'. No doubt lurking in the colleges are the would-be successors to those German theorists described by Herf who provided the justification of the subordination of modern methods to barbarous ends. ■

Hugh Belling

## No spiritual solutions

Swastika Night

Katherine Burdekin

Lawrence & Wishart £3.95

FIRST published in 1937, this book has appeared this year with a new introduction. It is claimed as an 'important critique of what we today call gender ideology and sexual politics'. The novel is important because it argues that 'fascism is not qualitatively but only quantitatively different from the everyday reality of male dominance'.

I started this review feeling apologetic. It's an anti-Nazi book, a feminist book (though oddly enough originally published under a male pseudonym). I should be able to recommend it. But the more I thought about what the book was actually saying the more angry I became.

In the novel Nazism has triumphed. The action begins in the year of Lord Hitler 720. The world is now divided into two militaristic empires: Nazi Germany and Japan. Lord Hitler is worshipped as a god who sprang from the head of his father, God the Thunderer. Society is feudal and all books, all monuments, all history has been destroyed.

Women are like animals—grotesque, stupid, docile, apathetic, with no function other than to produce male children. The women seem to have acquiesced in this as a logical progression of their sub-

missiveness to men.

It is a terrible, hopeless, world. You want to ask, 'How did this happen?' Well, apparently it happened because in a history of violent, war-mongering societies Nazism was the ultimate violence, in some way the inevitable violence towards which society was mindlessly spiralling. It was also a force that was unstoppable.

And yet the novel is not one of despair. The author does believe that human beings can change and that society can be changed. The society she portrays in her novel is in deep crisis.

Wars are no longer possible so there is no future for a society that exists only to make war. The women (in their one positive role) are somehow failing to produce girl babies and so hastening the destruction of society. Some men are beginning to question the world they live in, and one high-born individual has saved the truth (scraps of history written in a book, and a photograph).

The plan is that when society is disintegrating (as it must) and men are looking around for new ideas, the 'Evangelists of Truth' (those who've read the book and carry its message) must start their mission.

It's an interesting idea. It probably rings a bell with people who've read Orwell's *1984*. But here the hope doesn't lie with the prophet—far from it.

This book was written by a

woman who saw the world and its horrors and yet put forward a fundamentally passive, pacifist resistance. It upholds the spiritual over the actions of real people in a real world. The book is about a terrible reality and offers a mystical solution.

The irony of it is that of course there was a passive resistance to Nazism. It failed to defeat Nazism, and most of its exponents died in concentration camps.

Ms Burdekin didn't have any answers because although she observed fascism she clearly didn't understand it and couldn't explain it. She saw in Nazism a reversion to a dark, primitive society, peopled with Teutonic knights (a not uncommon misunderstanding of fascism). She was unable to see it for what it was—capitalism in its most brutal form. Not surprisingly she had no idea how it could be destroyed.

And what of the women in the book? They have to be dull animals,

'nothings' with no intelligence, no power or will to resist. Ms Burdekin is satirising men's traditional view of women. But underlying the satire is the strong suggestion that any positive attributes have been sapped from them over the centuries by men. Their submission in Nazi society is only an extension of what has always been. It is impossible for women to even begin to develop until war-like society disintegrates.

In the end it is not such an optimistic book. Because there never is any time to wait nor any spiritual solutions. That was true in the 1930s and it's true in the nuclear 1980s.

Pacifism was no answer to Nazism and passive resistance is no answer to the nuclear threat. Finally, to portray Nazism as the 'culmination of the cult of masculinity' is surely not only blind but a deep insult to the millions of men who died trying to fight it. ■

Beth Light

## BOOKBRIEF

THE UPRISING in South Africa has persuaded British publishers to make a few bob. Penguin are in the lead with Roger Ormond's *The Apartheid Handbook* (£3.95) which gives a detailed picture of the daily atrocities of the white regime, and Winnie Mandela's *Part of My Soul* (£2.95) which chronicles the heroism of one family of resisters.

What neither book contains is any real analysis of how the system works and what to do to end it. For that you will need Alex Callinicos' pamphlet *South Africa: The Road to Revolution* (*Bookmarks*, 85p). All of these are available at reduced prices in the Bookmarks Club Christmas list: my advice is choose Alex.

The idea that the USSR is a monstrous aggressor or quite different from the USA is one of the staples of rightwing propaganda. CND have published a series of essays edited by Gerald Holden *The Second Superpower*, (£2.50) designed to put that idea in its place.

Some of the essays are a bit naive, and one, by Fred Halliday, contains the palpable untruth that, 'the spread of the revolutionary ideas of the Bolshevik revolution has been a constant of Soviet policy since 1917', but it does do its bit towards debunking cold war myths. It is billed as the start of a debate in the peace movement. We hope that is the case since we have something to say about the USSR which makes a lot more sense either than Reagan's ravings or Stalinist apologetics along the Halliday line.

Also high on the Stalinist apologetics league this month are *Pathfinder with the War and Crisis in the Americas* (£5.50), which is ac-

tually a collection of Fidel Castro's speeches. The man comes over as a very nice and very sharp guy, a bit like Ken Livingstone in fact, able to put smart-ass US interviewers in their place in a quite admirable way.

He also comes over as about ten million miles away from socialism. He argues, quite openly and charmingly, that democratic elections are not needed in Cuba: he and his party somehow reflect the will of the people. The amazing thing is, he would undoubtedly walk any election there was, so his opposition can only be based on an ingrained Stalinist contempt for the working class.

Internationally he is quite clear about his opposition to socialist revolutions elsewhere in Latin America. As he puts it:

'I think the two basic problems for Latin America are, first, independence...and second development.'

The correct scientific term for all of this is 'petit bourgeois nationalism'.

Nearer home, Shirley Williams' *A Job to Live* (*Penguin*, £2.95) is everything you might expect from the SPD's intellectual: slick, superficial and secondhand. Her recipe is US electronic technology, Japanese social attitudes, West German politics and good old British union-bashing. Not worth the trouble. The same is true of Corrigan and Sayer's *The Great Arch* (*Blackwell*, £8.95), which is a contribution to the fashionable academic subject of the nature of the British state from the team that gave us the immortal *For Mao*. ■

# Books for Christmas



XMAS is a time when many of us have a few days off work. Although much of our time is spent eating, drinking and trying to recover, there is usually some time to set aside for reading. This selection of books should provide more entertainment than watching the circus or the 51st repeat of *Casablanca* on the telly. Many of them would make good presents as well.

Good historical biography has the advantage of both being full of information and (relatively) easy to read. Top of my list is *William Morris* by E P Thompson (*Merlin*)—a beautifully written book about the early socialist and artist. Don't be put off by its length—you can dip into different chapters.

The same goes for Yvonne Kapp's two volume life of *Eleanor Marx* (*Virago* £4.95). This is a marvellous introduction to a whole range of issues from Marx's family life to the building of the new unions and the Paris Commune.

Franz Mehring's *Life of Karl Marx* is heavier going. But it is a very good introduction to the development of Marx's thought. Shorter and obviously more up to date is Alex Callinicos's *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (*Bookmarx* £3.95). Two short books worth reading on Lenin are Moshe Lewin's *Lenin's Last Struggle* (*Pluto*) and *Lenin* (£3.95) by the Hungarian philosopher Lukacs. If you want something longer there is Tony Cliff's four volume biography, also titled *Lenin* (*Bookmarks*).

A number of non-Marxist—or even anti-Marxist—biographies are also worth learning from.

Michael Foot's *Aneurin Bevan* is

about the Labour left's folk hero, Beatrice Webb's *Diaries* (*Virago*) tell you about the real rotten Labour tradition. Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism* (*Merlin*) is a good antidote to both.

For something completely different try *Goddess* (*Gollancz* £12.95) the latest book on Marilyn Monroe, or *Lady Sings the Blues* (*Penguin* £2.50) on Billy Holiday. They won't tell you how to change the world, but do show you the road to 'stardom' is no escape for working class women.

If you want something more serious and educational, try a classic pamphlet. *Marx's Wage Labour and Capital* (35p), *The Civil War in France*, (75p), *Lenin's State and Revolution* (45p), *Trotsky On France or on Fascism: what it is and how to fight it* (80p) and *Rosa Luxemburg on Reform or revolution* (£2.25) all fit the bill.

Some of these ideas are covered in more depth in a wonderful if very lengthy read—the two volume study of *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (*Monthly Review* £10.00) by the American socialist Hal Draper.

Marxist economics are always a tricky area. If you haven't quite got through all three volumes of *Capital* and aren't sure you can, start off with the introduction *Man's Worldly Goods* (£6.55) by Leo Huberman. If you want to read more, there is *Explaining the Crisis* by Chris Harman (*Bookmarx* £3.95), *A History of Economic Thought* by the old Bolshevik I L Rubin (£4.95) or *Labour and Monopoly Capital* by Harry Braverman (*Monthly Review* £6.20).

Back on the lighter stuff. A writer who has done a great deal to dispel the idea that political writing must

be boring, is the French/Russian Victor Serge. His *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (*Bookmarx Club* £5.25) tells the story of the turbulent years surrounding the Russian revolution. *From Lenin to Stalin* (£3.50) describes the degeneration of the revolution. His novels *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* and *Midnight in the Century* (*Writers and Readers*) also describe the Stalinist terror and the counter revolution in Russia.

History can also be a good read. *War and an Irish Town* by Eamonn McCann (*Pluto* £3.95) is the best introduction to modern Irish history. Supplement it with *Labour and Irish History* by James Connolly (£1.35) and *Communism in Modern Ireland* by Mike Milotte (*Gill & MacMillan* £8.95). A slightly more off-beat look at the Irish struggle comes from *Curious Journey* (£3.95)—an oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution—and *Strumpet City*, James Plunkett's novel about the Dublin lockout of 1913.

Another brilliant oral history is *Blood of Spain* (*Penguin* £5.95), Ronald Fraser's record through the mouths of different participants in the Spanish civil war.

Last Christmas most socialists were concerned with helping the miners win their strike. *Blood, Sweat and Tears* (*Bookmarx* £5.00) is a pictorial history of the year-long struggle by John Sturrock, Roger Huddle and Mike Simons. *The Great Strike* (*Bookmarx* £3.95) tells the story of the strike in words. Both are produced by SWP members. In addition *More valuable than gold* (*Women against pit closures*) is the story of the strike through the eyes of strikers' kids. All would make marvellous

presents.

Perhaps novels are the easiest to read at Christmas. Here are a few slightly less well known ones, but well worth reading. *The life of the automobile* by Russian revolutionary Ilya Ehrenburg has been re-issued by *Pluto*. *Days like these* by Nigel Fountain and *Not a through street* by Ernest Larsen (both *Pluto crime* £2.50) are exciting and political thrillers. Any book by B Traven is good: try *Rebellion of the Hanged* (*Allison and Busby* £2.95).

Longer but very rewarding are Gabriel Garcia Marquez' *One hundred years of solitude* (*Picador*), *Studs Lonigan* by the American Trotskyist James T Farrell and *The Scots Quair* a trilogy by Lewis Grassie Gibbon (*Pan*). All three touch on themes of oppression—sexual, racial or national.

Three personal favourites which don't really fit into any category are *The Jewish Question* by Trotskyist Abraham Leon (*Pathfinder* £4.50), who perished in Auschwitz. It gives a materialist analysis of Jewish history, and is an excellent argument against Zionism. Secondly, *Eve and the new Jerusalem*, by Barbara Taylor (*Virago*), a detailed account of women and the Utopian socialist movement of the early 19th century. Finally Charlie Gillet's *Sound of the City* details the history of modern popular music, for those regular readers who want to go beyond the debates on the letters page.

Last but not least, we all need a diary for the new year when we grind slowly into activity again. *Bookmarx offer the Socialist Worker 1986 Diary*—whose theme is the anniversary of the Popular Front at a bargain £2.60.

Lindsey German





# Bookmarks

BOOKMARKS, the bookshop of the Socialist Workers Party and one of London's leading socialist bookshops, has just completed an expansion which greatly increases the size of the shop and the attractiveness of our display of books.

The new section of the shop incorporates a greatly expanded and improved selection of *childrens books* and has allowed us to bring our unequalled selection of paperbacks on international politics down to the ground floor.

If you are thinking of giving books (or diaries, calendars, posters) for Christmas or simply are looking for some Christmas cards that don't stop at snowmen or robins, then come on over to Bookmarks and see our truly vast and wide-ranging stock. There really is something for everyone.

To give a taste of the range of titles we stock is difficult. Needless to say we will stock practically all the books reviewed in *Socialist Worker Review* and in Lindsey German's article on the opposite page, but we also have a wide selection of other books on sale, as well as our Bookmarx Book Club selections.

Our new children's section will allow us to give greater prominence to books for young people. To list just a few of these: **Margarella, the Moles and the Money Tree** (£3.95) tells how the moles, under the leadership of Scarfa the red squirrel, foil the attempt of the wicked Margarella to plant money trees at Cottonwood. This illustrated book is a delightful, light-hearted look at the miners' strike for militants of all ages. **Nowhere to Play** (£3.95) tells how some Venezuelan children build their own playground when the council fails to keep its promises. **Journey to Jo'burg** (£1.10) is a story aimed at 7-10 year olds about two children whose journey to find their mother teaches a lot about apartheid. **I Din Do Nuttin & Other Poems** (£1.25) is a book of funny poems by John Agard about lively children in the West Indies and England. **More to Life than Mr Right** (£5.95) is a collection of stories for young women which looks subtly, wittily and compassionately at the different aspects of growing up female. In **Just Us Women** (£3.75) a small black girl looks forward to a trip alone with her aunt (for under-6's). **Our City** (£2.40) is a collection of poems by London school students and **Union Farm** (£1.95) is a story for 8-12 year olds about a group of farm animals who go on strike against their exploitative farmer.

Our secondhand section continues to expand with books at bargain prices and remaindered books (new books at cheap rates) are becoming a feature of our stock. Some recent examples are **States of Emergency** (£4.25) by Keith Jeffery and Peter Hennessy, which looks at British governments and strikebreaking since 1919, **The Political Police in Britain** (£1.50), Tony Bunyan's well-known book

at a bargain price in hardback, **Women Workers and the Trade Unions** (£1.95), Sarah Boston's history of women's role in strikes and other struggles, **Eyewitness in Hungary** (£1.20) in which Bill Lomax has collected first-hand accounts of the Soviet invasion of 1956.

In addition to the remaindered books we have a number of books previously featured in our Bookmarx Club list (see advert for the current list) which are still available at discount prices—for instance **The Invergordon Mutiny** (£4.95) by Alan Ereira, a narrative history of the last mutiny in the Royal Navy and how it forced Britain off the Gold Standard in 1931, **City in Revolt** (£4.40) John Gray's account of the Belfast dock strike of 1907, or Arturo Barea's trilogy **The Forge, The Track, and The Clash**, (£7.15 for the three volumes) which are set in Spain during the 1930s.

The majority of the books we stock are new books on the widest possible range of subjects from thrillers such as Gordon De Marco's latest **Frisco Blues** (£2.25) and Raymond Williams' **The Volunteers**, (£3.95) through poetry—try the **Rising Sons of Ranting Verse**, (£3.50) from Seething Wells and Attila the Stockbroker or Berthold Brecht's **Collected Poems 1913-1956** (£5.95), and you'll wonder why you ever turned your back on poetry (if you did). Novels form one of our biggest and most loved sections, and it includes plenty of good reading from Andre Brink's latest **The Wall of the Plague** (£3.95) to Emile Zola's classic story of French miners **Germinal** (£2.95).

Books on music, books on art, books on history, philosophy, the state, economics, and social science and most importantly books on struggle; struggle by women, by blacks, by lesbians and gays as well as the more general international struggle for socialism. You will find all these at Bookmarks. Visit our shop, or send a large stamped, addressed envelope for our booklists **Books for Socialists** or **Trade Union Booklist** free from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 2DE. We are just round the corner from Finsbury Park tube on the Piccadilly and Victoria lines and dozens of bus routes. [All books listed here, or elsewhere in *SWR* are available by post from Bookmarks—add 10 percent for post (min 30p, max £1.60).]

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!



## Bookmarx Club Xmas '85 Offers

**Blood, Sweat and Tears**  
£5.00 (normally £6.00)

**The Cutlass and the Lash**  
by Jonathan Neale  
£3.75 (normally £4.95)

**Clara Zetkin: Selected Works**  
Newly-published writings and speeches  
£4.15 (normally £5.50)

**The Western Soviets** by Donny Gluckstein  
Examines the experience of workers' councils in the revolutionary period 1915-20  
£4.90 (normally £5.95)

**South Africa: The Road to Revolution**  
by Alex Callinicos  
New pamphlet on the history of repression and struggle in Southern Africa  
50p (normally 85p)

**Apartheid Handbook**  
£3.00 (normally £3.95)

**Part of My Soul**  
by Winnie Mandela  
The politics and experience of the South African activist and wife of jailed black leader Nelson Mandela.  
£2.30 (normally £2.95)

**Year of Fire, Year of Ash**  
by Baruch Hirson  
Excellent account of the Soweto uprising  
£1.50 (normally £3.95)

**Zapping the Third World**  
by Marcus Linear  
Shows how the capitalist West causes the problems of famine  
£3.75 (normally £4.95)

**Hooligan**  
by Geoffrey Pearson  
Shows how, as in Victorian times, 'law and order' hysteria reflects the fear by the rich of those who might threaten their privileges.  
£5.25 (normally £6.95)

**A Rage in Harlem**  
by Chester Himes  
The first in a series of Harlem novels which use a thriller framework to express being black in America.  
£2.30 (normally £2.95)

**Voyage from Yesteryear**  
by James P Hogan  
Unusual science fiction novel about the struggle between a socialist planet and a militarist invader.  
£1.75 (normally £2.50)

**Socialist Worker 1986 Diary**  
A socialist diary whose theme is the fiftieth anniversary of the Popular Front on 1936, in France and Spain.  
£2.60 (normally £3.25)

**SPECIAL OFFER**  
LIST A: **South Africa: The Road to Revolution, Apartheid Handbook, Part of My Soul and Year of Fire, Year of Ash**—the four together for only **£6.50**.



**The massacre of the Communards by the troops in the last week of the Commune's existence was entirely without mercy; between 20,000 and 25,000 men, women and children were killed or executed and thousands more deported.**

## So comrades come rally

FOR NEARLY a century one of the most stirring moments of any socialist demonstration or rally has been the singing of the *Internationale*. Yet how many of us know the story of the poet and militant who wrote that great song?

Eugene Pottier was born in Paris in 1816. His father was an artisan, and when he left school, at the age of 12, Eugene went to work as an apprentice for his father, making packing cases. He took other jobs, none well-paid, and by 1840 had become a socialist, a follower of the Utopian Charles Fourier. He got involved with a socialist paper called *L'Atelier* (the Workshop), whose editorial board consisted entirely of manual workers.

But from his earliest years, Pottier was also a poet. He wrote his first poem at the age of 14, inspired by the revolution of 1830, when King Charles X was overthrown. He would sit up till midnight writing poetry, and then be up by five the next morning making packing cases.

Before 1848 the natural outlet for a working class poet was in the *goguettes* of Paris. These were clubs where workers could drink, sing and listen to well-known singers. Often these singers were highly political, and the revolutionary secret societies used to work through the *goguettes*. One product of these clubs was the great song-writer Pierre Dupont, whose songs were an inspiration to the revolutionaries of 1848. Following in his footsteps Pottier became a writer of political songs.

After the revolution of February 1848, Pottier was actively involved in working

class politics, and he narrowly escaped being shot during the Paris workers' rising in June 1848.

By 1870 Pottier had become a prosperous artisan, but when the workers of Paris established the Commune in 1871, he did not hesitate. He played a leading role in the Commune from the beginning, and on 16 April was elected to the Council of the Commune. He was active in a broad range of practical tasks, for example organising the requisition of meat, firewood and beds for ambulances. He helped to institute a system of half-price railway travel for the poor, and his signature is found on posters announcing the closure of brothels and calling for educational reform. He helped the painter Courbet to organise an assembly of Paris artists.

At the end of May 1871 came the bloody defeat of the Commune. Pottier participated in the workers' desperate defence and was lucky to escape with his life. One newspaper actually announced that he had been executed. It was in June 1871, hiding in a cellar in Paris and still fearing for his life, that Pottier wrote the song by which he will always be remembered, the *Internationale*.

Pottier was a member of the First International, and the song was a tribute to his own organisation. But beyond that it was inspired by the internationalism of the Commune itself, in which for example, the Hungarian Frankel and the Pole Dombrowski had held leading positions.

In July 1871 Pottier at last managed to escape from Paris, first to Belgium, then to

Gravesend in England. His health was beginning to decline and on a visit to Scotland he caught a chill which led to partial paralysis. He clearly had no future in France. In 1873 he was condemned to death in his absence. So, that same year, he went to Boston in the USA, where he worked as a draughtsman and as a French teacher. He continued to be politically active, working with French exiles and with what was left of the First International. In 1877 he was involved in the founding of the Socialistic Labor Party, and held office in one of its local sections.

In 1880 there was an amnesty for supporters of the Commune, and Pottier returned to Paris, where, ill and poor, he spent the last years of his life. While he did not join any organisation, he remained active in politics, trying to help a regroupment of the fragmented forces of French socialism. When in 1886 the miners of Decazeville struck for 108 days, Pottier, though nearly 70, was quick to back them. Despite his poverty he contributed financially, and wrote two songs in their support.

Still a poor man, Pottier died in 1887. But even his death was a political act. Ten thousand people attended the funeral—and the police brutally attacked the procession to grab a red flag carried by one of the demonstrators. Several people were seriously injured and a protest meeting was attended by 2,000 people. Some years later there was a move to erect a monument to Pottier. The Paris Municipal Council voted to contribute a substantial sum of money—but was promptly forbidden to do so by the Minister of the Interior.

Pottier had written the words of the *Internationale*, but the tune that was to make it famous was composed only after his death, by a Belgian worker, Pierre Degeyter.

Degeyter was born in 1848, one of a family of eight children, and at the age of eight went to work as a piecer in a textile factory. Degeyter studied music in the evenings and became a socialist activist. One day in 1888, after a day's work in the factory, he took some fellow-workers into the pub, and pulled from his pocket a draft of the tune of the *Internationale*. They were the first to hear it sung, and after their approving comments he made some minor changes.

Up until this time French workers on political demonstrations still sang the *Marseillaise*, the song of the bourgeois revolution of 1789—a magnificent tune, but with bloodthirsty and nationalistic words. In the 1890s the *Internationale* became popular among the miners of north-eastern France and gradually it ousted the *Marseillaise* and began to spread around the world. It was sung by Russian sailors on the *Potemkin* in 1905 and by French mutineers in the Black Sea in 1919. Eventually it was universally recognised as the song of the workers' movement.

From Pierre Dupont and Eugene Pottier to the Redskins and the Style Council there is a great tradition of socialist song. It must be mobilised to build and inspire our movement. ■

**Ian Birchall**

*Most of the information in this article is taken from Maurice Dommanget, Eugene Pottier, Paris 1971.*