

socialist worker Review

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THE PRICE OF PROFIT

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THE ECONOMY

Here comes the slump

WITH Labour ten points ahead in the opinion polls, attention in Tory circles is now focused on how to salvage their prospects in the next election.

On the economic front, debates inside the cabinet have now crystallised around a single issue. Should there be major tax cuts in the next budget, or should there be more increases in public spending?

On the one side are the hardliners, Lawson, Tebbit and Thatcher herself, who are still committed to implementing the tax cuts they first promised back in 1979.

On the other side are not so much the old 'wets' (none of those are left apart from Peter Walker) but, more interestingly, the former 'centre' or 'consolidationist' element in the cabinet (led by Biffen and Kenneth Baker, the new Education Secretary) who have become much more openly critical of Thatcherism.

They think that the Thatcher image, as axe-wielder on the welfare state, has become a serious electoral liability. They also argue that increases in public spending will have more impact on jobs than tax cuts.

Money received in tax cuts is more likely to go on imported videos, holidays abroad, or for the richest (and the biggest beneficiaries of any cuts in the basic rate) on financial speculation, than on goods produced in Britain.

The argument of the Tory critics is not very different from that coming from the Labour front bench. Increases in public spending should be concentrated on projects to benefit the construction industry, and community schemes for the unemployed.

Such measures are unlikely to do more than slow the unstoppable rise in unemployment. Moreover, costs in the public sector are rising faster than the average rate of inflation. That's partly because there is

less scope for productivity increases among teachers and nurses—and partly because the demand for services, especially from the old, is continually rising.

As a result, increases in public spending are necessary just to maintain the same level of services. So even the extra spending proposed by some ministers is not going to stop the decay of school buildings, the hospital closures, or the pressures on local authorities to attack the wages and conditions of their workers.

What is interesting about the cabinet debate is that both sides are desperately hoping for some sort of old-fashioned pre-election boom. That's a far cry from the days when monetarism ruled, and proposals for stimulating the economy were rejected out of hand as inflationary.

The rate of inflation is now at its lowest level for 14 years. That has more to do with falling oil prices and the world crisis than with anything the government has done.

But falling inflation was supposed to give the government more room for manoeuvre to reflate the economy. It won't, for three reasons.

One is the weakness of the 'balance of trade'. Despite all the closures, and increases in productivity of the last five years, most of British industry still lags behind its competitors. Crucially, the manufacturing sector is incapable of filling the yawning trade gap left by the fall in oil prices. That gap is going to get steadily bigger over the next few years as production in the North Sea declines.

Secondly, the pressure of rising wages is now frightening the bosses. For the last few years they were willing to trade off pay increases a little above inflation in return for redundancies and concessions on the shop floor. But now inflation is down to below 3 percent, the going rate for most workers is still 6-7 percent, and the productivity gains have reached the limit possible without massive new investments.

That combination spells serious trouble for profits. But if the defeat of the miners and unemployment of over three million have failed to break resistance to wage reductions, more and more employers are asking if a different 'style of government' isn't needed.

Thirdly, any government that wants to launch a Keynesian style programme of expansion, whether by more spending or by tax cuts, is going to have to borrow more. The fall in oil revenues makes that inevitable in the long run.

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In the year ahead, the Tories can cover up the deficit by selling off another £5 billion worth of shares in British Gas and British Telecom. But whoever wins the next election will have no choice but to either raise taxes, or go cap in hand to the bankers.

If that worries the Tories it will be even more difficult for a Labour government. Their credit rating with the bankers will be lower. Their arrival in power will probably coincide with another sterling crisis. The room for manoeuvre will be even less than in 1974.

Indeed, the suggestion in last month's note on the economy that another world slump might be on the way has been confirmed by recent figures. Output in West Germany, for example, fell by 1½ percent in the first quarter of this year. The simmering debt crisis could easily boil over again as Mexico and other oil producers get deeper into trouble and are unable to pay the bankers.

Over the next few months we will be subject to a lot of tedious debate from all parties about what sort of tinkering with the plumbing might help the British economy. Meanwhile the taps will be running dry, and the boiler down in the cellar will be losing pressure. The crisis goes on. ■

LABOUR'S WITCH HUNT

Moving right at the roots

THE EXPULSION of Derek Hatton is the culmination of the campaign of witch hunts launched by Neil Kinnock against *Militant*.

The success of the witch hunt shows how far Labour has moved to the right since Kinnock took over the reins of the party.

He has of course been aided in this

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purpose by the rightward moving 'new realism' of the trade union movement.

For the trade union bureaucrats the lesson of the miners' strike was simple—mass picketing and militant action don't work so accommodation has to be reached with the Tory government and their anti-union laws.

Given this atmosphere not too surprisingly the ranks of the trade union bureaucrats and the block votes have come down heavily on the side of Kinnock.

What's more, the outcome of most of the recently held union conferences has strengthened this move to the right.

All this means that Kinnock's witch hunt has been a much more effective campaign than that run by his predecessor Michael Foot.

In reality the crucial difference this time round has not been the relative merits of one leader over another but the behaviour of those who were on the left of the party.

Practically all of what is seen as the soft left opposed the witch hunt first time round.

They identified the Labour right as the real enemy, attacked the record of recent Labour governments, and argued that the new left Labour councils could challenge Tory policy and provide an example for future Labour governments to follow.

Today many of these same individuals can be seen either openly supporting the



Derek Hatton

witch hunt or theoretically opposing it while in practice launching attack after attack on *Militant*.

This is particularly true of 'left' Labour papers such as *Tribune* and the *New Statesman*.

In reality the left has accepted Kinnock's two prime propositions: that Labour must win the election at all costs, and that big business must be able to feel confident that Labour will be a responsible party of government.

Neither is this mood confined to prominent left figures. There is every sign that the mood has its reflection at the base among many of the constituency activists. These were the very forces who were at one time seen as the key to breaking Labour from its right wing past.

It is not only that the constituency activists have deselected very few right wing MPs, it is also the apparent growth of anti-*Militant* feeling at a local level.

The letter pages of *Tribune* are full of attacks of one sort or another on *Militant*.

'The *Militant* tendency...are contemptuous of the Labour Party and do not deserve to be treated with any respect,' was how one letter ended.

Others openly describe *Militant* as the Revolutionary Socialist League, the name ascribed to them by all who wish to see them expelled as a separate organisation.

They are also described as the 'self-styled Marxist tendency', 'the real enemy', 'bullies and intimidators' and so on.

There is little doubt that the logic of Kinnockism is digging very deep roots into a party which not only witch hunts *Militant* but also marginalises Benn, Heffer and the Campaign Group of MPs who are looked upon as boat rockers.

To make matters worse, the main victims of the witch hunt, *Militant*, have offered a very confused resistance to the whole process.

Instead of admitting the difficulties and dangers, *Militant* consistently talk of the 'gains the left are making' and how the left are going from strength to strength.

Perhaps the saddest sight recently has been that of Pat Wall publicly disassociating himself from the paper.

Militant described his endorsement by the Labour leadership as a 'victory for the left and all those who oppose the witch hunt in the party'.

Yet here was somebody who has always been seen as a prominent *Militant* supporter, claiming no connection with them.

If Wall is telling the truth, this can hardly be seen as a victory for socialism, rather it will be a continuation of a sad old story of an individual putting political ambition before principle.

If not, then it is surely a sign that in order to avoid the witch hunt *Militant* are willing to fudge the whole issue. In doing so they further hamper their ability to fight the rightward drift in the Labour Party.

Whatever the truth, Wall's statement, and the confusion that goes with it, will inevitably aid Kinnock and the Labour right.

Also aiding this process is the confused

response of those attempting to resist.

The main strategy announced in advance by the Liverpool party and others was one of defiance, of ignoring the NEC decision and refusing to recognise the expulsions at a local level.

This would force the NEC to disband local parties involved, and therefore, so it was argued, further hinder Kinnock's attack.

The most optimistic view (and one particularly coming from *Militant*) was that in the face of this the NEC would have to back down.

However, now that the crunch has come, there seems to be a very great reluctance to follow this course.

A recent conference of left Labour activists, all clearly anti-witch hunt, rejected the formula that they 'call upon local parties to ignore the expulsions', and instead went for the softer option of 'supporting' those that do so.

As we go to press it is unclear what Hatton and Co are going to do in Liverpool, but it is worth noting that they did not defy the NEC at the first two opportunities presented to them—Hatton did not attend either the local party executive committee meeting or the constituency party meeting.

For those wishing to fight the witch hunt all this can only spread confusion and disillusion, and it provides another hard-earned lesson that the Labour Party cannot be transformed into a force that will create socialism. ■

THE PRINT DISPUTE

Paying unity's price

FOLLOWING last month's vote by SOGAT and NGA members to reject Rupert Murdoch's latest offer, activists could have been forgiven for thinking that there would be a stepping up of the industrial action.

The result was a slap in the face for SOGAT leader Brenda Dean and her strategy of winning over public opinion.

Dean had been given a rough reception by striking SOGAT members prior to the ballot, and her clear wishes that the Murdoch offer be accepted were turned down by a sizeable majority.

Yet the truth is that despite this setback Dean's control over the dispute is, if anything, greater than before.

The main reason for this must be put down to the behaviour of those best placed to give an alternative lead to that of Dean—the London branch officials.

These officials, although critical of Dean, have from the beginning acted as her

left face, often carrying out her dirty work for her.

Prominent among them are Michael Hicks, Bill Freeman and Chris Robbins. All three would see themselves to the left of Dean, and Hicks and Freeman are both former members of the Communist Party—expelled for their support of the *Morning Star*.

Although the London officials were clearly pleased with the vote to carry on the strike, they failed to use the opportunity to go on the offensive against Dean, and instead got themselves caught up in a shoddy compromise.

Dean used the recent SOGAT conference to launch an all-out attack on the London branches.

She accused them of being splitters, more concerned about their narrow interests than those of the union as a whole.

Moreover, she accused them of wanting to declare UDI and likened them to the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Instead of fighting back, of pointing out that victory at Wapping was a victory for the whole union, and that likewise defeat at Wapping would mean defeat for the whole union, the 'left' officials sought compromise.

Instead of denouncing Dean for her disastrous leadership of the dispute, they sought unity with her.

Yet what little unity Dean was prepared to offer was always going to have its price.

For a paper commitment from Dean that she would view the dispute as being one about jobs, not redundancy money, they agreed to composite an amendment highly critical of the NEC with the NEC's own motion.

When the deal was finally done it was clear that they had conceded to Dean on every major point.

Gone was a commitment to step up the boycott campaign (even though this had been Dean's own tactic). In was a clause stating that any further action must be within the law—a policy that effectively castrates the strike.

Thirdly, and most crucially, the 'compromise' motion also stated that the NEC should have complete control over the dispute.

Far from confronting Dean and her tactics, Hicks, Freeman and Co were handing her control of the dispute on a plate.

They claimed in their defence that they had now committed Dean and the NEC to support of mass picketing.

Yet Murdoch almost immediately took out injunctions against the NEC and the London officials attempting to prevent them from organising mass pickets.

When it comes to her commitment to mass picketing, as opposed to her commitment not to break the law, there is little doubt which way Dean will go. Far from strengthening the mass pickets, the compromise has put their very existence at risk.

The failure of the left officials should not really come as much of a surprise.

On the picket lines at Wapping, Hicks has persistently 'liaised' with the police and, along with Freeman, has consistently

marched people past the main gate—away from the main chance of stopping lorries.

They have been able to police the dispute in a way that Dean could not, but they have never been able to break free of Dean.

Their attitude is reflected in the pages of the *Morning Star*. While having certain cautious criticisms of Dean, it has never really confronted her, and has certainly not argued for rank and file strikers to organise independently of her.

Indeed, the *Morning Star* printed Dean's attack on the London branches without comment, praised Kinnock's speech to the conference, and relished the 'unity' achieved at the conference.

The policy of the paper for years, and indeed of the Communist Party, has been to look to left, and frequently not so left, trade union bureaucrats.

It is a policy that means that whatever criticisms there may be of the bureaucracy you are always in one way or another tied to it.

Never has this policy been more thoroughly practised or more blatantly exposed than in the print dispute.

Just as Dean's disastrous leadership of the dispute cannot be separated from her rotten politics and her commitment to the 'new realism', neither can the failure of Hicks and Co be separated from a political approach that sees capturing the bureaucracy as more important than the organisation and self-activity of the rank and file.

In general this approach leads to a tail-ending of the bureaucracy and, in the case of this dispute, had led to the absence of the development of a clear alternative strategy which could actually win. ■

POLAND

The crime of fighting back

ZBIGNIEW BUJAK was arrested on 31 May after four and a half years in hiding.

He was the last member of the TKK (the Provisional Coordinating Commission—the underground leadership of Solidarity) to remain outside of prison. Now he faces a maximum ten year sentence for 'preparing to overthrow the system of the Polish People's Republic'.

Bujak started work at the Ursus tractor factory shortly after the 1976 strikes, and became chairman of the Warsaw region of Solidarity in 1980.

He was a prime mover of the threatened all-out strike which forced the regime to overturn a judicial decision to deny Solidarity's registration as an independent union.

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Bujak was on Solidarity's militant wing. He always looked at ways to develop workers' confidence and organisation. In August 1981 he was quoted as saying, 'If we consider ourselves merely as a trade union, as the government expects us to, then we must think of ourselves as a trade union of seamen on a sinking ship.'

On 3 December, nine days before martial law was declared, Bujak argued, along with others, that a workers' militia should be set up. Unfortunately no active measures were taken.

Bujak became the best known Solidarity leader underground. In a *Newsweek* interview last September he estimated that there were still 50-70,000 Solidarity members engaged in regular illegal work with some 200-250,000 active from time to time.

He said that the food price increases of that year had been delayed by strikes, and that on several occasions the regime's managements were forced to negotiate deals with formerly illegal Solidarity committees.

After Bujak's arrest, Lech Walesa made a speech in protest after Mass at St Brygida's in Gdansk. Thousands of pilgrims chanted his name at the shrine at Czestochowa. In Wroclaw 200 people were baton charged and tear-gassed by ZOMO riot police.

Perhaps the most interesting protest was during a march of 2,000 people called by the Freedom and Peace movement.

The movement was set up in 1984 after a young conscript refused to take the oath of allegiance to the state and was imprisoned.

The demonstrators were marching against the building of nuclear power stations in Poland and chanted: 'No iodine from the USSR' and 'Today Chernobyl, Tomorrow Zarnowiec' (the site of a proposed nuclear plant). To these was added the chanting of Bujak's name.

One striking thing about Bujak's arrest has been the similarity in the ways that ruling classes, whether East or West, abuse their opponents. Polish TV has shown police interrogations of Bujak where he is quizzed about receiving money from the Americans. Dollars have been 'found' in his flat. But it's the regime that is desperate for money.

The EEC ban on foodstuffs from Poland has already been lifted. More importantly

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of the month

for Poland's capitalists, on 28 May Poland was accepted back into the gangsters' syndicate when Poland rejoined the International Monetary Fund.

This is a coup for Jaruzelski. Poland has not been a member since it left in 1950 at the height of the Cold War.

Nevertheless the pressure on the bureaucrats to squeeze more productivity from workers continues. Poland's debt is still 30 billion dollars and rising. But the regime is trumpeting the arrest of Bujak and his comrades as a sign of Poland's return to 'normality'.

Bujak has weaknesses. An ignorance of independent workers' politics, of revolutionary politics, has led to illusions in the West. So, in the *Newsweek* interview, Bujak advocated a market economy in Poland along the lines of the Hungarian model. He showed a gullibility towards western governments and trade union leaderships.

This gullibility is all the more apparent given the real attitude of the Reagan administration which has recently been underlined by revelations from a Polish military defector, quoted in the *Guardian* last month. He showed that the Americans knew about the plans for martial law in advance, yet said and did nothing.

But for all his faults, it would be a mistake to put Bujak in the same league as our 'new realist' trade union leaders. He never sold out. ■

JAPAN

Old virtues new markets

THE GENERAL election in Japan on 6 July will return the ruling Liberal Democratic Party almost as certainly as elections in Russia return the CPSU, though for rather different reasons.

The LDP has been in power for almost 40 years without a break, and it seems likely to be returned with a bigger majority this time. But the election is still interesting because it comes at a time when the Japanese ruling class is facing new dilemmas and conflicts.

The present prime minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, leader of the smallest LDP faction, embodies one choice for the ruling class. It is well known that factions within the LDP are usually more politically influential than are the opposition parties.

Of course, the basis of these factions is not usually clear cut in terms of a particular faction of the ruling class, since much of it is based on careerism and pork-barrel politics. But splits on policy are important too, especially at the moment, which brings us back to Mr Nakasone.

Since he became prime minister almost four years ago, Nakasone has represented two things which may at first seem contradictory: an opening up of Japan, and a renewal of Japanese nationalism.

The opening up of Japan's capital markets to foreign investment, has gone together with a 'special relationship' with Reagan. There has also been increased defence spending and an effort to 'reform' Japan's schools to put more emphasis on 'old Japanese virtues' and the national flag and anthem (unchanged from the pre-war ones).

In fact these things are not contradictory. They represent two sides of the same development—an increasing world role for Japanese capitalism.

This has come about as a result of the massive growth of the economy over the post-war period, the so-called 'miracle'. This was based on the dual advantages of forcibly restricted arms spending and the smashing of the Japanese working class in the immediate post-war period of US occupation.

The growth of the economy was led by the export sector, where Japan's competitive advantage has resulted in huge trade surpluses, which have recently broken records.

This has had the result that on the one hand huge amounts of capital have accumulated in Japan and on the other pressures have built up in the other advanced countries for protectionist measures to be taken, restricting Japanese imports.

To get round the problem of trade restrictions, there has been increased Japanese investment in the US and Europe. This has taken the form of joint ventures with local companies and the building of factories to produce goods inside the target markets.

One other factor has transformed the situation over the last nine months—the rapid rise in the value of the yen, up by about 40 percent against the dollar.

The Group of Five leading advanced industrial nations agreed last September that this was desirable to correct the massive US trade deficit and perhaps avert a trade war. But the actual fall in the value of the dollar was not so much a con-

sequence of this as of underlying economic realities.

The result for Japan is a sudden loss of competitiveness.

Manufacturers who want to hold their prices down in export markets are looking to move their operations out of Japan to lower cost (ie lower wage) areas, particularly the Asian NICs (newly industrialised countries): South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. There has been a marked increase in Japanese companies' decisions to invest in the Asia/Pacific area this year compared with 1985. They will also buy more components from overseas to use in Japan.

This development, together with head-on competition in steel, cars, shipbuilding and electronics with Asian producers, will certainly mean increased unemployment in Japan—some forecasters see it doubling.

Many capitalists also oppose the plan to offset falling export demand by trying to boost consumer spending in Japan at the expense of saving. Nor do they like the idea of more public spending.

So, although it shouldn't be overstated, Japanese capitalism is facing new problems, which are potentially serious ones, not least in that they threaten the social consensus, built on a combination of repression and prosperity. But what about the working class and the political opposition in general?

It is interesting to see the leader of the main opposition party, the Japan Socialist party (JSP), doing a Kinnock. He has been trying to move the party further to the right by dropping its nominal commitment to Marxism, and its actual opposition to increased arms spending and to nuclear power.

The reason for this is that he sees openings in the factional battle within the LDP and hopes to make the JSP an acceptable coalition partner to sections of the LDP as well as the other centre parties. It is easy to see the attraction of this to various union bureaucrats too.

There is no doubt that considerable sections of workers are dissatisfied and they express this partly through voting for the Japanese Communist Party. In the municipal elections in Tokyo last year, the JCP won 19 seats against the LDP's 57. In the last general election the JCP got 5.3 million votes.

Opposition to moves to remilitarise Japan is also strong, and forced Nakasone to fiddle the figures to make it look as though spending on defence hasn't gone through the ceiling (set in 1976) of 1 percent of total national output.

At present, the demand to 'tighten your belts' is working. This year's pay round has been very quiet, with no major strikes and exceptionally low pay rises. Nippon steel workers accepted their lowest pay rise for years this spring.

While all this hardly amounts to an outbreak of class war, hopefully it should act as a counterbalance to the patronising, racist and uninformative coverage which the Japanese election is likely to get at the hands of the British media. ■

SPAIN

A victory for socialism?

AFTER weeks of banal and empty sloganeering and very little politics, Spain's fourth general election since 1977 has finished with a predictable victory for the ruling Socialist Party (PSOE).

After four years in government the socialists have effectively stolen the right's clothing on nearly every issue.

Their economic policies have mirrored those of conservative governments elsewhere, leading to extensive 'rationalisation' in industry and of course even higher unemployment.

They have cut back on regional and national (ie Basque etc) rights and introduced abortion legislation that is so restrictive that only the fascist right can seriously complain.

Where the PSOE has excelled itself is in the areas of foreign policy, and law and order. Its consistent crawling to US imperialism has culminated in the 180 degrees about-turn over membership of NATO.

Once in government, the Socialists portrayed NATO as some sort of harmless extension of the EEC, striving for world peace.

Worse still, in the Basque Country the PSOE has got away with much that previous right wing governments never dared do. Police brutality is still rife and Amnesty International continue to publish details of cases of torture.

Despite this the PSOE still enjoys massive popular support—it polled around 45 percent of the votes. Manipulation of the mass media—something which served the socialists so well during the NATO referendum in March—can only partly explain its success.

The truth is that millions of workers see little alternative to the PSOE, whose youthful, modern and populist image compares so favourably with the former Francoist politicians who lurk about on the right.

Moreover, the once powerful Communist Party (PCE), by systematically demobilising the mass movement during the transition to democracy, played an important role in demoralising many workers and pushing them into the hands of the PSOE.

Yet, as the NATO referendum showed, the left still has a significant mass base, but there is little possibility of this finding any expression at an electoral level.

The Eurocommunist PCE tried to cash in on the 'no' vote in the referendum by

forming the 'United Left' coalition with the pro-Soviet PCPE and various other tiny parties.

This coalition only managed to increase the number of Communist MPs from four to seven in comparison with the 23 elected in 1979. The PCE's attempt to recuperate its electoral support was hindered not only by its lack of credibility but also by an alternative 'Communist Unity' list headed by the Party's former general secretary, Santiago Carrillo.

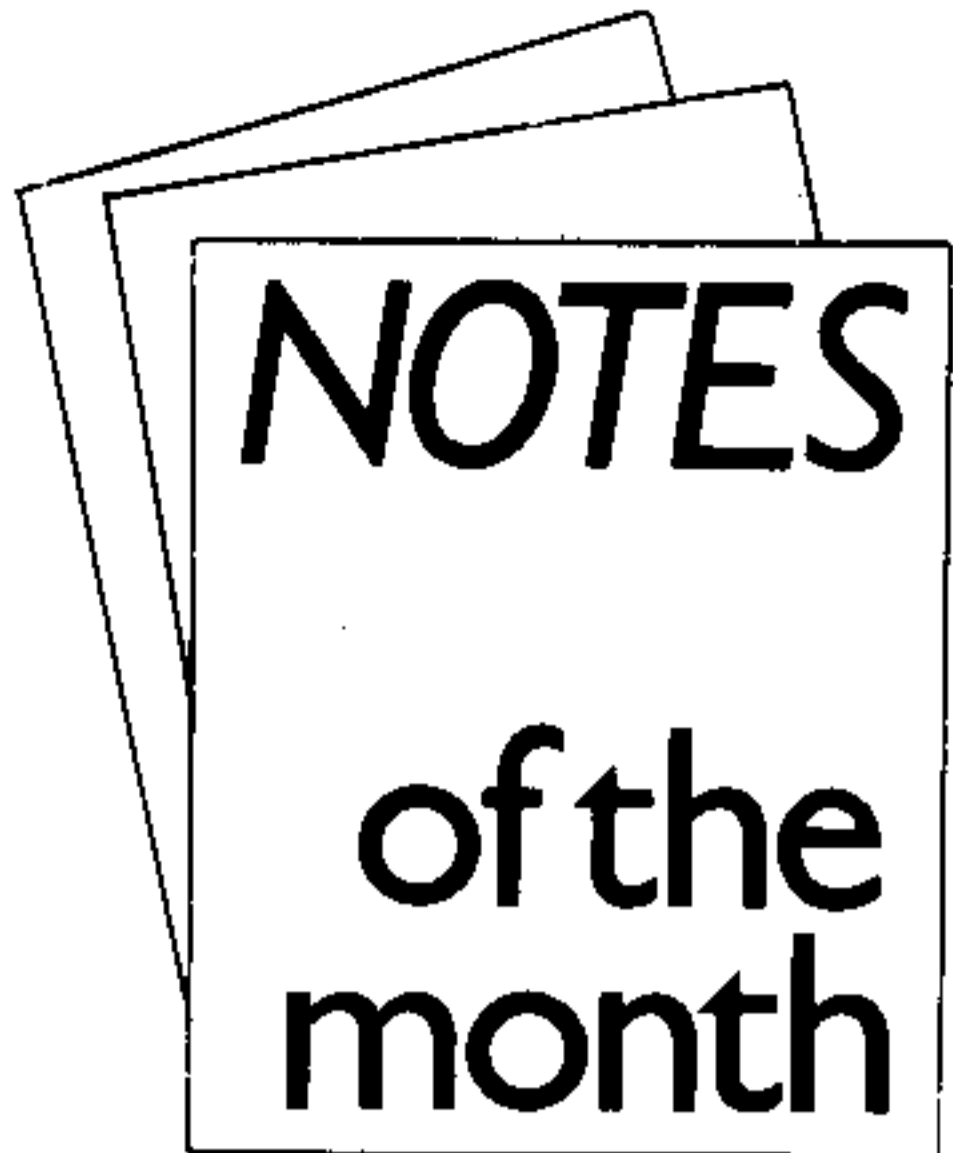
Also in its former stronghold of Catalonia, the Communist vote was divided after Eurocommunists and pro-Soviet parties failed to reach an agreement and stood separately.

Faced with 'the lack of any clear left electoral alternative and the general irrelevance of direct participation in the present situation', the main revolutionary organisations, Movimiento Comunista and the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria, opted not to present candidates nor to call for a vote for anyone else.

Instead they organised outside of parliament regardless of the election results, the exception being in the Basque Country where they supported the radical left nationalists of Herri Batasuna.

The latter, much to the government's alarm, increased its number of MPs from two to five, showing the continued mass support for the Basque guerilla group ETA.

Despite the PSOE's success the basis of



an alternative radical left still exists. This can be seen in the 125,000 people who recently marched yet again on the US base of Torrejon, near Madrid, and in the pro-abortion campaign, which is now openly defying the state by carrying out abortions.

Also, recent months have seen a steady increase in the number of strikes, the most spectacular being a three week stoppage by dockers against privatisation.

Luckily the PSOE is not going to have it all its own way. ■

Additional notes from Pete Green, Pat Stack, Sue Cockerill, Andy Zebrowski and Andy Durgan.

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NIGEL HARRIS

Thorn in the crown

YOU MIGHT miss it. The shabby paint boasts, 'Indian Renaissance Institute'. Inside, at the end of a long garden—full of mountain flowers at this time of year—is a pleasant colonial house, bathed in the soft evening sun.

A covered terrace shades wicker chairs and a table, a bit tatty now. There are photographs of a man in grey flannels and open necked white shirt with rolled up sleeves, very nineteen thirties.

The pictures are of M N Roy, once the terrifying voice of the Communist International in the cool corridors of British power in New Delhi, the Viceroy's nightmare of Bolshevism.

This was the last house where Roy and his American wife, Ellen, lived. It is set in the foothills of the Himalayas at Dehra Dun.

Roy was a village boy who came to the big city about 1905. He started his political life throwing bombs at the British in Calcutta. For this discourtesy, he was locked up several times in Calcutta's exceptional prisons.

In 1915 his group sent him to the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) to guide into eastern India a ship load of German arms with which to begin the revolutionary war of independence.

The attempt failed, so Roy went again. This time he moved on from the German embassy in Batavia to the one in Tokyo. He then travelled to warlord Peking to negotiate German arms shipments over China's western border to India. Again the Germans balked and sent him to San Francisco where he married his first wife, Evelyn Trent, and thence to New York.

He was in New York when the United States entered the First World War. Immediately, the American police began rounding up Indians as German spies or collaborators. The Roys fled south, finally to Mexico, on the high tide of the famous peasant revolution (1910-1920).

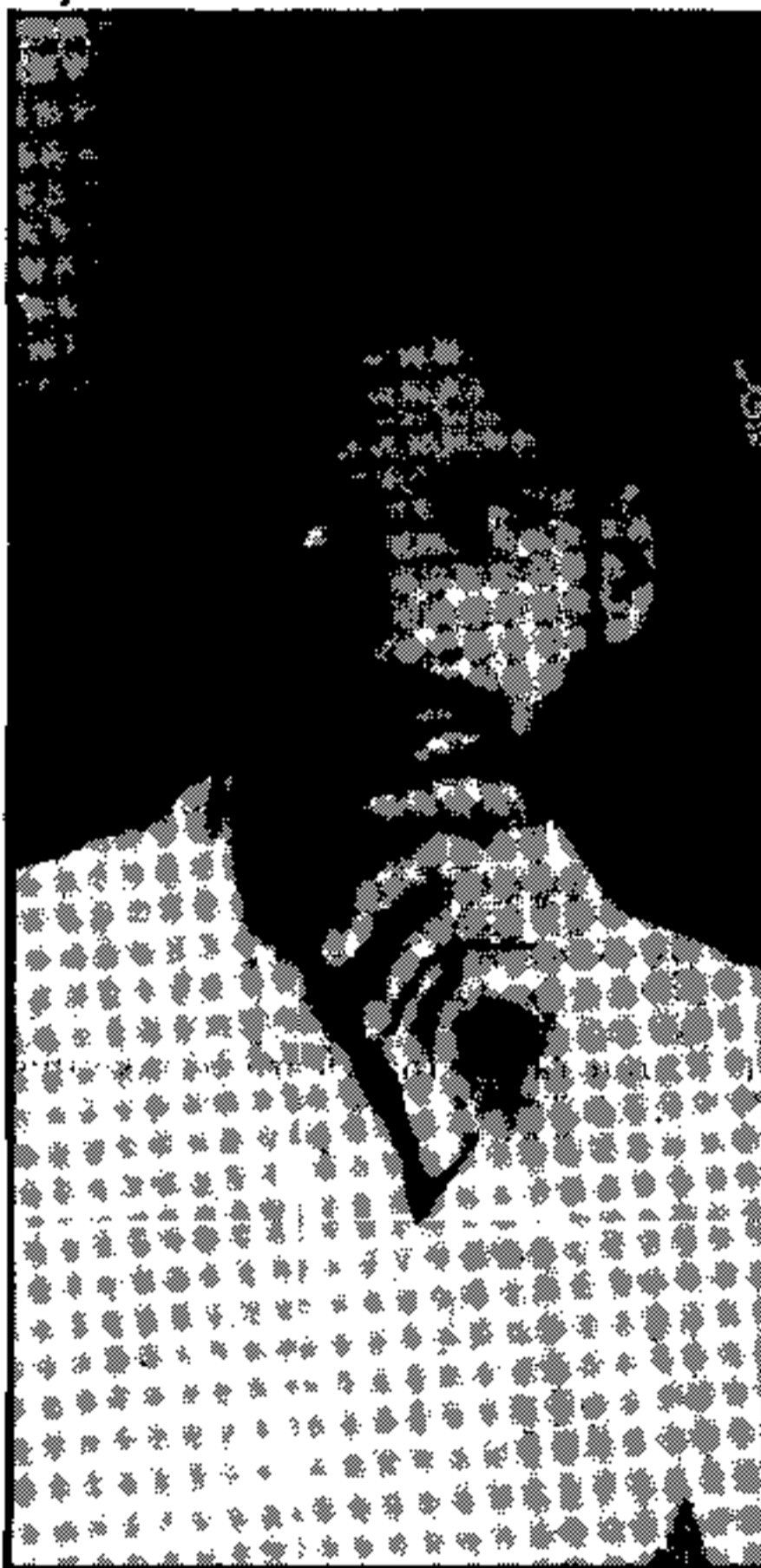
Here, at last, the Germans paid up, but now it proved impossible to get back to India. After a major effort to do so, Roy gave up. Instead, he settled down, learned Spanish and threw himself into the politics of the Mexican left and the emigré North American radicals. He became the secretary of the Mexican Socialist Party and drafted its manifesto.

That might have been enough for a Bengali boy a long way from home. But it was not. Already, the world of socialist and anarchist politics worldwide was being transformed by the Russian revolution.

A Russian Bolshevik, Michael Borodin, trying to get into the United States, was refused entry and went south to Mexico to enter by the back door. It was not to be, for he was summoned home for the second

Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1920—and took with him the two Roys as delegates of the Mexican Socialist Party (which, at the last minute, changed its name—but not its politics—to the Mexican Communist Party).

On the way, Roy stopped off in Berlin. For a short time, he plunged into the turbulent politics there, making friendships with some of the leaders of the German Communist Party that were later important.



M N Roy

In Moscow, the Comintern was pre-occupied with the defence of the embattled young Soviet regime—to be achieved partly by the creation of a world proletarian movement and its alliance with the independent struggle of the national bourgeoisie of the 'backward and colonial countries'.

There were very few representatives of these countries at the Congress and very little was known about them. Roy found himself cast in the extraordinary role of a leading representative of the 'Asian revolution' and of the jewel in the crown of the largest of the empires, the British.

It was this temporary privilege which allowed him to debate with Lenin and induced Lenin to recommend Roy's thesis to be included in the minutes of the Congress as an addendum to the official resolution.

Lenin had however carefully amended Roy's theses to dilute some important errors. Throughout the twenties, Roy developed an alternative 'ultra-left' position, summarised in three points:

1 European capital had become heavily—decisively—dependent on the profits made in the colonies. The European workers' revolution could not succeed unless a revolt in the colonies cut off this flow of profit. Instead of the colonial revolution being marginal to the European struggle, it had become central.

2 Because of this dependence, European capital was obliged to make major concessions to the rising national bourgeoisie of the colonies, permitting it to develop its own capitalism—the post-war imperialist finance capital demands the industrialisation of the colonial country [and] it is no longer possible to completely exclude the indigenous bourgeoisie from the profits of exploitation.' (*India in Transition*, Aug 1922.)

3 This changed position of the national bourgeoisie meant that it would not champion the independent struggle or the bourgeois revolution; it would settle for a compromise with imperialism. The only revolutionary struggle would be that of the social—rather than the national—movement, of peasants and workers, and this in the more advanced backward countries put on the agenda a workers' revolution and the creation of Soviets.

In sum, there were no 'stages'. The position of the Bolsheviks on the bourgeois revolution in Russia was repeated in the colonies—the bourgeoisie would not do it, and would bend all efforts to defeat revolution.

The position was ultra-left, but the deviation was a healthy one in comparison with what came later in the Comintern—the complete subordination of the social struggle to the national, of the peasants and workers to the national bourgeoisie.

After the Congress, Roy became an important Comintern agent—trying to organise a Communist Party from Indian political refugees in Tashkent, to foment rebellion among the border tribes of British India, producing a journal for clandestine despatch to India from Berlin.

Finally, as a member of the Executive Committee of the International, he participated in all major discussions—including the expulsion of Trotsky.

In the spring of 1927, he was despatched as Comintern representative to China just after the catastrophic defeat of the Chinese party by Chiang Kai-shek. He went, he thought, with the complete backing of Stalin, to launch a peasant revolution to destroy Chiang.

At the Congress of the Chinese party, however, he failed to win the party away from the preceding Comintern line—support for the left Kuomintang and, very softly, support for the peasant movement (a line maintained by his old friend, Michael Borodin).

As he was to admit later, it was impossible to support the peasant revolution and the landlords of the Kuomintang at the same time.

He was recalled, and held to be responsible for the disasters that followed from Stalin's policy (although he had himself been a party to that policy). Fearing the worst, he made a secret escape to Berlin.

There he became involved with his old friends, Brandler and Thalheimer, in a Communist Opposition to the Comintern (a protest against the Comintern's Third Period), and that sealed his fate in Moscow.

In 1930 Roy at last returned to India, to a world of stifling backwardness. Arrested by the British, he served six years of his twelve year sentence in gaol. He then joined the Congress and became active trying to create a Marxist wing.

But on the outbreak of the Second World War he demanded a united anti-fascist movement against Germany and opposed demands for Indian independence until this was accomplished.

That earned him the charge of being a collaborator of British imperialism from the Communist Party up to the time when Germany invaded Russia—and the CP adopted the same line as Roy.

Lenin's defeatism, Roy said, was wrong in the Second World War because the Soviet Union now existed and Europe was dominated by fascism (so the Second World War was also a European civil war). He was expelled from Congress.

Later he came to argue that the mistake of the Comintern was to orient on one class only, to generalise from the fluke of Russian experience which could never happen again. The unification forced on all classes by the threat of fascism would after the war provide the basis for universal socialism without the need for revolution. In India that needed a philosophical revolution, the renaissance, embodied in his 'Radical Humanism'. In 1954, he died.

The old man who took me round the house got a bit breathless. 'We hoped to make it a museum and library for world Radical Humanists,' he said. 'But we are very few now, and the house is costly to run. So we sent the archives to the Nehru library in Delhi. And now we let the house to paying guests.'

Do the paying guests sense the ghosts of Bengal terrorists and German spies, of Zapata and Madera, of Lenin and Trotsky?

The house sleeps, its historical significance seeping away, remembered by fewer and fewer. It is a pity the new generation will not remember the audacity and heroism of the past—but a relief also that they are preserved from its nightmares. ■

Black breakthrough?

OVER 160 black or Asian councillors were elected on 8 May. In London alone that represents more than a 50 percent increase since the last council elections. The overwhelming majority of these are Labour councillors.

How far will this advance force the Labour Party to campaign against racism either now or in office?

The 1981 council elections provided sections of the left with the opportunity to commit the councils they controlled to equal opportunities, positive discrimination, grants for black community organisations, the setting up of ethnic minorities' committees, and so on. But in the outside world, the state of the minorities in reality was still the same.

1981 was important in other respects. Thirteen black youths were murdered in a fire in Deptford, giving rise to a demonstration of 15,000 predominantly black workers and youth angered by police inaction and media neglect.

There was also a big demonstration of Asians against the Nationality Act by which the Tories stripped non-whites of secure citizenship.

Both Blacks and whites were involved in defence campaigns against deportations. And the riots of the summer drew some white youth behind black youth taking their revenge on police harassment.

But rather than learn to take this fight against racism into the workers' movement, a layer of black activists turned instead to the Labour Party and the changes going on in it. For in the absence of a high level of workers' struggle, the question of linking the fight against racism to working class self-activity seemed rather remote.

This turn to the Labour Party in turn led to black activists within the party setting up Black Sections. The supporters of Black Sections put forward demands: the National Executive Committee should be increased by five members to be elected at an annual conference of Black Sections; there should be mandatory inclusion of at least one black person, if any apply, on all parliamentary and local government short-lists; and the party should promote a substantial extension of affiliation by suitable ethnic minority organisations at local, regional and national levels.

At both the 1984 and 1985 Labour Party conferences the demands for Black Sections were lost. But as a sop to the Black Sections' very vocal demands, the NEC put forward the notion of a Black and Asian Advisory Committee. The NEC proposal was carried and members for this committee were duly appointed.

The shift to the right in the Labour Party has not been without its effect on black

activists. Some, like Keith Vaz, prospective parliamentary candidate for Leicester East, have indicated a willingness to cooperate with the apparatus. Vivendra Sharma, a former Southall councillor, is now the first black full-time official of the Labour Party. More significantly, the London Regional Conference in March this year withdrew its support for Black Sections by 500,000 to 160,000.

At the same time, the Black Sections' campaign to boycott what they rightly term the 'fake', 'Bantustan' advisory committee set up by the NEC is having some success. Regional Labour Parties have either nominated no one or withdrawn their representatives. Some leading appointees—including Keith Vaz—have resigned.

Although all is not sweet for Black Section activists, there are now 37 constituency Black Sections across the country.

Marc Wadsworth, national chairperson of the Black Sections, claims, 'Black Sections have put race equality and representation on Britain's political agenda. No political party can ever again ignore our demands.' (*Socialist Action*, 23 May 1986) Brave words—but what is actually happening, and how is the Labour Party reacting to the successes of their black councillors?

Since the elections, a massive row has broken out on the Labour left about the connection between racism and voting patterns.

On the whole—and valid comparisons are only possible in London where more than one councillor is elected per ward—black candidates did less well than white ones.

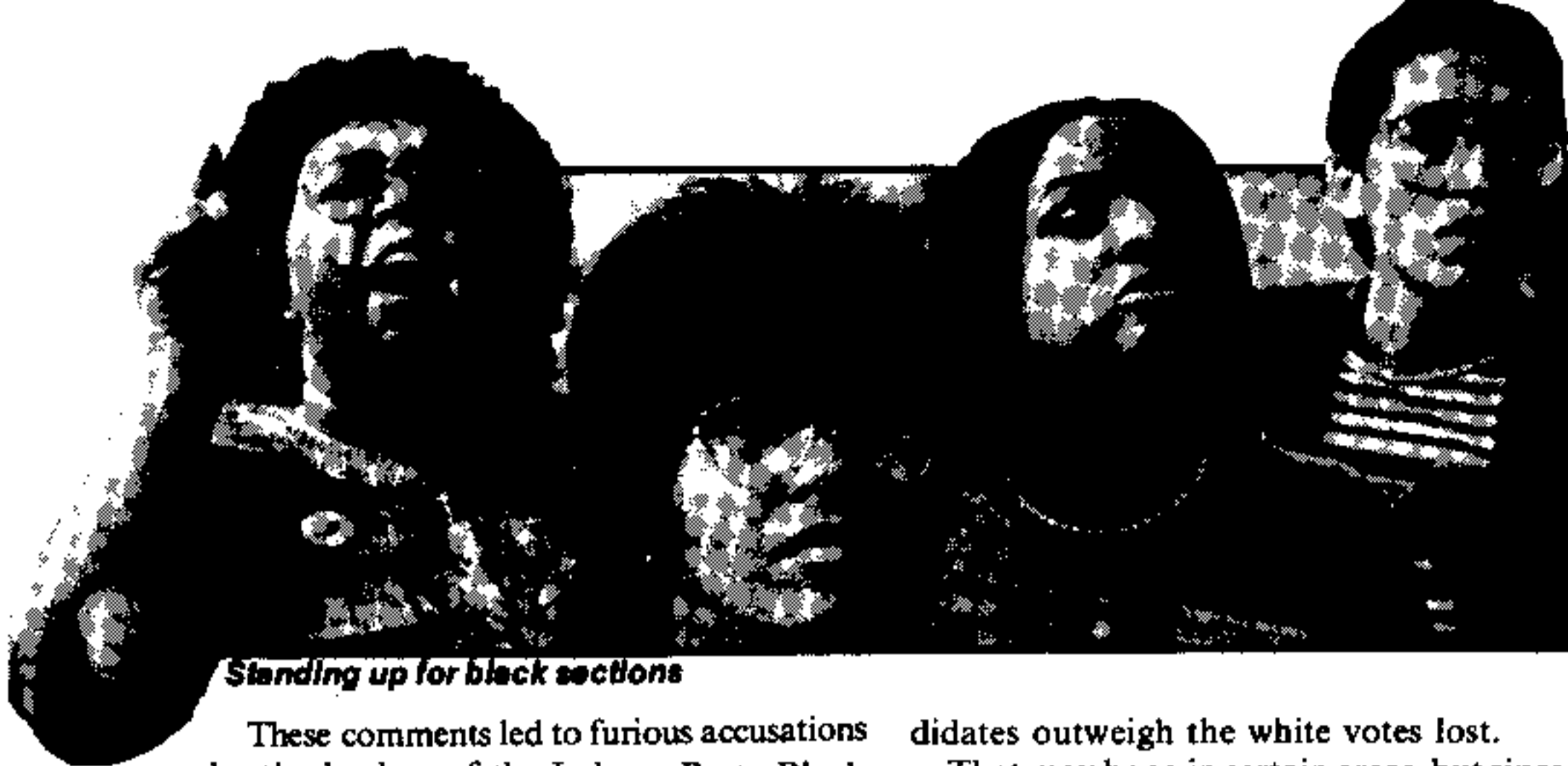
The difference is slight. 'Blacks did only 1.8 percent worse than whites on average' in the five London boroughs surveyed (*Guardian* 27 May 1986).

In many wards—in Lambeth and Brent—Blacks did better. In Haringey, despite a vicious racist campaign against him, Bernie Grant came top in his ward, twenty votes ahead of his fellow Labour candidate, who was white.

In Wandsworth, Labour failed narrowly to seize power from the Tories. This led *Tribune*, in an article entitled *Did anti-black prejudice cost Labour crucial seats?*, to comment:

'In Wandsworth, where Labour was cheated of victory by one seat, white Labour candidates were successful in two seats where their black and, in one case, gay running mates polled slightly fewer votes and were eased out by Conservatives.'

Similar thoughts were voiced by *New Society* and *New Statesman*.



Standing up for black sections

These comments led to furious accusations by the leaders of the Labour Party Black Section. Their chairperson, Marc Wadsworth, said that 'what we are seeing is pseudo-intellectual racism'; and Paul Sharma, on behalf of the Black Sections, wrote to the *New Statesman* and *New Society*, concluding: 'Your journal has a duty to destroy racist myths, not perpetuate them.' (Quoted in *Socialist Action*, 30 May 1986)

Is there any truth in these accusations? What lies at the back of them is the legitimate fear that reactionary conclusions can be drawn from saying that anti-black prejudice cost Labour votes.

But whether *Tribune* is guilty of putting such a construction on these 'facts' is less clear. Nigel Williamson, its editor, rounded on *Socialist Action*, which supports the Black Sections. Why, he complained, did it omit to quote two crucial lines of *Tribune's* editorial:

'The Liberal-SDP Alliance exploited this racism quite unscrupulously. Nor was it averse to the anti-gay smear. Such attitudes must be tackled head-on and the hypocrisy, cynicism and sheer opportunism of the Liberals and SDP must be exposed for what it is.' (Letter in *Socialist Action*, 6 June 1986)

Certainly *Tribune* failed to discuss instances where black Labour candidates fared better than white ones. Nor did it discuss alternative explanations as to why certain black candidates did less well.

Equally, failure to go out and fight racism could account for poor showings by black candidates.

Nevertheless, it is ridiculous to accuse these journals—and *Tribune* in particular—of writing racist articles, of being racist, or of pandering to racism. What the row really underlines is the fear that electoral calculations could be used against the Black Sections.

What will be suggested by the Kinnockites is this: we are not racist, we oppose racism, but look at the effects of prejudice (which we deplore!) on our electoral prospects. If we don't get returned to office, how can we ever be in a position to fight the kind of racism sustained by the Tories? So no more black candidates that cost us seats at local and national level!

The Black Sections will be quite right to reject this suggestion. But they will be on weak ground, because the electoralism of the Labour Party will force them to argue not primarily on principle but on the contention that black votes won by black can-

didates outweigh the white votes lost.

That may be so in certain areas, but since at the end of the day crude voting totals are all that matters for the Labour Party the pressures to sacrifice the minority ethnic vote will be overwhelming. After all, that is why the Labour Party has always introduced or reinforced racist immigration measures when in office, despite its 'sincere' horror of racism.

There is no evidence that Kinnock in office will be any better than Wilson or Callaghan on the question of race. His emphasis that he will be firm about immigration control, while getting rid of the Tories' 1981 Nationality Act, is already a massive concession to racist ideas.

The problem is that *Tribune* has no strategy for fighting the electoral pressure of racism on the Labour Party. On the other hand, the Black Sections do themselves no good by ignoring the racism of Labour voters.

Ignoring the reality of what it means to run local councils, despite the ominous precedent of Ken Livingstone's career, also seems set to make its mark on the Black Sections. Already the signs are not very encouraging.

Take Brent, where there are now 19 black Labour councillors and a black Labour leader, Merle Amory. *Tribune* proudly billed this as 'the first-ever black woman to lead a local authority in Britain'. But what of her politics?

She has distanced herself from the hard left. She refused to sign a statement in London Labour Briefing, fighting the cuts. She is against illegal budgets. She talks in terms of priorities. She opposes *Militant*—and can afford to oppose the witch hunt, since *Militant* are thin on the ground in Brent. During the Jasmine Beckford affair she supported the sacking of the social workers involved.

Interviewed by *Tribune*, Merle Amory recognised that many Labour authorities have good policies about equal opportunities on paper but that real barriers exist within the workforce. 'The resentment that some of the white workers feel about the way they are being denied opportunity' has yet to be broken down.

The answer to this resentment? Education, according to Merle Amory.

Nothing wrong with education, of course. But in the absence of hard cash to expand jobs and services, it all sounds suspiciously like fine words to cover up the fact that people will be being 'educated' into equal but fewer opportunities.

The same suspicion clouds what Merle Amory has to say about satisfying the needs of different disadvantaged groups. There is a lot about the necessity to 'open up the decision-making structure' so that people can articulate for themselves what they want, rather than what they want being perceived from above. But there's precious little about resources.

Linda Bellos, who became the second black woman leader (of Lambeth council), is politically very different from Merle Amory. She identifies with the hard left and with the struggle for Black Sections.

She succeeds Ted Knight, who is disbarred from office as a result of the rate-capping campaign, and shares his commitment to maintaining jobs and services. All this is a distinct improvement on Merle Amory.

However, there still remains a crucial question. What strategy will make it possible to expand the services that Lambeth (like many other inner-city areas) desperately needs? If the collapse over rate-capping proved anything it was that defiance based on looking to the council leadership didn't work.

It evaded the much tougher question of how town hall employees, mobilised in self-defence of jobs and conditions, could give an effective lead to all those other community campaigns to protect services. If the hardest of the hard left councils—Liverpool and Lambeth—failed last year, how will it be possible now under less favourable conditions?

Linda Bellos shows no sign of departing from the perspective of her predecessor in office—the same perspective that failed last year

How can the Labour Party—with its ingrained racism and sexism only too evident from its record in office—be the answer?

In a kind of despairing gamble, she has committed herself to what seems to be the only 'realistic' alternative:

'We rejected the idea of the lesbian ghetto. We wanted women-only space for our strength, but we felt we couldn't ignore the world, and we had to be active in the Labour Party.' (*City Limits*, 5-12 June, 1986)

Alas, that 'realism' will prove to be a trap. Whatever Linda Bellos's intentions, whatever the change in style or language, it is difficult to see how she will finish up in a different position from Merle Amory, or indeed any other Labour council leader.

More black and fewer white faces will preside over the rundown of the inner-city areas. The dream of the Black Sections for a real fight against racial discrimination will crumble into squalid manoeuvrings amongst black careerists in the council chambers. And the mass of the working class, both black and white, will find their day-to-day worries little affected by the brave new ventures run from the town halls. ■

Rahul Patel
Gareth Jenkins

The puritan's disease

AIDS IS still a comparatively rare disease, at least outside of central and eastern Africa, and yet it has had a deep effect both inside and outside the gay scene. The media has led a vicious anti-gay campaign based on it, which has resulted in some gays being sacked and motions being passed in union branches calling for an end to unions fighting against discrimination—in other words, if gays or lesbians are sacked the unions shouldn't defend them.

But the effect of the anti-gay propaganda has not just been to increase harassment. It has had a deep effect on gays themselves.

Against the attacks of the likes of the *Sun* and Tory politicians, the gay movement has not responded by campaigning against health cutbacks and for the government to spend more money on research to find a cure (the British government spends almost nothing on AIDS research). Neither has it responded to the media's filth by pickets or demonstrations outside or inside the papers.

Instead conferences have been held, and pamphlets and leaflets distributed explaining what you, the individual, can do or not do to catch AIDS. In other words, the response has not been to try to change society, or even to reform it, but to spread the word on how you can change yourself and your sex life.

The most open and blatant attack on gays has been met with almost no collective response.

Under the umbrella of left Labour councils the gay movement has become almost an appendage to mainstream reformism. Gay rights have been added to the list of reforms the Labour left are committed to introducing from above some time in the future—reforms which of course Kinnock drops whenever they become unpopular (that is, noticed by the media).

The central core of gay politics has long been to work within the framework of capitalist society. The miners' strike and the links that were built between some gay activities and mining communities have not challenged the hold of reformism overall—they have strengthened it.

The lessons learnt from the strike are not those of struggle leading workers to generalise their ideas from the economic to challenge all aspects of society. Rather it is to build links seen as necessary between the gay movement and the labour movement/Labour Party. It has not led people to self-activity but tied them to the passivity of the Labour Party.

But the people affected by the Great Strike of 1984/5 and the gay activists in the Labour Party are a tiny, if influential, minority of gays. The hold of reformism

doesn't explain the total lack of a collective response to the attacks or the undermining of the whole idea of gay liberation that has happened in the last year or so.

Gay oppression is different from most other types of oppression in that a lesbian or gay has to start by coming to terms with their sexuality. A black person knows that she or he is black. Gays or lesbians are not a different colour or physically different from hets. As the slogan put it, 'We are everywhere.' The first and vital step for any gay or lesbian to start fighting against their oppression is to acknowledge their sexuality—to come out.

That was the breakthrough of the Gay Liberation Front in the late 60s and 70s—to urge all lesbians and gays 'to come out of the closets and onto the streets'. For accepting the label of oppression and fighting against it are linked in the heads of the oppressed.

Gay liberation was therefore necessarily a continuation from fighting self-oppression. Society oppresses gays and lesbians through the courts, queer-bashers,

AIDS and the New Puritanism

Dennis Altman
Pluto Press, £4.95.

AIDS is no more a gay disease than German measles is German. It has probably existed, undiagnosed, in Haiti and north-west Africa for decades. In late 1979 two Los Angeles physicians noted previously fit, young gay men succumbing to illnesses which the body's normally functioning immune system would throw off in a matter of weeks.

Up to 1986 16,138 Americans had contracted AIDS—of whom 8,220 had died.

The rapid rate of spread, combined with the AIDS-aided mixture of fear and hatred of homosexuality which has been disseminated even faster, has created an epidemic which is without medical precedent in the post-war years.

Pre-scientific explanations have abounded: AIDS is god's punishment, gays have 'brought it on themselves'.

The first thing to understand is that AIDS is, by the standards of most infectious diseases, very hard to catch.

But it is unusually persistent. As far as we know, an AIDS-carrier is infectious for life, which makes psychological and social support networks of particular importance.

Secondly, medical progress in understanding the disease has been extraordinarily good. It took less than three

and the media etc. But the prime agent of oppression is self-oppression. Fighting for gay liberation, and challenging the system that creates that oppression has to start from the individual fighting self-oppression/self-restraint. It meant fighting for as free as possible expression of your sexuality, 'if it feels good do it'.

The AIDS scare has undermined the very idea of liberation by reintroducing the idea of self-restraint and self-oppression. The gay movement now urges gays to control themselves, not to express their sexuality but to censor it. In the 70s the idea of liberation came from the initial fight to come out. It led from the individual outwards. Today's obsession with AIDS has meant it leads from coming out to self-restraint.

In the process there is little scope for any awareness of oppression as a social evil. The idea of liberation is now an extremely abstract one to the point where it is little talked about within the gay movement. All is now life-style and individual solutions.

All this does not mean that we should denounce AIDS as a capitalist plot or that 'safe sex' should be seen as pure hype. Rather we should recognise the ideological effects the AIDS scare has had on gays and how it has depoliticised the issue.

Lenin said the party is the memory of the class. We are now the memory of gay liberation as well. ■

Noel Halifax

years for virologists, after recognising the syndrome, to find the responsible virus, and one more year to invent a test.

In Britain there are about 300 known AIDS cases, mostly in London. On the whole the NHS has responded well. The venereal disease clinics of the NHS are probably unique in offering open-access, free investigation and prescription and extensive contact tracing. This has meant the immediate availability of skilled specialist opinion.

But the introduction of AIDS-contaminated clotting factors to haemophiliacs could have been entirely avoided if the blood transfusion service had been protected, by adequate funding, from 'buying out' supplies taken from at-risk donors rather than UK volunteers.

Sexually transmitted diseases have until very recently caused a terrible toll of fatal illness, which in the case of syphilis was chronically associated with extreme suffering. Sex, for women especially, has never been particularly 'safe'.

As for the mood in the gay community, the AIDS-obsession, as documented by Altman in North America, seems to have had a conservatising political effect.

One thing is certain though: far from being caused by the gay liberation movement, the AIDS outbreak would have taken far longer to detect and deal with if homosexual men were still forced to live lives of deception, dishonesty and shame. ■

David Widgery

Senile socialism

IN HIS *Diary in Exile* Trotsky refers to a shock people suddenly experience—the sudden realisation of being old. Slowly, relentlessly, day by day, changes are imperceptibly occurring. Then a task usually easily accomplished—climbing a hill or running for a bus—proves to be too much for one's dwindling powers.

It is my contention the same principle applies to the Labour Party. Born 86 years ago, it has long since lost the bloom of youth, the rosy years of young promise. Past, too, is the mature phase of positive achievement. Today senile dementia has set in: no longer has it any intellectual grasp of where it is or where it is going.

The steady decline takes many forms. In 1951 the Labour Party had an individual membership of 1,051,000; now it is down to 310,000. At the 1951 general election Labour secured 13,266,592 votes; at the last general election, despite a large increase in the number of people entitled to vote, it received only 8,456,934, the worst result since the MacDonald debacle of 1931.

But this deterioration should not be considered purely in quantitative terms. As its links with the grassroots of the class have atrophied, so workers' expectations of what Labour might accomplish have also withered.

It is impossible to envisage the scenes of wild excitement that greeted the election of the Clydeside rebels in 1922 ever being repeated. Then an ecstatic crowd of 200,000 assembled at Glasgow's Trongate station to cheer their heroes as they set off on their journey to parliament.

The new MPs included Jimmy Maxton, the right-hand man of John Maclean, Dave Kirkwood, convenor of the militant Parkhead Forge, the recently imprisoned Emmanuel Shinwell and John Wheatley, the great tactician of the Clyde Workers' Committee. And who did they meet when

they arrived in London? None other than George Lansbury MP, just out of convict's uniform after successfully leading Poplar council's defiance of the government.

These were men who had suffered in the class struggle, established strong links with the labour movement and were also personally dedicated to the abolition of capitalism. What a contrast with the well-heeled lawyers, smug middle class and upwardly mobile who grace the Labour benches today! Yet how much did Clydeside rebels accomplish? As David Kirkwood honestly admits in his autobiography—very little.

This is the problem that has to be faced—a growing credibility gap. Down through the decades high hopes have been followed by dashed hopes, illusions in fundamental change through parliamentary politics has been followed by disillusionment. As a consequence, it has been possible to obtain a more realistic assessment of limitations of Labour-style organisations.

Before the First World War Trotsky regarded the Labour Party's German equivalent, the SPD, as the socialist jewel of the Second International while Lenin thought that the edition of the SPD's paper supporting the imperialist conflict, must be a police forgery.

They can, perhaps, be forgiven for their mistaken appraisals. However, anybody who made the similar mistake today should be diagnosed incurably insane. And why? Because 70 further years of German SPD theory and practice have helped to make it abundantly clear what its position is in the political firmament.

Any party that simply administers capitalism has to act in the interest of capital and against the interests of labour—in other words, of necessity, it adopts anti-working class measures.

Even the most successful reformist

governments don't buck this rule. Take the Attlee administration (1945-51). Some of the implications of its dirty deeds are only now becoming fully apparent.

From the outset of the Cold War, the Labour government backed US capitalism, a move that involved joining NATO, cutting real wages to fund increased arms expenditure and conducting a purge, albeit on a smaller scale than in McCarthyite America, of so-called subversives.

While the secret services superintended the sacking of left-wingers, we had no idea that, at the same time, they were co-operating with the CIA to secure the escape to South America of Nazi war criminals like Klaus Barbie, the butcher of Lyons.

Likewise the Labour government secretly manufactured the first British nuclear weapons. Neither the British people nor parliament were consulted about the decision. It concealed as well from the public the facts about radiation. The first civil defence manual, published in 1950, had pages 39 to 45 omitted at the last moment.

Only now is it known that this was done because the government got cold feet, fearing the panic which might be caused if the genetic effects of radiation became general knowledge.

Critics, though, can point quite legitimately to the Attlee administration's positive achievements. But these reforms need to be seen in context. A widely diverse and contradictory set of forces interact to determine whether or not, at any particular time, reforms will be introduced. Of these, two stand out in importance.

First, there is the depth of feeling, organisation and resolve among the ruled to secure change. Second, there is the ability—or lack of ability—of the existing social order to grant concessions.

In 1945 working people were militant. A widespread determination prevailed that the promises of a bright new world, made during the war by politicians to bolster morale, would have to be kept. More to the point, over five million had served in the armed forces, thereby coming to possess military knowledge that could be put to dangerous use.

When placed alongside a powerful trade union movement, equally determined to see change, their power proved irresistible, particularly since the British ruling class, compromised by appeasement, had largely been discredited. Even that old fool Lord Hailsham, then known as Quintin Hogg, read the situation correctly: he saw the alternatives were either reforms or revolution.

The Attlee administration brought in reforms, so lessening the tensions of transition from war to peace. It could do this because the economy, more healthy than today, could bear the extra cost of all these welfare measures. By 1951, once the ruling class felt more powerful and secure, the Attlee government had served its purpose. It could be replaced by a Tory one.

Even so, the post-war boom continued to make concessions. Whereas at the



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Base and superstructure**

plus ★ Donny Gluckstein on Keir Hardie
★ Ann Rogers on Women at work
★ Pete Green on The rate of profit
★ John Molyneux and Lindsey German debate on Marxism and male benefits

present time, in contrast, increasing competition and depressed profit margins make reforms a too expensive luxury. Indeed, throughout the world, from USA to Scandinavia, the tendency is to whittle away welfare concessions already granted.

All this places Neil Kinnock in a predicament. The essence of reformism is reforms, the belief that things can be gradually improved, transforming the system without the painful class conflicts involved in revolution.

In the long run, reformism without reforms—or, rather, with existing reforms countermanded—does not remain a viable proposition. Moreover, unlike revolutionary socialism, where a greater understanding of the past helps to strengthen the cause, with reformism it has the reverse effect.

Not only negative things, like the already-mentioned nuclear skulduggery and secret service machinations, have a damaging effect, but also the positive things, the triumphs of which Labourism is proud, turn from gold to dross.

From a 1986 standpoint, the Attlee administration leaves Kinnock a doubtful legacy. He is liable to be asked: How was it possible to have full employment then but not now? Why could they afford a comprehensive welfare state, from the cradle to the grave, and not us? What made it possible for there to be a completely free National Health Service in 1946—no charges for prescriptions, dental treatment or spectacles—whereas Labour regards it as totally impractical 40 years later?

Any Labour Party member who suggested a future Labour government should re-introduce these and other progressive measures brought in by Attlee would be making a suggestion so wild, so left wing, he (or she) would be in danger of being expelled from the party as an undercover supporter of the Militant Tendency.

Actually, the policy of the Labour Party today is of historic significance—in its entire 86 years existence it has never been so reactionary. Kinnock has been careful not to commit himself to repairing the damage done by Thatcherism since 1979, let alone restoring the swingeing public expenditure cuts of Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey in 1976, when Healey embraced monetarism.

Although during the last decade inequality has grown immeasurably, Kinnock has made it clear he will not repeat the pledge—made in Labour's 1974 election manifesto but not kept—to see there was 'a significant but irreversible switch in the distribution of the national income from rich to poor'.

Kinnock's poverty of vision would match the continued mass poverty; a growing hard-core of unemployed would be left to speculate how a Labour government today could not accomplish what a Labour government did 40 years ago, coming into office, running a delapidated economy, after a highly costly and destructive world war.

Obviously, sooner or later, Kinnock will



encounter stiff opposition from socialists, both within and outside the Labour Party. His predecessors, finding themselves in the same situation in the past, have always been able to turn to right-wing thinkers, like Crosland, Gaitskeli, Douglas Jay and Strachey.

However outrageous the conduct of Labour leaders, these provided a theoretical underpinning for it, a plausible justification, at least in some people's eyes. But in today's cold climate, it must be an embarrassment to Kinnock to turn to these right-wing reactionaries of yesteryear, a painful experience of how wrong the theoreticians of the Labour right were.

All their writings were profoundly influenced by the prolonged post-war boom and the illusions it engendered. The assumption was confidentially made that revolutionary change was unnecessary as all the fundamental problems of society had been solved. What lay ahead was a vista of uninterrupted progress. Keynes had refuted Marx; full employment was here to stay; the national income would continue to grow. Every sentence exuded optimism.

Anthony Crosland was the doyen of this school of thought. His book, *The Future of Socialism*, was the bible of the Labour right. At the beginning of the book, he contemptuously dismisses what he refers to as the fundamentalism of the left:

'...in my view Marx has little or nothing to offer the contemporary socialist, either in respect of practical policy, or the correct analysis of our society, or even of the right conceptual tools or framework.'

You see—and here hold on to your seats!—Crosland thinks it is wrong to characterise contemporary society as capitalist. To back this assertion, Crosland pointed to profound changes, altering fundamentally the basis of Britain:

- 1 The state played a greater role in decision-making;
- 2 Economic control of companies had moved from shareholders to a salaried managerial group;
- 3 Industrial capital's influence, anyway, has been curtailed by social and political influences;
- 4 Wealth has become much more evenly divided;
- 5 Capitalist ideology (individualism, belief in private enterprise, etc) had little or no influence in present-day Britain.

Crosland believed society's existing structure was fundamentally sound and that in such circumstances, workers can be assured that large-scale class conflicts, the

industrial battles that characterised the inter-war period, belong to the bad old days, never to return:

'One cannot imagine today a deliberate offensive alliance between Government and employers against the unions on the 1921 or 1925-6 or 1927 model, with all the brutal paraphernalia of wage cuts, national lock-outs and anti-union legislation; or, say, a serious attempt to enforce, as so often happened in the 1920s, a coal policy to which the miners bitterly objected.'

(Obviously, Crosland is correct: the 1984-5 coal dispute must have been a figment of the miners' fevered imagination!)

Consequently, Crosland concludes all major problems have been solved. What remains to be done is social engineering. More and more reforms, strengthening the welfare state and moving Britain towards Crosland's ideal socialist society—Sweden!

All this may seem weird and old-fashioned, rather like the clothes of a by-gone age, but this should not prevent us asking searching questions about Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, published first in 1956.

In the past 30 years it has been Keynes, not Marx, who has been sent to the economists' knackers' yard. As his methods of regulating the economy have been discarded, does this mean that there is no way of securing lasting full employment in a present-day society?

Was not Crosland's analysis patently wrong that led him to conclude capitalism had collapsed? Would not the re-emergence of crises, increasing frequently and increasingly severe, rather lead to the conclusion that Marx's analysis is fundamentally sound? And haven't the theories of Marx, unlike those of Crosland and Co, stood the test of time?

The theory and practice of reformism has never been in such bad shape. Its understanding of the world has never been poorer. Its ability to secure reforms never so unpromising. But this will not deter Neil Kinnock in his dogged pursuit of high office.

What differentiates him from those that went before him is his limited political horizon, the meagreness of his appetite for change.

Not for him the ideal of a New Jerusalem; rather he would be content to administer things as they are. Indeed, Kinnock could be described as a believer in utopian capitalism, a system without inner contradictions. It never has existed—it never will. ■

Ray Challinor

Don't fight—vote!

Andy Zebrowski spoke to John Poynter of the National Communications Union, Martin John of the Civil and Public Services Association, Irene Davies of the National Union of Teachers, Glyn Powell of the National Union of Public Employees and Martin Larkham of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers about their conferences this year.

AZ Describe the mood of the delegates and union leadership. What is the level of strikes?

CPSA There were stories before we went of substantial left gains in the forthcoming elections. These did not materialise. It was Alistair Graham's last conference and he had a lot of success. He managed to get through the grading review.

This will mean much greater flexibility and the downgrading of various types of work. It will be used to block the kind of fightback which has been taking place on the staffing cuts over the last 18 months. There have been a number of local victories.

The strikes have not been smashed but sold out. The classic case is the DHSS staffing campaign where the union demanded 12,000 extra staff and settled for 2,500. The strikes have often been desperate, defensive battles because the Tory cuts are now getting right down to the bone.

NCU The NCU is divided into two parts, clerical (the old CPSA Post and Telecom group) and engineering (the old POEU). They have separate conferences and come together for the last two days. The right wing were cock-a-hoop after the defeat of Phil Holt from the Broad Left, and the election of right wing Labour MP John Golding to the position of general secretary.

Golding is pretty unpopular though. He was defeated over not giving up his job as an MP which he had promised to do in his electoral address. But still the right was in control. The level of strikes in Telecoms since the national dispute a couple of years ago has been very low.

NUPE Rodney Bickerstaffe and Tom Sawyer have a high profile in the labour movement. Bickerstaffe chairs the TUC Economic Committee and Sawyer is on the NEC of the Labour Party. They are known as lefts in terms of the TUC.

Two years ago Bickerstaffe was quoted as saying, 'It's not a question of shall we break the law, but which law shall we break.' Today he's full of left rhetoric against Thatcher but is also very crude against the real left.

The leadership was very popular this year and consistently got their way, although they were forced to reject incomes control but with 'reservations'.

In NUPE and COHSE there have been one or two long drawn out, fairly hopeless strikes. Addenbrookes in Cambridge is still going on. It's mainly a COHSE strike which gives the NUPE leadership an excuse for ducking out of their responsibility for it. Generally the strike level is very low with the odd battle by isolated sections.

NUT The major feeling was that the NUT was in the lead in taking on the Tories. This was the biggest thing that had happened in the union since the war. Bigger than the strikes in the early seventies, which isn't true.

The level of strikes in the salaries campaign has been low and tokenistic. There have been attempts to push the executive to further action in Bradford and London. But mostly everyone followed the leadership of the executive. They argued that they had led this great struggle which had actually got somewhere.

'We were even urged to call him Neil and not Kinnock'

USDAW There's always a tendency to follow the platform. The conference is seen as a reward for branch officers. This year there has been a further shift to the right. Roy Hattersley spoke in favour of incomes control under Labour. It was the usual phoney argument about lower paid workers being better off if the higher paid are restrained.

There is a very low level of strikes with only a few thousand paid out in disputes.

AZ How was the 'new realism' demonstrated in your conferences?

NUT The whole of the salaries campaign has been part of the new realism. Trying to chase public opinion, never going on strike for fear of alienating parental support. The campaign had been useful to the Labour Party. But it was the Labour councillors who were the ones on the Burnham Committee who prevented the NUT coming to ACAS before they called off the action. They thought the teachers' action might now be counter-productive in terms of the next election.

NCU The new realist idea of keeping 'politics' out of trade unionism was reflected in the campaign for a political fund in the clerical section. They had posters saying 'Vote "yes" for a political voice'. In the last three months the word

political has been dropped. The left wanted the campaign to affiliate to the Labour Party to follow on straightaway, but the executive argued that the campaign should be delayed for two years. Otherwise the membership would be alienated and wouldn't vote yes.

There was also the debate on the renationalisation of British Telecom. Golding argued that we shouldn't push renationalisation without compensation because it might jeopardise Kinnock's chances. But we needed Kinnock because he was bound to renationalise!

NUPE We were told it was important to stand behind Neil. We were even urged to call him Neil and not Kinnock.

Bickerstaffe got a policy of accepting in-house tenders on privatisation passed for the first time. He argued that at least we would keep some members.

Delegates from Newcastle followed his lead and boasted that they had saved jobs by getting a £20 wage cut. Bickerstaffe said there was no question of a national pay campaign because a) it wouldn't work, and b) it would harm Kinnock's election chances.

CPSA It was Alistair Graham who announced the new realism way back in 1983. For his pains he was removed from the TUC General Council by the Broad Left before it split and Ray Alderson, a leading Communist Party member, took his place. But now the Broad Left 84 grouping as well as the right wing back Graham's new realism.

Graham went to a press conference and said he was sad to be leaving the union because there was still the unfinished business of dealing with the hard left.

He was going to appeal to Neil Kinnock for help. He would send the names of leading Militant Tendency activists to Walworth Road and demand their expulsions.

USDAW A militant branch has in the last three or four years successfully pushed the same proposition—£120 minimum, a 35 hour week and a total rejection of any incomes policy. Nothing ever happens about it anyway but this year it didn't even get passed. The propositions accepting government funding for ballots were easily passed.

AZ What has the move to the right meant for the left inside your unions? What was the response to the witch hunt on Militant?

CPSA In CPSA the Broad Left is bigger than Broad Left 84. The left made some electoral gains. Last year they had no one elected on the executive. BL84 had a few. That situation has been somewhat reversed, although there are still a couple of BL84 members on the executive.

NCU Last year there was a Broad Left majority on the engineering executive. This year there was only one left out of 24. *Militant's* response was solely that we need a better electoral machine, better publicity. Leading Broad Left member, Phil Holt, actually said that one of the reasons why NCU First (the right wing) won was

because they had a five colour leaflet out whereas we had only three colours. There was no real political analysis at all.

There was one anti-witch hunt motion before the main conference. It was lost four to one. Only two *Militant* supporters spoke.

NUPE There is a very weak *Militant*-dominated Broad Left in NUPE. *Militant* were so intimidated by the right wing feel of conference that it was mainly left to SWP members to make the running.

Jane Kennedy, who is the soft left General Secretary in Liverpool, was the main protagonist in the three witch hunt motions. She produced a whole mass of 'evidence' about how Liverpool council had attacked NUPE as a union and individual NUPE members. She spoke to rousing cheers and standing ovations.

Militant's lack of understanding of the situation was made quite clear by one of their supporters. The motions were lost by something like 10 to 1, yet he said that if they had managed to get a speaker from Liverpool on the platform then we could have won it.

CPSA The left split in the CPSA in late 1984 following the dispute at the big Newcastle DHSS computer centre. It represented the leanings of the Communist Party and the soft left to accommodate themselves fully to the union bureaucracy—rather than be held accountable to a large Broad Left organisation under *Militant* influence.

The left was demoralised very early on by setbacks in the conference and it tended to be flat after that. *Militant* didn't rouse themselves in their own defence. It was the SWP who produced an anti-witch hunt petition. We managed to get some 400 signatures. Some BL84 members signed, but others were very hostile and refused.

Militant and a number of other people on the left don't relate the problem to the situation in the Labour Party because it would undercut their perspectives a lot. So they have this strange idea that BL84 is the equivalent of the SDP—rather than understanding that BL84 is the face of Kinnock's Labour Party inside the union.

NUT The STA (Socialist Teachers Alliance) was certainly much bigger on the ground at the conference. It pulled much bigger meetings in the evenings. It does bugger all in operating in any organised way at a school level and sees the conference as the centre of its activity.

There's only a small number of *Militant* inside the NUT. They only support the STA as individuals. Jim Ferguson, who's on the soft left took them to court over the redundancy notices and led a revolting campaign against them in Liverpool. Rate-capping was obviously a big issue because of the immediate consequences of cuts for teachers. But the STA all the time used Lambeth never Liverpool.

The executive were forced to the left on racism and women, but this was purely verbal with no commitment to action.

A lot of teachers now think that free periods are their right. The policy of



The House of Lords: will the 'new realists' end up here?

absolute 'no cover' was only narrowly defeated. It's an issue teachers will clearly continue to fight over.

USDAW A few years ago Tony Benn would speak to Broad Left meetings of 5-600 people. Full-timers supported it. Now there are only tens, not hundreds, on an organised basis. The Broad Left used to challenge the EC on major propositions and get between one third and a half of the votes. This year it was slaughtered.

AZ What was the SWP intervention like? How can we build a revolutionary presence in the unions today?

NUT We have recruited teachers in the past year more from high street paper sales and public meetings than directly through the dispute.

Our main mistake was that we tended to argue for more militancy in the salaries campaign at the STA fringe meetings as opposed to talking about Kinnock, *Militant* and what our alternative is. We had a meeting of about fifty and sold 170 papers. One person joined.

NCU We had only one delegate and two observers. After leafletting, 15 or 20 people came up and we had a chat over a drink. We sold about a hundred papers.

NUPE The move to the right has been so rapid that it has left some people stranded. Those who aren't completely disillusioned are looking around for a serious alternative. *Militant* were very low profile. We were the only credible alternative. We had speakers on every important debate. We sold 120 papers and recruited seven at our fringe meeting which was attended by forty people.

At the end of the racism debate a couple of pretty right-wing people off the exec-

utive approached one of our candidates and asked for help in organising an anti-racist campaign. It was almost like saying, show us how to do it. Building the credibility in terms of how the left and other people see us is the best thing that can be achieved.

NUT I think there's a danger in this argument about credibility. More people want to talk politics. But that doesn't mean that you can go out and lead campaigns against racism or about women. Obviously you get involved in anything that's happening. But that is such a small part of what we have to do. The major part is putting the general political arguments.

A couple of people joined out of 60 at our fringe meeting. We sold over 300 papers.

CPSA Focussing on rank and file militancy was not enough for us any more. The Broad Lefts were successful when the Labour left was strong in 1980-1. Now that's not the case, people are confused. They don't understand that Kinnock is calling the shots, or the link between the union leaders and the Labour Party.

We have to explain the whole idea of electoralism coming down from the top through the activists. Labour's electoral requirements are a break on workers to stop them fighting back.

USDAW Two joined at our meeting of 20 people. We sold 80 papers. One delegate said, 'Thank god you were there. I was getting so desperate at this conference.' One guy, who had been in the Labour Party for a number of years and was having doubts about Kinnock, joined. It showed the importance of arguing our broad politics on every issue, from nuclear power to Kinnock. ■

South Africa:



Repression and resistance

IT IS too early to tell whether or not the enormous clampdown imposed by the Botha regime after their declaration of a nationwide state of emergency on 11 June marks a turning point of the struggle in South Africa.

What is clear, despite the very strict censorship, is that the large-scale detention of political and trade union activists and the massive deployment of the security forces did not prevent the stay-away commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Soweto rising from receiving the overwhelming support of black workers in industrial areas.

Why did the regime move in so hard? At least in terms of the image presented to the outside world it represents a shift. In April and early May it looked as if the State

President P W Botha was pressing ahead with his reform programme.

Bills were published scrapping the pass laws and granting freehold rights to Africans outside the Homelands. The government also ended its opposition to a multiracial joint administration for the white-ruled province of Natal and the tribal KwaZulu Homeland.

The so-called 'KwaNatal' option has often been seen as a trial run for involving 'moderate' black leaders like KwaZulu leader Gatsha Buthelezi in national government.

And then, at a meeting of the key State Security Council on 12 May, the regime seems to have decided to toughen its stance. Allister Sparks, the *Observer's* veteran correspondent, argues that the

catalyst for this decision was the visit by the absurdly titled Eminent Persons Group (EPG), formed after last year's Commonwealth conference to get Mrs Thatcher off the sanctions hook.

The EPG's efforts to persuade Nelson Mandela and the exiled leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) to negotiate with the regime were alarmingly successful. Botha suddenly found himself faced with the prospect of an escalation of the reform process, in which he might find himself sitting round the negotiating table with ANC leaders he had long denounced as 'communists' and 'terrorists'.

It is almost inconceivable that Botha would have been willing to do so: the regime's overwhelming superiority in firepower means that it is not yet faced with the

choice, Negotiate or Die (though this does not rule out talks with the ANC in the future). Political pressures on the ruling National Party (NP) in any case counted against talking to the ANC.

The regime's military superiority is no mere matter of tanks and guns. It reflects the social underpinning of white power—four and a half million whites, most of them workers, members of the new middle class, or farmers. The secret of the Nationalists' political domination of South Africa since 1948 has lain in the construction of an alliance uniting Afrikaner capitalists and masses in defence of white privilege.

Botha's reform strategy reflects changed economic conditions—the need to integrate the black middle class and even sections of the African working class into South African capitalism. But it threatens to disrupt the Nationalist alliance, as sections of the NP's popular base break away in protest against the erosion of their privilege.

The Afrikaner far right has mushroomed in recent years. It embraces two parliamentary parties which split from the NP, the Conservative Party (CP) and Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP).

Far more sinister, however, is the fascist Afrikaner Werstadsbeweging (AWB), which attracted world-wide publicity when it disrupted a meeting in Pietersburg due to be addressed by Foreign Minister Pik Botha on 22 May.

The AWB, under its demagogic *fuehrer*, Eugene Terré Blanche, is a classic Nazi movement. It denounces Botha for his 'betrayal' of Afrikanerdom, espouses 'Afrikaner national socialism', and sees 'Anglo-Jewish money' as responsible for the division of the *volk*.

The AWB's rapid growth among disgruntled Nationalist supporters has led to growing links between Terré Blanche and the main far-right party, the CP.

It's not clear how serious a threat to NP domination this represents. Botha controls 117 out of the 166 elected seats in the White House of Assembly (compared to 16 CP and 1 HNP MPs) and doesn't have to face an election till 1989. But the far right has been picking up votes in the *platteland* of the northern Transvaal, where white farmers in places like Pietersburg have had to cope with drought, unfavourable government pricing policies and ANC raids, and in white working class areas on the Rand.

A recent opinion poll suggested that 47 percent of all whites and 58 percent of all Afrikaners would still vote NP. But one of the most sinister features of the Pietersburg meeting was the failure of the police to get rough with the AWB demonstrators. The loyalty of the security forces is vital to the regime's survival, and many, especially among the police, are reported to be sympathetic to the far right.

It was against this background that the regime hardened its line. Botha delivered a speech denouncing the EPG in their presence. The South African Defence Force raided three neighbouring

Commonwealth states, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia, and attacked Soviet merchantmen in the Angolan port of Namibe.

After that there was nothing left for the EPG but to deliver a stinging critical report denouncing Botha's reforms as 'cosmetic', and calling for intensified international pressure on the apartheid regime, a serious blow for the Western anti-sanctions club composed of the right-wing governments of the United States, West Germany, Britain and France.

'In every great surge of struggle there comes a turning point...'

The regime is presumably relying on these allies to protect it from the worst in any new round of selective sanctions, which is the most that concerted action at the UN and by the Commonwealth is likely to produce. Indeed, some of its advisers apparently believe that the siege economy which full-scale sanctions and disinvestment would produce might actually benefit South African capitalism, though it is hard to imagine this line going down well with the Chamber of Mines, dependent as its members are on world markets for their gold and coal.

In any case, it was the situation within the country which dictated the clampdown. One vital point to consider is the extent to which a belief that the balance of forces was shifting in their favour entered into the calculations of Botha and his advisers, encouraging them to go onto the offensive.

The present wave of township risings has now been going on since September 1984. This makes it a much more protracted struggle than the Soweto revolt, which was finally broken by mass detentions and banings in October 1977.

In every great surge of struggle there

comes a turning point, when the mass movement either goes decisively forward or is defeated.

Thus in the summer and autumn of 1981 there were marked signs of demoralisation and exhaustion among the Polish working class. As Colin Barker shows in his new book, *Festival of the Oppressed*, Solidarnosc suffered a fall in support. Workers wanted a decisive solution to the crisis.

Unfortunately, the Solidarnosc leadership were not prepared to grasp the nettle and launch a struggle for state power. Instead it was the Jaruzelski regime which struck in December 1981, and smashed the workers' movement.

Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* noted a similar mood of exhaustion among workers in the autumn of 1917. They had had enough of uncertainty. In this case, however, the Bolsheviks were able to offer a decisive solution by arguing that the soviets should themselves take power, and by organising the insurrection of 25 October.

No force in South African society today is playing the role performed by the Bolsheviks in 1917. The two most influential currents are 'populism' and 'workerism'.

The populists, most notably the ANC and its sympathisers in the United Democratic Front (UDF), pursue a strategy of achieving majority rule on the basis of a class alliance embracing black workers and capitalists alike.

Instead of mobilising the power of the working class against the state, they rely either on community-based actions or on guerilla warfare, neither of which will break the apartheid state. It is little wonder that sections of the ANC leadership were responsive to the EPG initiative.

The workerists are influential in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), although they have had increasingly to confront a challenge from the populists since the new federation was formed last December.

They have concentrated on building up a strong trade union movement in the belief

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that this is sufficient to secure workers' interests. This has left them confused and disorientated in the face of the political turmoil in the townships.

The independent unions have taken part in political strikes, like the November 1984 Transvaal stayaway, and mounted the magnificent one-day strike on May Day this year. But they have not sought to give independent working class leadership to the broader political struggle.

The result is a movement whose centre is missing. The level of struggle has been higher in the townships than in the factories and mines. Young blacks, increasingly radicalised by the experience of the past two years, have taken part in heroic confrontations with the security forces on the streets, confrontations which the state's vastly superior firepower has allowed it to win. The power of the black working class has not been mobilised against the white state.

It's not surprising that, in these circumstances, there have been some signs of the mood in the townships turning against the militants. The clearest example has been that of Crossroads, where a murderous alliance between the security police and black vigilantes, the *witdoeke*, has succeeded in achieving what the regime has failed to do despite nearly a decade's efforts—clearing many of those living there from the camp.

The *witdoeke* have their counterparts throughout South Africa. The regime has only succeeded in running the townships, shanty-towns, and resettlement camps thanks to the existence of a layer of black intermediaries whose collaboration is bought in exchange for marginal, but real, privileges.

Johnson Ngxobongwana, the boss of Old Crossroads, the main squatter complex outside Capetown, lives very

comfortably off the monthly one rand per plot he charges every shack in the camp. The rise of the 'comrades', young militants supporting the ANC, challenged the power structure in places like Crossroads.

It may be also that the 'comrades', by failing to involve the mass of camp dwellers in democratic structures, have provided the black godfathers of Crossroads with some mass support. The liberal Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* reported on 13 June:

'Divisions in Cape Town's black townships can be attributed to the dissatisfaction by the "comrades" with collaborators and the challenge of the "comrades" to the economic exploitation of the Crossroads committee.

'Yet at the same time there was resentment by residents towards the excesses of the "comrades" and the way they dispensed justice through kangaroo courts or by imposing "progressive" campaigns on people without having consulted them.'

It would be a mistake to generalise from the case of Crossroads, although events there represent a significant victory for the regime. In the traditional ANC strongholds of the eastern Cape the UDF is based on strong popular organisation.

A similar network of street committees exists in Johannesburg's Alexandra township, where an alliance of socialist trade unionists and pro-ANC 'comrades' has built an impressive organisation around the Alexandra Action Committee.

Nevertheless, the existence especially of the Homelands has created a mass of petty black interests in the survival of white power based usually on tribal divisions.

The horrifying tribalist pogrom mounted in Durban last August by Buthelezi's Inkatha movement is an indication of the dangers posed by these divisions, unless opponents of the regime are

able consistently to involve the black masses in the struggle.

This can only be achieved by linking their material interests as workers to the political struggle against apartheid.

How big a setback for the mass movement does the new state of emergency represent? Certainly it isn't South Africa's equivalent of December 1981, though Botha seems to have learned a thing or two from Jaruzelski, to judge by the large-scale disconnection of telephones in Soweto on 16 June. Arrests of trade unionists seem to have been fairly selective, and aimed at weakening the strike that day rather than destroying the unions.

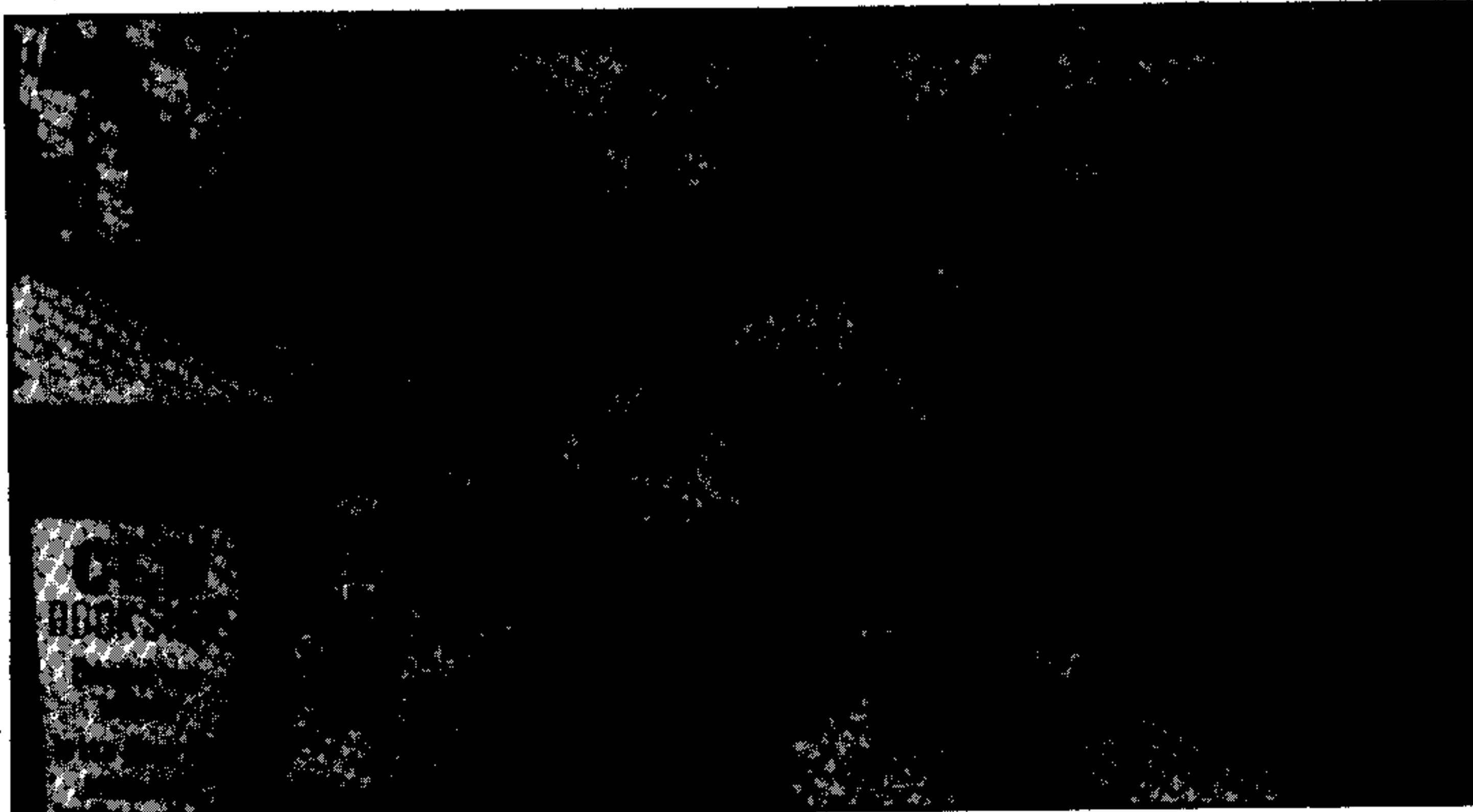
State capitalism in Poland could not co-exist with genuine trade unions. In South Africa, however, very large sections of capital believe that the modernisation of the economy requires a genuine black workers' movement, provided that it can be politically incorporated. Botha is very unlikely to retreat from his reform strategy, since it reflects the interests of big capital.

Ever since June 1976 the regime has vacillated between reform and repression, unable genuinely to dismantle apartheid, but forced to make partial changes. The crackdown is simply another lurch on Botha's part, this time in the direction of repression.

How much it dampens down the mass struggle remains to be seen. What is certain is that capitalism in South Africa will have to face waves of popular revolt until the collective strength of the black working class is mobilised to end it.

That requires political organisation, a revolutionary socialist party which seeks to direct workers' struggles toward the conquest of state power. Until such a party emerges, South Africa will hang suspended between reform and revolution. ■

Alex Callinicos



Johannesburg: a white on the run

The protestant working class

THERE IS no subject in Irish politics about which more nonsense is spoken than the Protestant working class.

Most political groups—including all the major political parties—are either frightened or flummoxed by it. Usually both.

The reason for the fear and confusion is fairly simple. It is that any calm analysis of why Protestant workers cling to Orange bigotry leads to conclusions which most political organisations can't stomach.

We have to begin by facing the obvious fact that sectarian bigotry is still widespread and strong among a majority of Protestant workers. This was clear from the results of the 15 by-elections held in the North in January.

Right-wing Loyalists increased their support by thousands and won 78.6 percent of the poll. Moreover, support was strongest in solid working-class areas like East Belfast.

This hard fact can't be wished away by claims that Protestant workers were 'confused' or 'misled' or by reference to the lack of credible alternative candidates in some constituencies. More Protestant workers went out to vote for Orange bigots than in 1983.

This fact was reinforced by the relative success of the strike against the Anglo-Irish Agreement in February. Of course, there was widespread intimidation and, of course, the RUC did little to counter the intimidation. But if there had been sizeable hostility to the strike in the power stations, the shipyard, the engineering factories and so forth, the intimidation would not have worked. The strike call was answered because, while many Protestant workers might not have been enthusiastic about it, neither did it go against the grain. And what they were striking about was the apparent involvement of 'representatives' of the Catholics in running Northern Ireland.

The strike was about keeping Catholics out. And 'keeping Catholics out' means preserving Protestant privilege.

Orange bigotry is based on Protestant privilege today as surely as it was when the Orange Order was founded in 1795. Then, the privilege had to do with access to the best land on the most favourable terms.

Today it has to do with jobs, houses, social prestige and access to political influence.

The fact that, from the Protestant workers' point of view, the privilege is pretty small, matters not at all. When tuppence-halfpenny is looking down on tuppence, the halfpenny difference can assume an importance out of all proportion to its actual size.

The existence of Protestant privilege in the North down through the years is not seriously denied by anyone any more.

Nor is it seriously denied that from the inception of the Northern state in 1921 the preservation of Protestant privilege became official state policy.

The quotes from Unionist prime ministers are so well known they have

the Protestant and Catholic workers. What he discovered was very simple.

Average male unemployment had increased massively between '71 and '85 (from 10.3 to 26.4 percent). Within this, Protestant unemployment went up from 6.6 to an estimated 18-20 percent. But for Catholics the rise was from 17.3 to 38-40 percent. (The figures for female unemployment, published separately, showed the same pattern: average rise, 4.7 to 9.5; Protestant rise, 3.6 to 11-12; Catholic rise, 7.0 to 18-19.)

In other words, while Protestant workers had become worse off over the 14-year period, Catholics had become worse off at a faster rate. The sectarian gap had not narrowed. It had become wider. And there

is no reason to suppose that this trend is not continuing.

Despite the Fair Employment Act and the existence of a Fair Employment Agency, Catholics are still finding it impossible to get jobs in the shipyard, in Shorts aircraft factory, in the major engineering firms and so on.

And the same pattern—of a sectarian gap—emerges from Cookstown, Antrim, Derry, Armagh, Lisburn, Enniskillen... everywhere. Concluded Rowthorn: 'The disparity between Catholics and Protestants will remain

gigantic for the foreseeable future.'

Thus when Protestant workers march today under the slogan: 'What we have we hold', they are talking about something very real. And insofar as they have lost anything in the last two decades (in terms of direct control over the police and unchecked power in the councils) they are demanding: 'What we used to have we want back'.

This fundamental fact is scarcely mentioned at all in most coverage of the North, which strives to suggest that the Protestant masses are just deluded by demented demagogues, that if only the real situation was explained to them clearly they wouldn't follow the Orange drum any more.

It's understandable that this mindless nonsense should be peddled by Garrett FitzGerald and his hangers on in the media: the right-wing nationalist tradition they represent has made evading the reality of the North into an art form.



Loyalist youth 'tuppence-halfpenny looking down on tuppence'

become catch-phrases: 'A Protestant parliament for a Protestant people' (Craigavon); 'If we in Ulster allow Roman Catholics to work...we are traitors to Ulster' (Brookeborough); and so on.

This policy of anti-Catholic bigotry was enforced by means of repression and murder, often carried out by the official forces of the state (the RUC and B-specials), occasionally carried out by unofficial armed gangs and merely tolerated by the state.

These facts are now acknowledged on all sides. What, very often, is not acknowledged is that Protestant privilege is still a fact of life in the North.

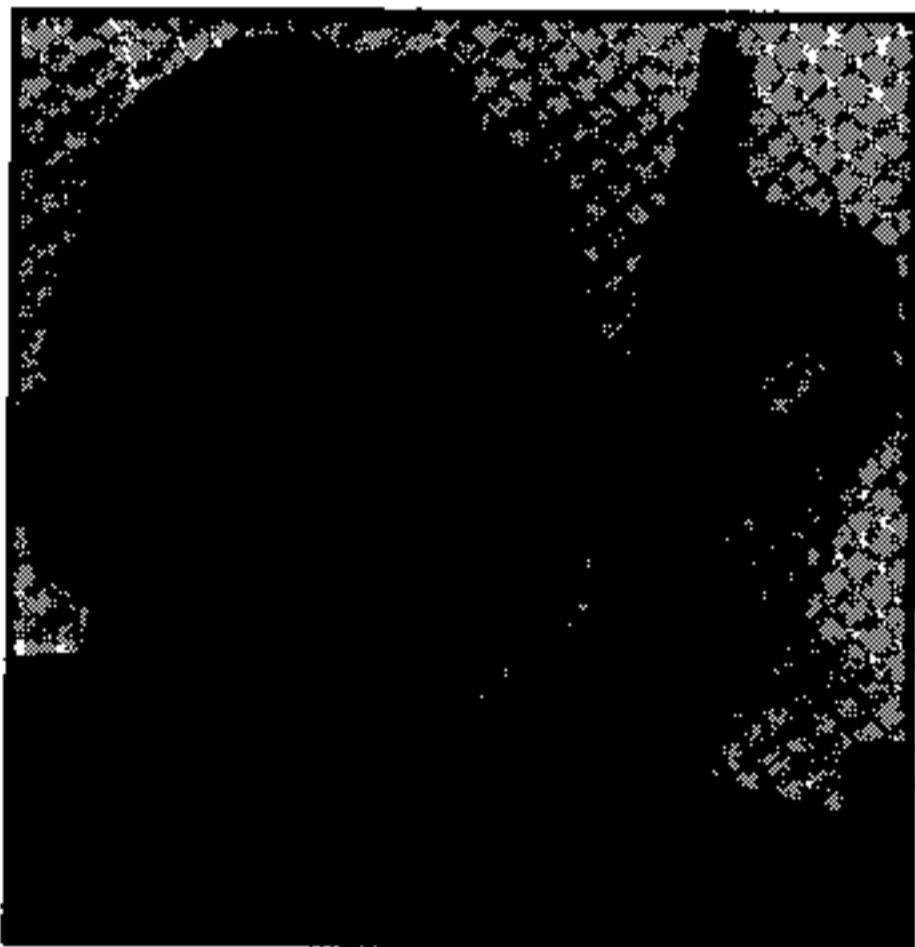
For example, in January the Belfast magazine *Fortnight* published a survey of unemployed trends in the North by Cambridge economist Bob Rowthorn. Using the 1971 and 1981 census returns and statistics released since, Rowthorn traced the way patterns of unemployment affected

But the same line—that there's no real basis for Orange bigotry at all—is also pushed enthusiastically by self-styled socialists like the Labour Party left and the Workers Party (the old Official Sinn Fein/IRA). Indeed the Workers Party goes further and suggests that Orange bigotry is merely an emotional reaction to militant Republicanism.

Unless reality is faced it cannot be changed. Unless we deal with the real basis of Protestant workers' sectarianism we cannot devise a strategy for detaching Protestant workers from it.

When they attach themselves to sectarian ideas Protestant workers are entering an alliance with Protestant bosses. They are declaring that the religion they share with middle and upper class Protestants is more important than the status of worker which they share with people of a different religion. The Orange Order and its associated bodies have traditionally provided the mechanism by which this integration took place.

Former Unionist Prime Minister Brian Faulkner summed it up perfectly when he told a Twelfth of July demonstration in 1963:



The arch bigot

'Many a company director has marched with his lodge today shoulder to shoulder with wage earners. This is a healthy state of affairs.'

What the wage earners got out of this was a feeling of involvement in the dominant group in society, plus a guarantee of a place towards the front of the queue for whatever jobs, houses etc might be going.

What the company director class got out of it was a feeling of security that the wage earners wouldn't be marching against them. (Faulkner completed the quote by declaring that: 'This is the right ground on which to base the soundest of industrial relations.')

Orange sectarianism has always played this role in working class politics, binding the workers to the boss class, while simultaneously cutting off the possibility of an alliance between protestant workers and others of the same class.

Over and over again it has proved very useful to capitalism in the North. The history of the North is studded with examples of working class militancy being

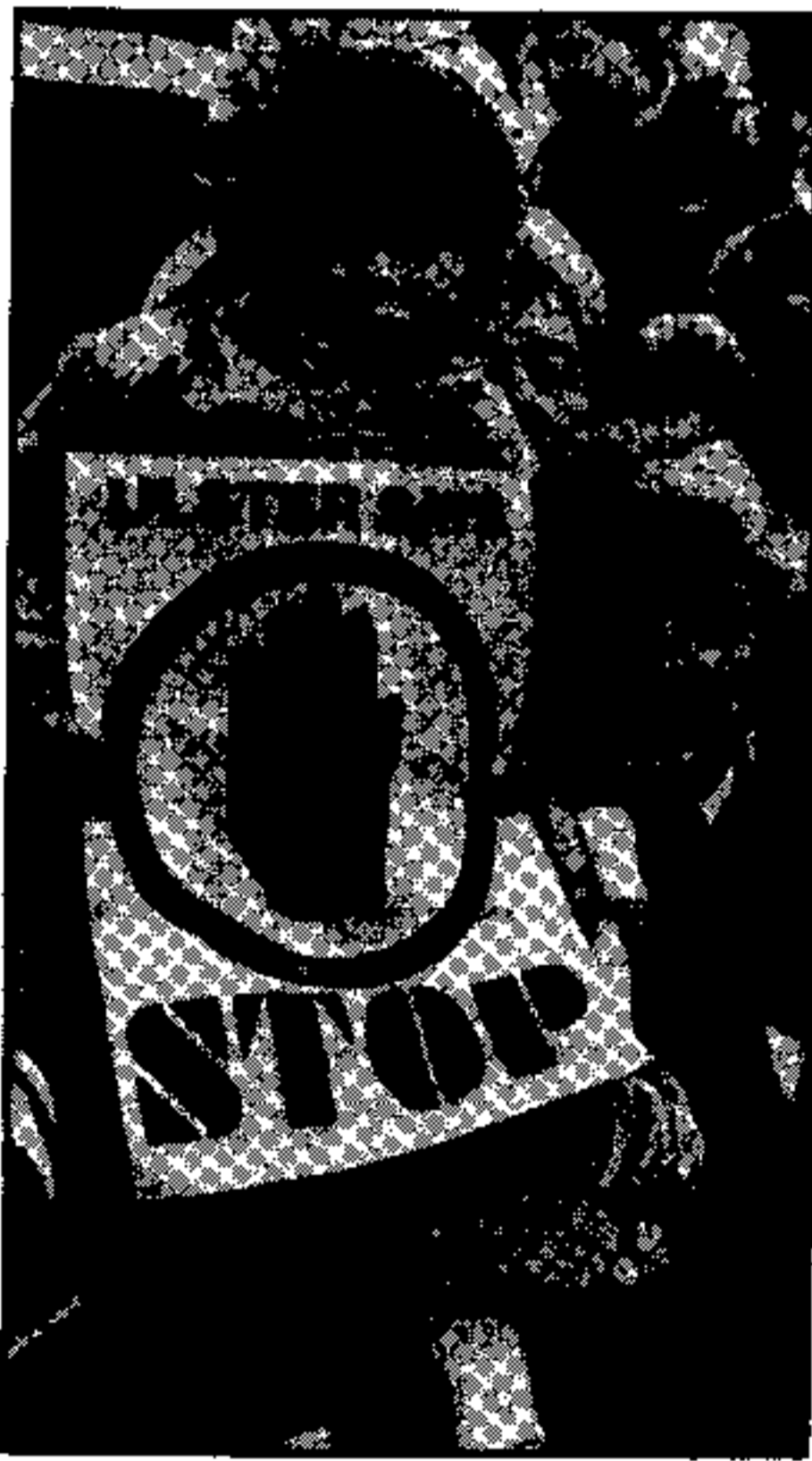
divided and destroyed by appeals from Orange bosses to Orange workers to desert the class battlefield and come back into the fold.

The fragile working class unity established on each of these occasions did not last long. But at least it happened. And on each occasion it happened in the course of working class struggle.

Indeed—and this is a point of overwhelming importance for socialists—the only occasions on which sizeable numbers of working class Protestants have even temporarily deserted Orangeism have been occasions when they were involved in class struggles.

When they struggle to better themselves as workers, Protestants—like Catholics, Muslims and Hindus—must break with their bosses and associate themselves with other workers.

When they struggle to better themselves as Protestants, they must break with other



Playing the Orange card

workers and associate themselves with their bosses.

Of course, there are many Protestant workers—mostly active trade unionists—who have not been swept away by the sectarian rhetoric and who in their unions and workplaces have stood firm courageously against the pressure pushing them backwards towards sectarianism.

However, these are in the minority and for the time being right-wing bigots are making all the running. Thus the reaction of many left-wingers to write the Protestant working class off as hopelessly lost to bigotry and political filth.

This is very stupid.

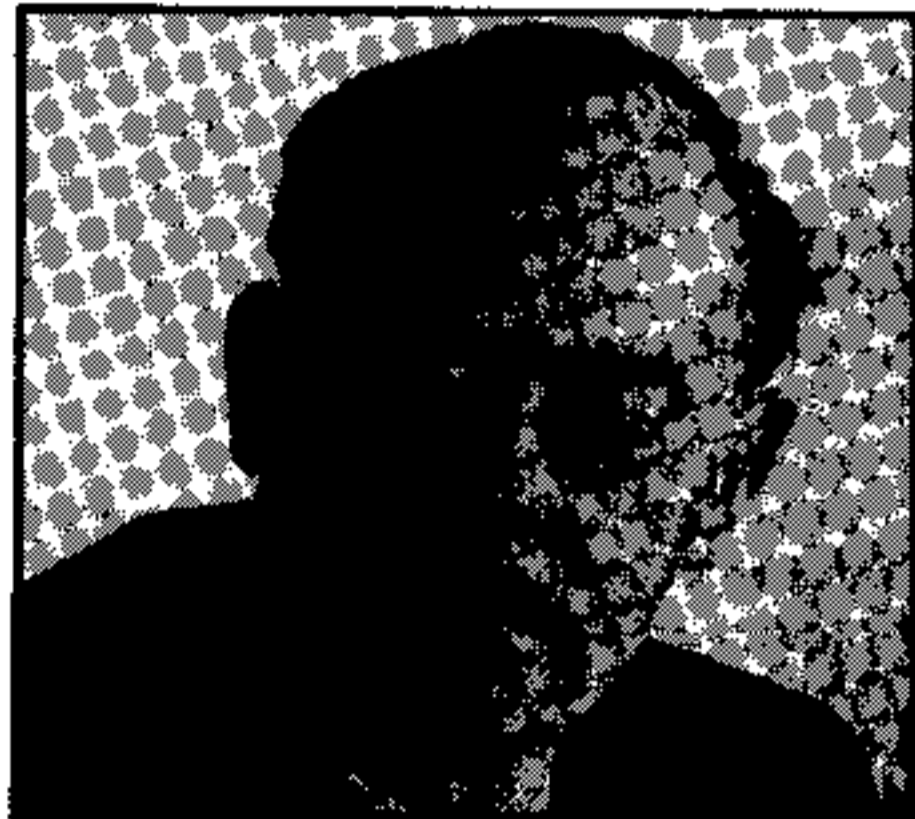
It is obvious that Protestant workers can—and sooner or later will—reject Loyalism and make common cause with their Catholic fellow-workers. This is obvious because it has happened fre-

quently in the past—including the very recent past—and for reasons that will inevitably recur.

Any socialist seriously interested in overcoming the sectarian divisions and establishing working class unity must look closely at the occasions when this came about, and examine why it came about and the reasons it was so short-lived when it did.

It happened in 1907, when James Larkin led Protestant and Catholic dockers and transport workers in a strike which paralysed Belfast.

It happened in 1919 when 40,000 shipyard and engineering workers came out in Belfast for the 48-hour week in a mighty



Molyneux—the 'moderate' bigot

struggle which only ended when British troops were sent in to smash the strike. Most of the strikers were Protestant—but a majority of the strike committee were Catholic. The strike lasted weeks, was absolutely solid and the workers fought together against British Army scabs.

It happened in 1932 when thousands of unemployed workers engaged on 'relief' work struck for higher payments. The Falls and the Shankill joined and from the inter-connecting streets fought off RUC baton charges.

It happened in 1944 when Belfast was gripped by an unofficial general strike involving more than 25,000 workers after mainly-Protestant shipyard workers defied wartime anti-strike laws and came out over pay.

It happened in 1982 when thousands of Catholic and Protestant health service workers across the North stood shoulder-to-shoulder on picket lines against Thatcher's cuts and for a wage rise.

These particular incidents are well-known to anyone with a smattering of Irish history. But there are hundreds of other examples of smaller-scale industrial action which make the same point—that, year in and year out, Protestant workers do break from sectarian loyalist ideas and ally themselves instead with Catholic workers to better the conditions of both.

Of course on each occasion the unity has been short-lived. But the fact that it happened at all—and has happened so frequently—shows clearly where we have to start from.

We have to start from the simple and glaringly obvious fact that it is when, and only when, they are involved in class

struggle that Protestant workers see Catholic workers as their natural allies and Protestant bosses as their natural enemies.

There are no examples of sizeable numbers of Protestant workers in this century rejecting Loyalism in any other circumstances. Only class politics has ever successfully challenged Loyalism for Protestant workers' allegiance.

The reason the moments of class unity have always been brief is that unity on the economic issues has never developed seriously into unity on the political issues. On each of the occasions mentioned above, the workers began to split along religious lines as soon as the 'national question' was raised. And in the aftermath of working

It was true after the unity of 1932 when Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookborough) did likewise and triggered the bloody sectarian riots of the mid-30s. Etc, etc. It is still true today.

On no occasion has the official workers' leadership been able to enter into political battle against those out to split the unity which workers themselves had shown could be established. The most dramatic example was the pitiable attempt of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions (ICTU) to organise a back-to-work march during the 1974 anti-power sharing strike. About 200 turned up—under British army protection.

Throughout the current troubles—like all previous troubles—Northern leaders of

While the Provos generally express support for workers struggling for better wages or to save jobs, or whatever, they deny that such struggles have any immediate relevance to the fight against the State.

The Republican line is that class politics must take a back seat until such time as the sectarian State is destroyed. So the united Ireland which they are offering as an alternative to the North is, clearly, a capitalist united Ireland.

Once that is created, so the Republicans say, then the struggle for a socialist Ireland can begin. There is nothing whatever in this to attract Protestant workers, even Protestant workers who are class-conscious.

The key to winning Protestant workers away from Loyalism and to socialism is to build an organisation which is based on the day-to-day struggles of the working class and which also faces up squarely to the necessity to smash the Northern State.

An organisation which only fights on the economic front might gather Protestant working class support on a shallow basis and in the short term, but it will be broken when it comes into collision—as inevitably it will—with the realities of Northern politics.

An organisation which fights only to destroy the sectarian State, but which doesn't base itself on working class struggle, will remain confined within the Catholic community and will never make contact with the consciousness of Protestant workers, even when they are directly engaged in fighting their own bosses.

To the sectarian State which offers Protestant workers marginal privileges in relation to jobs and houses it is necessary to counterpose the idea of a socialist Ireland in which the rule of the capitalist class—Orange, Green and true-blue Brit—has been ended. A State which represents the culmination of all the struggles of Irish workers, Catholic and Protestant, North and South.

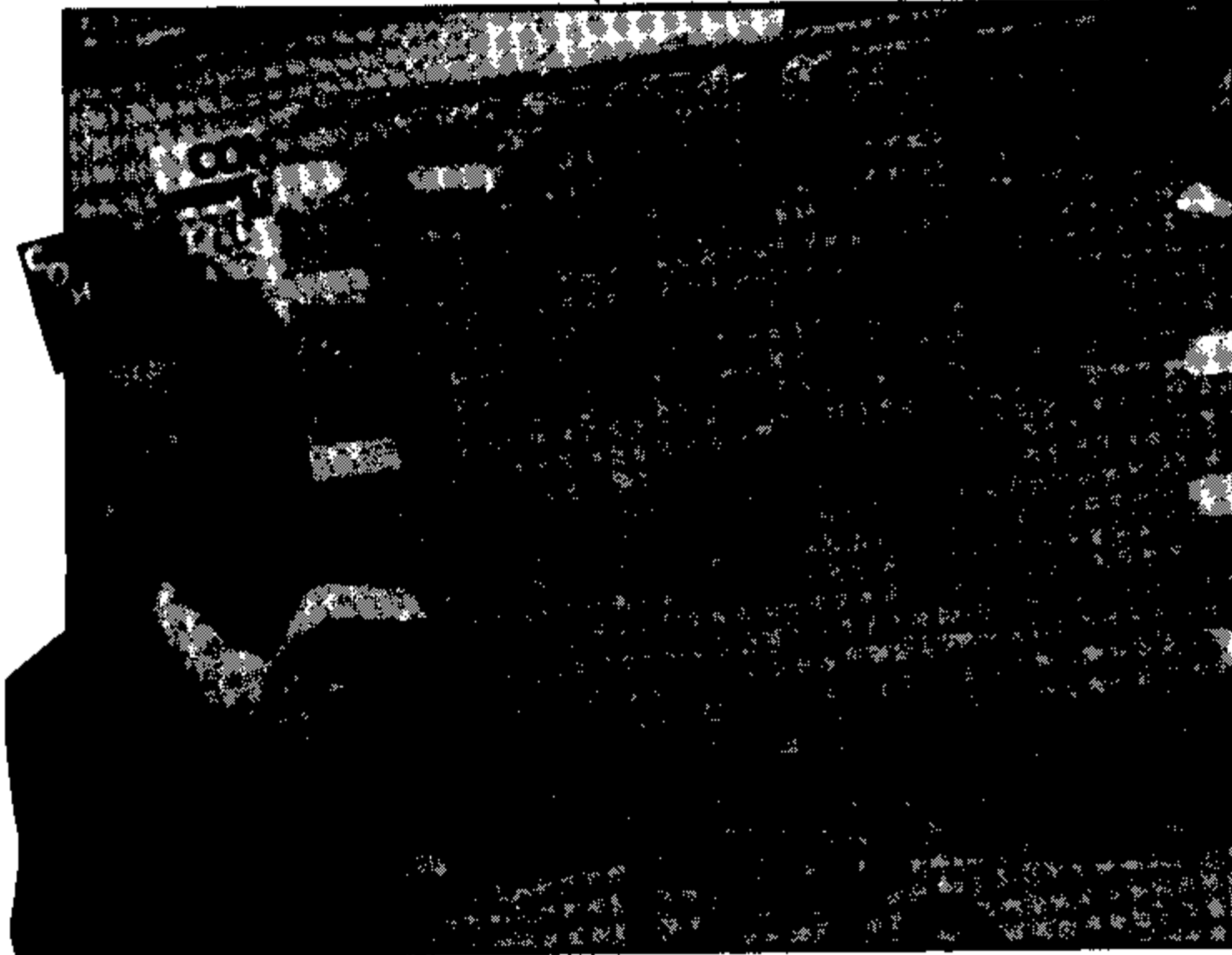
It is possible to make a link between that vision for the future and Protestant workers in the present. Protestant workers—simply because they are workers—are thrown into conflict with their bosses time and time again. They are not mindless automatons, nor are they helpless victims of some mysterious virus. To analyse the situation as if they were is a perverse form of anti-Protestant bigotry.

Moreover, it is to ignore the fact that the strength of Loyalist ideology in the North has a great deal to do precisely with the disastrous failure of both the social democratic and Republican ideologies to get to grips and grapple at close quarters with it for the allegiance of Protestant workers.

Only revolutionary socialism—Marxism—which links the question of the existence of the Northern State to the question of what class is to rule in Ireland has any hope of success. ■

Eamonn McCann

This article originally appeared in Socialist Worker, the paper of the Socialist Workers Movement in Ireland.



Health workers crossed the sectarian divide in 1982

class struggles it was always raised by the bosses for precisely that reason.

Once 'Home Rule', and later 'The Border', entered into it, the Protestant workers lapsed back into Loyalism and began to identify themselves again with people of the same religion rather than people of the same class.

One of the major reasons for that has been that the official leaders of the labour movement have time and time again failed to face up to the political questions.

The North's official trade union leaders, for example, have argued at every stage that economic issues must be kept separate from politics, that to introduce politics is 'divisive'.

The result has always been that when division came about anyway they have had no answer, no basis on which to combat the divisive politics which are inherent in the structure and the very nature of the Northern state.

This was true after 1919, when Craigavon, preparing for the establishment of the State, whipped up Loyalist emotions in the Belfast shipyards and split the workers asunder.

the ICTU have denounced anyone who tried to argue that no section of the working class should support a State based on sectarianism. That's 'divisive', they said.

The result has been that when the question of supporting the Northern State is raised—as it has been raised now by Ian Paisley and James Molyneaux over the Hillsborough Agreement—the ICTU is in no position to say anything.

It is the official policy of the ICTU in the North to say nothing about the border, or anything relating to the border. The policy is—no policy.

Small wonder then that many of the workers who were solid together in the health service strikes a short time ago are now deeply divided. Their own union leadership had told them that the picket line unity had no political implications whatever.

At the same time, the major tradition which does consistently put the issue of the sectarian nature of the Northern State right on the very top of the agenda—the Republican Movement—doesn't acknowledge the importance of workers' unity on the economic issues at all.

Slow strangulation

AS SOON as the first bombs hit Tripoli last month the whole of Nicaragua moved to the alert. In all his speeches Reagan has described a worldwide plot orchestrated from Libya and Nicaragua and threatening the very existence of the West.

So it was logical to assume that the response to the bombing of Libya would determine how long it was before Managua was subjected to the same stirring reminder of the balance of world military power. In the event, the bombing has not occurred.

But the threat has not diminished. A Pentagon Report published in May made the administration's attitude crystal clear. The Report was an attack on the Contadora peacekeeping process and it was an open warning. The Nicaraguan government, it said, would use Contadora 'as a shield behind which they could continue the use of subversive aggression to impose Communist regimes throughout Central America'.

The alternatives were clear enough; invasion in the short term (involving 100,000 troops in the calculations of the Pentagon) or support for the counter-revolutionary armies on whom Reagan has lavished some of his most tearful eulogies. These are the freedom fighters, the national liberation armies for freedom, he says.

The whole debate about whether or not the US will invade is, in a sense, beside the point. While the possibility of a direct military assault on Nicaragua is now openly discussed in Washington, the fact is

that an invasion has already happened.

Five thousand 'Contra' troops are massed on the northern border with Honduras and their raids have caused nearly 6,000 deaths in the last year. They are highly trained, very well equipped and well paid.

They are also extraordinarily savage; when they kill, they do so painfully and slowly. A year ago *Newsweek* carried photographs of a Contra killing which made the brutal point.

Most of the Contra leadership, and many of its personnel were members of the National Guard—an elite force owing absolute allegiance to the old dictator Somoza. Bermudez, the military chief of FDN (the Honduran Contras) is one of them.

Others, like FDN's political leader Calero, are wealthy thugs most of whose money comes from drug trading. They maintain an uneasy relationship with the more 'respectable' leaders of the Contras, Chamorro and Cruz.

To the south, another Contra organisation, ARDE, was led until recently by an ex-commander of the FSLN, Eden Pastora. Despite his willingness to murder Nicaraguans, he was uneasy about associating with the National Guard.

His reluctance was an obstacle to the unification of the Contras—and he was removed by the US, after the failure of an earlier attempt to kill him.

These then are the 'contemporary

Maquis' to whom Reagan has shown such unstinting allegiance—even to the extent of attaching one demand for economic support for them to the federal budget to make sure it would get through.

On that occasion, as on many others, the manoeuvre failed. Yet at the same time, so-called 'non-lethal aid' (\$27 million to date) continued to be sent; the Honduran army continued to provide arms, personnel and a cover; and ample direct military support came from the CIA and private anti-communist organisations.

All this is public knowledge; yet there has been a marked reluctance on the part of Congress or Senate to challenge Reagan's obsession. Last year, military assistance was turned down—but even Democrats swallowed their doubts when Reagan's determined media campaign threatened their seats in the coming elections.

In the US there are few voices outside the revolutionary left prepared to contest Reagan's lunacy. Where the extreme right, in the person of Jesse Helms, dominates the Foreign Relations Committee, and the press and media have capitulated before the fact to the assumptions of the right, the political cost is one few self-serving politicians are prepared to bear.

Nicaragua itself is already bearing the cost of America's exercise of its ideological discipline over its half of the world.

One result is a campaign of economic attrition that has already had its effects. Fifty percent of Nicaragua's national budget is now expended in maintaining an army of 50,000 and a reserve militia permanently mobilised in the defence of the national frontiers.

The other effects are permanent shortages of basic goods, machinery, medicines on the one hand, and on the other a loss of the export earnings necessary to make up those shortages.

To this end Contra attacks are concentrated on the coffee growing areas, killing those who harvest the crop, preventing the sowing of seed and driving the peasants from their land in fear of their lives.

Yet there is a paradox of even greater proportions here. For the full burden of economic hardship has been borne by the workers and peasants of the country.

Amidst this scarcity there are supermarkets where luxury commodities can be bought for dollars; and the economy remains overwhelmingly in private hands. One consequence of the almost permanent state of military emergency existing in the country, furthermore, has been a series of measures restricting the right to strike.

The economic damage to this tiny and vulnerable country, then, has been massive. Production losses of around \$282 million combined with £98 million in actual damage are only one aspect of it.

Only 6 percent of the national budget this year was given to new projects—ironically, a number of large and very expensive projects have continued because they are tied to foreign aid, through they make little economic sense in

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Nicaragua's siege economy.

These are the most obvious effects. But there are other political consequences which, in a sense, are more far reaching still. Reagan and his spokespersons rant wildly about Nicaragua's responsibility for regional subversion. They describe the Sandinista government as a Marxist-Leninist threat to world stability.

It's worth recalling that Nicaragua is a country the size of England with less than 3 million people, and an economy entirely dependent on agricultural exports.

The double irony is that not only has Nicaragua striven to win its democratic credentials, but that it remains a mixed economy with the overwhelming majority of economic power remaining in private hands.

It is the basic support of the population for the military defence of the country that has ensured the continuing popularity of the Sandinistas. And this despite the fact

leading role in society—as it has effectively done since the escalation of the military assaults on Nicaragua in 1981/2.

Such a command structure can co-exist with a national assembly, a limited bourgeois democracy—but not with authentic workers' power.

The elections of 1984, in that sense, were not a development of popular power but an alternative to it. Above all they were a demonstration to the USA and the West generally of Nicaragua's readiness to accept the general rules of behaviour within the Western alliance.

Central to that was the continuing protection of the domestic middle class, and a renunciation of support for the Salvadorean revolution. And as that support was progressively withdrawn, so the internal balance of power within the Salvadorean movement itself was shifted towards the advocates of compromise and negotiation and away from the revo-

demands laid on the Nicaraguans more and more extreme.

In part, this reflects the political shift to the right within the Salvadorean movement, the effective destruction of the resistance movement in Guatemala for the moment, and the concessions made in earlier negotiations by the Nicaraguans themselves.

They did ask Salvadorean fighters to leave, they did accept a programme for elections imposed by the US. And they have provided a growing range of guarantees to the domestic bourgeoisie as well as imposing a series of political and economic constraints upon the mass of the population.

Far from bringing peace, it has simply given the right a taste for blood and a conviction of the possibility of victory. In the intervening four years, Mexico, the leading light in the negotiations, has become increasingly absorbed in its own debt crisis and its solution. As its own internal stability has come increasingly into question, its sympathetic attitude to Nicaragua has changed.

Yet the Sandinistas have continued to sue for peace, express a willingness to open a dialogue with the internal opposition, expel foreign advisers and stop aid to El Salvador.

The US demands that they accept a permanent military disadvantage and the permanent presence of 3,000 US troops in Honduras have made it impossible for any accord to be signed—and it is clear that the US will continue to veto any peace plan, not least by threatening invasion if any such plan were signed.

The implications of all this give little comfort to Nicaragua in the immediate future. The debt crisis has tightened the general discipline within the world system, limiting the room for manoeuvre that some social democratic regimes still enjoyed four or five years ago.

The US under Reagan has opted for an aggressive isolationism supported only (but without question) by the British government; it will demand military victory either directly or through surrogates—and it is this latter that the irrepressible warmonger Henry Kissinger describes as his 'plan for peace for the region'.

In such a climate each concession simply whets the monster's appetite—and no revolution can guarantee its own survival by sacrificing another. On the contrary, the US will come to the negotiating table—as it did in 1979-81—only because the struggle has advanced and the balance of forces shifted.

Its solution will always be containment, isolation and a slow strangulation. Ours must be solidarity in the first place, and in the second a refusal to divide our own side into national teams.

It is the identity and shared interests of workers that is our central strength—and the central consideration around which the politics of resistance can be built. ■

Mike Gonzalez



Waiting for the Americans

that the cost burden of war has fallen on the working classes.

The middle class has been protected from its effects in order to maintain the mixed character of Nicaragua's economy. And in the midst of shortages and hardship, it is the very process of change itself—internally and externally—that has been delivered to the international bourgeoisie as a guarantee of Nicaragua's will to make fundamental compromises with the world system.

Two things are central in this respect. The first is the relationship between the new state and its own working class; the second, and the key test in some ways, its relation to the revolution in El Salvador.

In the states of emergency that have succeeded one another since 1982, the right to strike has been the first victim. Social investment has virtually ended as resources have been diverted to military spending.

The much vaunted organisations formed in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 revolution have not formed the basis of the power structure. On the contrary, the constitution now being discussed makes clear that it is the army that shall hold the

lutionary wing of the Salvadorean FMLN-FDR.

It was never explicitly stated, of course, and the Nicaraguans continue to offer verbal support to the Salvadorean struggle. But the reality is that Nicaragua is actively engaged in a 'peace process' where the principal bargaining counter is the Central American revolution itself.

The Contadora group came together in 1982. The Plan was an attempt to limit the Nicaraguan revolution. This had two aspects: first, to protect the rights and property of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie; secondly, to limit the extraordinary impact of the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship on the rest of Latin America, and in particular on those already building a mass resistance movement in El Salvador and to an extent in Guatemala.

There was a tactical disagreement with Reagan and his administration—but there was a general acceptance of the need to limit the effects of the revolution of 1979. That was the price of peace according to Contadora.

Since 1982 the terms of the Plan have become increasingly stringent—and the

The red Republican

PEADER O'DONNELL who died in Dublin in May, has been described as the greatest Irish agitator of the 20th century, and it would certainly be hard to find another candidate for that honour.

His political career spanned 70-odd years from the days when he first heard James Connolly speak in Dublin to a short time before his death when, at 91, blind and in poor health, he presided over a mock ceremony in protest at an Irish University's conferral of an honorary degree on Ronald Reagan.

Ironically, for most of his life O'Donnell had been banned from the same university as a dangerous subversive!

Born in rural Donegal in 1893, after training as a teacher, he went to Scotland to organise migrant Irish potato pickers—many of them the children he taught back home. He returned to Ireland and became an organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in 1918.

He soon gained a reputation as a militant with considerable tactical talent. One of his first acts was to lead the occupation of a mental hospital by its nursing staff. When one of the strikers lost faith and threatened to open the doors to the police, O'Donnell, self-appointed 'medical superintendent' certified the renegade as mad and locked him in the padded cell until the strike was won.



Peader O'Donnell

When Ireland's war of independence began in 1919 O'Donnell rose quickly in the IRA, becoming a Brigade Commander.

In 1922, the official labour leaders accepted the Treaty which partitioned the country to the continuing advantage of imperialism. O'Donnell, like many others, abandoned the labour movement and threw himself full-time into the IRA.

At the outbreak of the civil war he was a member of the anti-Treaty Army Council, but was soon taken prisoner. While many of those captured with him, including his friend and fellow radical Liam Mellows, were summarily executed, O'Donnell survived.

But it was a narrow shave. On the night of the executions O'Donnell had been roused from his sleep and ordered to dress. Some hours later he was ordered back to bed and told 'your name wasn't on the list after all'.

It was after the civil war that O'Donnell came into his own. From 1924 to 1930 he edited the IRA paper, *An Phoblacht*, of which 50,000 copies were regularly sold—the equivalent of around 750,000 for a revolutionary paper in Britain.

His aim was to turn the IRA from a purely military machine into a politically radical body, organising and leading struggles and making the connections between rural workers and small farmers—whom O'Donnell believed held the key to the Irish revolution.

To this end he launched and almost single-handedly conducted a mass campaign against the mortgages paid by small farmers to the British government for the purchase of their farms from the deposed and departed English landlords.

But the IRA withheld support and in the end victory went to Fianna Fail, the party created by Eamonn de Valera when he split from O'Donnell and the IRA in 1926. De Valera led Fianna Fail to power in 1932 promising to withhold the mortgage payments from Britain.

In many ways this episode sums up the limitations of O'Donnell's radical agrarian politics.

O'Donnell's objective—'The Republic'—was an ill-defined hybrid where power would not be wielded by the dominant social class but by 'the people'. He rejected the Workers' Republic as 'too city-minded a term in my world of the small farm countryside'. But what he overlooked was the fact that even the most radical agrarian demands were containable within the capitalist system.

Not surprisingly, he failed to find the road to his Republic—for the road itself did not exist. Fianna Fail was much clearer about the kind of Republic it wanted: it would be unashamedly capitalist.

O'Donnell tried to fight them without offering a viable alternative.

The consequences of his radical-republican approach were seen most clearly in the Republican Congress debacle.

In 1934, after two years of Fianna Fail rule, thousands of Republicans who had agreed to give de Valera a chance, were disillusioned and ready for a new departure. O'Donnell seized the opportunity and split from the indecisive IRA to launch a new mass movement: the Republican Congress.

In building it, one of O'Donnell's greatest achievements (in the company of Connolly's daughter Nora) was to win over a vanguard of Protestant workers in Belfast.

But O'Donnell and his ex-IRA colleagues, supported by a rightward moving Communist Party, insisted that the goal of Congress was not the workers' republic as much of its propaganda and activity had seemed to suggest. Instead they would aim for 'the republic' that de Valera had failed to deliver. This led the Congress to split and disintegrate leaving the ground clear for Fianna Fail.

Within a few years, through the careful use of the carrot and the stick, de Valera had reduced the Republican movement to an insignificant rump, which, by and large, it remained until the North exploded over 50 years later.

Although O'Donnell remained politically active for the rest of his long life, involving himself in every worthy cause and struggle, his role as a leading actor on the centre stage of Irish politics ended in the mid-30s with the ideological triumph of Fianna Fail. Radical republicanism had proved unequal to the task of winning 'the people' for 'the republic'. That was not O'Donnell's fault—it was just an unattainable objective.

At the time of his death Peader O'Donnell was President of the Irish Academy of Letters. He was a powerful and prolific writer with several outstanding novels to his credit as well as three volumes of autobiography.

His art served his politics and all his books are worth reading, not just for their considerable literary merit but for the sense of unflinching, incorruptible rebelliousness and deep humanity they convey.

Although a tough political operator right to the end, O'Donnell was quite self-effacing. On the interest shown in his life and struggles he commented:

'I can only say names must be very thin on the ground when someone searches for the makings of a book in mine. My name became widely known not for what I did but through the stature of those who abused me.'

The truth is, the name of Peader O'Donnell once struck fear into the hearts of Ireland's rich and powerful. With him finally out of the way, they may think themselves a little more secure. But as Peader O'Donnell knew so well, there will come another day. ■

Mike Milotte

Voicing bitter kindness

ALICE WALKER was born in Eatonton, Georgia, and her writing obviously draws on her early life in the Southern states of America. She has since escaped the poverty of her background and risen to become one of the most famous black American writers of this century.

Her marvellous writing justifies the many accolades heaped upon her by critics and public alike.

During her career she has written three novels and a number of short stories, essays and poems. *The Colour Purple*, her best known novel, won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and has recently been turned into a film by Steven Spielberg.

It is a compelling, beautifully written work which enables the reader to understand the experience of black people, particularly black women, in the southern states of America.

She now lives in San Francisco as a successful artist but in her writing her origins are inescapable. There is always somewhere 'the evil greedy men who worked my father to death and almost broke the courage of that strong woman, my mother'.

Most of her writing is partially set in the southern states. She is able to portray the vicious racist divide still very much in evidence and show how deeply this affects the lives of the black population. One direct outcome is the strength of religion. She describes the people she grew up with:

'Outcasts to be used and humiliated by the larger society, the southern black sharecropper and poor farmer clung to his own kind and to a religion that had been given to pacify him as a slave but which he soon transformed into an antidote against bitterness.'

Walker emphasises the importance of her southern heritage again and again: 'What the black southern writer inherits as a natural right is a sense of community.' She consciously makes preserving this heritage her responsibility:

'We must give voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighbourly kindness and sustaining love.'

When she writes about the life of blacks in America her criticism of American capitalism is fierce. Their poverty grinds them down and dominates their lives:

'Without money, an illness, even a simple one, can undermine the will. Without money, getting into hospital is problematic...'

The crux of her position is probably summed up in the comment, 'America does not support or honor us as human beings, let alone blacks, women or artists.'

In the foreword to a new biography on Zora Neale Hurston, Walker spells out

what is latent in her novels: her pride at being black and, above that, her pride in being a woman. She has chosen to fight back against American society, predominantly through her portrayal of black women in her writing.

When she describes the world in which we all live, Walker shines. She does not openly preach but comments sharply upon what goes on around her. In *The Colour Purple*, Celie's sister writes to her from Africa, describing workers on a cocoa plantation:

'They don't own the cocoa fields, Celie, even President Tubman doesn't own them. People in a place called Holland do. The people who make Dutch chocolate. And there are overseers who make sure the people work hard, who live in stone houses in the corners of the field.'

However, Walker also sees it as part of her responsibility as an artist to change the world. She talks of nothing less than a revolution. Changing the world is to be achieved through her writing and lecturing.

This requires a certain amount of individual success for '...changing the world requires a lot of mobility. Requires money, and, as Virginia Woolf put it so well "a room of one's own".'

It is not easy to grasp exactly what she means by changing the world and what revolution she envisages. The most pervasive meaning in her work seems to be that of a spiritual revolution; the ability for all people to have the personal freedom to overcome all forms of servitude.

How is the world to be changed? She seems to suggest this can be done through the power of writing alone, although she also praises the Civil Rights Movement.

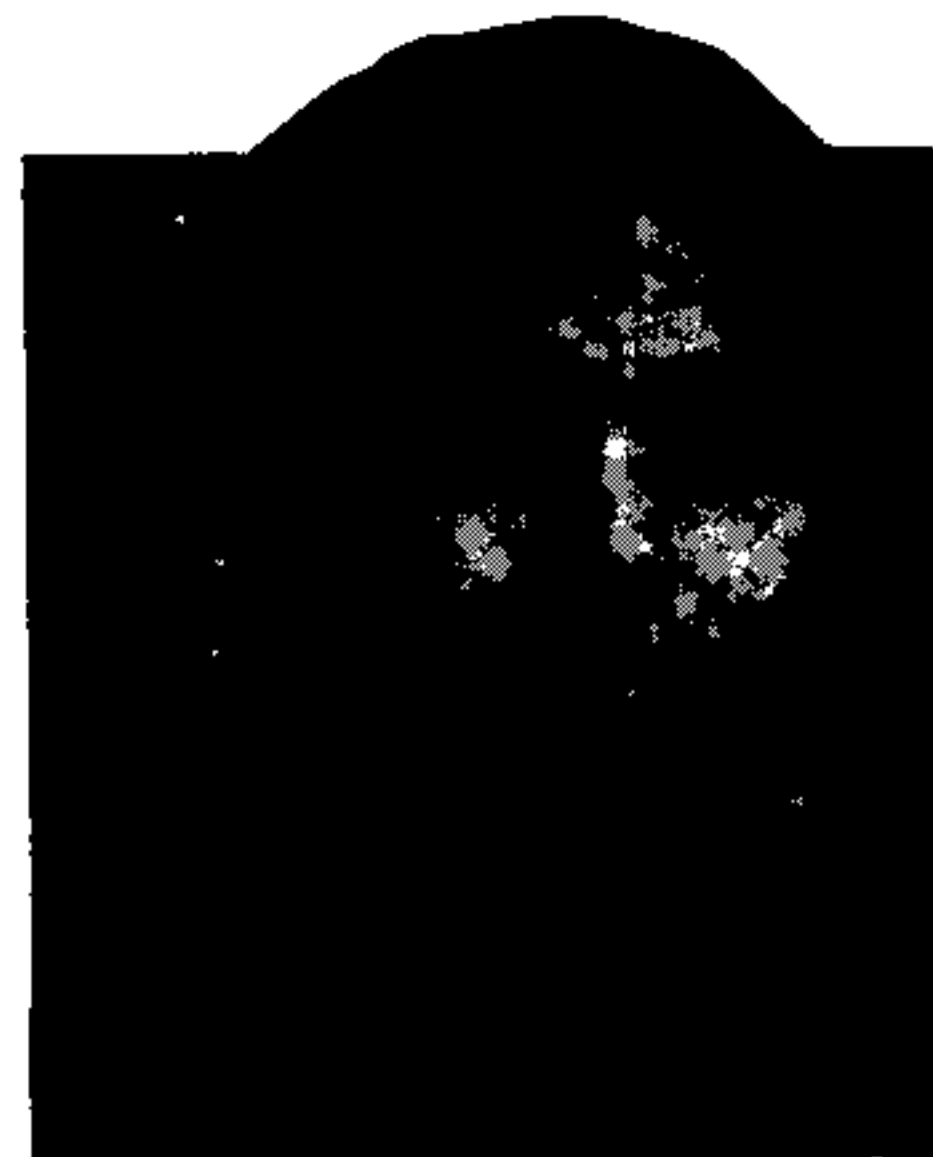
She strongly attacks those who claim the Civil Rights Movement did not live up to its expectations and points to its achievements:

'There is widespread starvation in Mississippi... The movement has prodded and pushed some liberal senators into pressurising the government for food so that the hungry may eat.'

What she overlooks is the fact that the aim of the movement was nothing less than integration and equality, and this was not achieved. Although in the 1960s the Kennedy and Johnson governments provided for formal equality for the blacks in the South, this was not realised in practice. For her, the most important achievement was that 'it broke the pattern of black servitude in this country'.

In her own words about her first novel, Alice Walker outlined her main preoccupations:

'I am preoccupied with the spiritual



Alice Walker

survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women. In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, ostensibly about a man and his son, it is the women and how they are treated that colours everything.'

It is also a woman who provides the only hope for the Copeland family at the end of the novel.

In all her work men are portrayed in an extremely unsympathetic way. It is first and foremost the *men* who are responsible for the miserable lives of her women. In *Meridian* it is clear that she perceives the antagonism between men and women as even transcending that between black and white. She chooses to include a scene in which one of the white volunteers in the Civil Rights Movement is raped and humiliated by black men. It is in fact a central scene in the novel.

This outlook, coupled with her preoccupation with spiritual revolution, tends to lead her to putting forward individual solutions to the ills of America. Celie, the main character in *The Colour Purple*, is raped whilst still a child by her step-father, her children are taken away from her and she is forced to marry a man she despises. For Celie to triumph over adversity requires a personal transformation.

In Alice Walker's work her leading characters are women who, like her, have risen above their backgrounds and are able to decide for themselves what to do with their lives.

Her writing is powerful because she is writing for a political purpose. This is largely a feminist, individual solution. It is a pity she does not offer collective working class solutions in her work; the power of her writing would be a valuable weapon in the fight for socialism.

She is worth reading for the vivid engrossing narrative alone. It is powerful, beautiful writing from a woman who wants to change the world, as we all do.

But this writing alone will not do it and she has little else to offer. On the other hand, the work in itself is well worth reading purely on its own merits. ■

Lesley Hoggart

The Bill on the Hill

'ROLL CALL 7.08am. Item 12. Be appraised, people, that in the light of the upcoming gubernatorial election and the rally for said election at the city stadium tonight, the following personnel will be pulling double shifts: Bates, Coffey, Hill, Renko...'

I love *Hill Street Blues*. In part, its simply because as good television it stands head and shoulders above the third-rate dross that fills the box 90 percent of the time. The direction is fast and crisp, the scripts alive and three-dimensional, the characters (for the most part) real individuals not cardboard stereotypes. Above all, almost alone among American imports, it treats its audience as adults, both in the issues it tackles and the subtlety of its responses.

The last point is why its appeal goes deeper than simply being good to watch, and why it has a large (if largely closet) audience among socialists. *Hill Street* is compulsive viewing not just because it's funny, entertaining and gripping, but also because it is—within the limits of television—subversive.

On the face of it this seems absurd. How can a programme whose central message seems to be that the filth are human beings who we should treat sympathetically be anything but another expression of the ruling ideas in society? The answer comes (like the programme itself) in three parts.

Firstly, seen in terms of being a police serial, *Hill Street* breaks week in week out, the central rule of the genre—that the criminals always get their just desserts.

Indeed, the scripts do not revolve around a crime whose solution is the end of the episode. Crimes are merely events in an unfolding story whose central theme is the legal system seen from the inside.

And as seen from the inside in *Hill Street*, it stinks. The Chief of Police is a corrupt, devious and unprincipled dirtbag (to quote Belker). Detectives are on the take, involved in drug dealing, demanding sexual favours from prostitutes as protection money and so on. Senior officers either turn a blind eye or are taking their share of the racket, and are openly racist. Street patrols are running small-scale protection rackets, and are habitually brutal and violent, often shooting first and asking questions later. Most of this takes place off the Hill, of course, and most of the regulars have never been involved up to their necks (though none of them are innocent of brutality, of breaking the rules or of covering up). But we're left in no doubt that the Hill is the exception rather than the rule.

The second part of the answer lies in the values expressed in the series. *Hill Street* belongs to a new generation of American TV serials, inspired primarily by Robert

Altman's *M*A*S*H* and the subsequent series based on the film. Current examples include *Cheers*, *Kate and Allie*, *St Elsewhere* and the *Cosby Show*.

Almost all follow a similar format. Individuals have problems, caused by other individuals. By talking them through with friends, or taking individual action, they solve them.

Though on the surface shot through with liberal values, the underlying message is deeply reactionary. Everything that goes wrong in your life is capable of being put right by you, and if you can't cope with that then it's your fault.

Hill Street never breaks entirely free of the faults of the liberal series. There is a tendency to preach, to see change in purely lifestyle terms. Where it stands out from the rest is in its realism.

'The realism of Hill Street sets it apart from the rest'

Take the question of racism. You could watch *Benson* or the *Cosby Show* for months and never know it existed—and that in programmes centred around black characters! On *Hill Street* it's ever present: in the hatred that stares out of black eyes at black or hispanic cops, in the smouldering tensions of the gang-leaders' conferences, in the throwaway comments of the white characters. And it's not accepted fatalistically by the black characters, but seen as something to be fought.

Hill Street asks difficult questions and then insists that there are no simplistic answers. That the blame lies not with individuals but with the system. For that quality alone—trying to tell it like it is, in all its complexity—the realism of *Hill Street* sets it apart from the rest.

This realism also leads, of course, to a surface that is more right-wing than the liberal serials—the maintenance of law and order, and all the values that go along with that. Yet paradoxically that surface allows *Hill Street* to get at issues that other programmes would never touch. Take Andy Renko, one of the central characters: he's a southern racist, a loudmouth, a bully and incapable of treating women as equals.

Hill Street doesn't invite us to share his values, nor to despise him for them, but rather to watch him in a difficult struggle to change those ideas and assumptions. Individuals change, not as a result of being preached at, but through their own experience. It's a complicated and sensitive presentation which few other programmes



MARXISM & CULTURE

would attempt—and it works. *Hill Street* asks its audience to think, a rare thing on television.

Yet insofar as it directs those responses, it is in a liberal direction. It is Lt Hunter, the uniforms and hardware nut and the only hardcore rightwinger, who is the figure of fun. And here we come to the central weakness, the core of unreality at the heart of the realism. *Hill Street* station itself is presented as an island of sanity and (relative) purity in the sea of corruption and violence, a presentation concentrated in the father/priest figure of Frank Furillo.

The truth is, of course, that in real life *Hill Street* would be every bit as brutal and corrupt as Midtown or the Heights, and that any eccentric who tried to do anything about it would be chewed up and spat out by the system, as the film *Serpico* (based on a true story) showed. But any programme which attempted to systematically portray the police as they really are would never get the backing of a production company or the advertising to sustain it. *Hill Street* is a prisoner of the system that it tries to expose, and of the limits placed on those who want to change things through the power of the media.

Yet the last reason for arguing that it is subversive is the reaction of the production company who own it to its limited exposures. The latest series, to be shown in America in the autumn, will junk the present format in favour of the standard cops and robbers, car chases and gun battles.

This is in part because *Hill Street* has been slipping in the ratings

But it's more fundamentally because those who control television cannot stomach even the partial telling of the truth that *Hill Street* attempts.

The American state does not pay its police forces to have personal crises or to fight corruption, but to protect the minority who run society from the majority who own nothing. Corruption and brutality are not bad habits that can be weeded out, they are built into the job. And the role of television is to lie to us about it. That they found it necessary to kill off *Hill Street* tells us that it has something useful to say. ■

George Gorton

His own master

Hanif Kureishi hit the headlines with the success of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Jane Ure Smith interviewed him for *SWR*.

HANIF KUREISHI is genuinely surprised that his first foray into film writing—*My Beautiful Laundrette*—has been such a success. Even in America, he says, it is climbing the charts, doing better at the box office than *Absolute Beginners*.

Laundrette's success bears out Kureishi's belief that films made about contemporary Britain can pull in a wide audience. There is no need to retreat, as so many have done, into adaptations of novels set safely in the past.

It is all a question of how the subject is tackled. The ponderous naturalism of *Cathy Come Home* may have worked in the sixties—but nowadays 'people are depressed enough as it is'.

In Thatcher's Britain writers and film makers must have other strings to their bow:

'In the *Laundrette* I wanted to use irony and satire, to have different kinds of people. So you can write about class and race and money and, at the same time, it's entertaining and very lively and quite sexy. I also wanted to use the kinds of images and liveliness you find in pop videos—which are vacuous in themselves, but interesting to look at. People are used to seeing surreal and odd images now.'

The all-round enthusiasm for *Laundrette* is also evidence that audiences want characters they can identify with and a strong story line, according to Kureishi. 'No matter how much you spend on a film, or how tricky it is, in the end people want basic things: humane, rounded, full characters,' he says.

On this basis, it may seem odd that Kureishi spent part of last year adapting Brecht's *Mother Courage* for the Barbican. After all, Brecht aimed to smash up the smooth progression of well-rounded realism, to disturb and alienate the audience and thereby create a revolutionary art-of-the-real.

But Kureishi would argue that the people of Brecht's plays are still 'full' characters that the audience can 'like'.

The men and women of *Laundrette* are examples of the complexity of character Kureishi wants to show. He is contemptuous of those who say that socialist writing should portray people as they 'ought' to be rather than how they actually are.

'I want to write about odd people, weird people, rounder people, people who are nasty, people who are in sticky situations, people who are changing, people who are greedy. To write about Uncle

Nassar in the *Laundrette* was terrific—here was this huge character, who was very generous, very kind, but also very greedy, very dangerous, quite violent.'

Three-dimensional, flesh and blood characters are the writer's basic ingredient. They are the foundation for the political arguments Kureishi wants to make.

'I am interested in creating characters that are quite different from each other, and having them fight it out so that you create a dialectic. You don't provide an answer but the arguments clash and make people think about things.'

Having roundly condemned those who want to show all women as strong, and all Asians as nice people, resisting the system, Kureishi freely admits to falling into a similar trap with the ending of *Laundrette*.

He simply did not want to show a gay relationship breaking up. So in those magic few moments when Johnny decides to stay

they say or the sexist things, and you realise that the process of education hasn't even started, even among people who claim to be on the left.'

He believes the Labour Party has failed completely on race—if it did set up black sections, he says, it would probably be a kind of tokenism anyway. 'They have absolutely failed to come to terms with their own racism. I think they see it as a sub-issue, as a trivial issue.'

Kureishi argues that it is worth staying involved to push for change in the party. But his real political commitment lies elsewhere—in his writing.

Writers—if they can make money out of it—are in a privileged position, he says. They can be their own master.

Since *Laundrette* Kureishi has found financial backing easier to come by. But he has turned most of the offers down because of the strings attached. It is a question of hunting out opportunities for writing which do not demand a compromise of the material. Channel Four, for example, which commissioned *Laundrette*, offers greater possibilities than big budget films for the cinema where the bankers call the shots.



Omar and Johnny: love in the face of chaos

with Omar we see their love as the one solid thing in the face of violence, hatred, disintegration and chaos.

'The ending shows the possibility that social and political problems can be solved by acts of love, which we all know to be false. There has to be political and social change. Class problems and race problems can't be solved by black and white people kissing each other.'

Kureishi is a member of the Labour Party, on the basis that it is a mass working class party, which in office may achieve minimal things like closing fewer hospitals than the Tories or putting more money into education. But on sexual politics and racial issues, he claims, the party is appalling.

'They talk about having broad humanitarian aims on education and health, housing and so on. Then you go to meetings and hear the racist things

Channel Four left them alone to get on with *Laundrette* unhindered. 'It was rather anarchic,' recalls Kureishi, 'like making a record in a garage.'

He is hoping to repeat the experience with a new film, *Sammy and Rosie get Laid*, next spring. Set during the riots of 1985, like *Laundrette*, 'it is about race, sex and violence with a patina of social comment'.

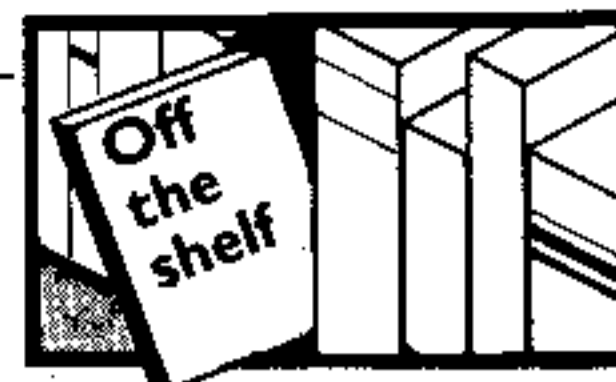
Kureishi finds inspiration in the desire to say things that have not been said before, in dealing with subjects like sex that are rarely explored in a serious way in films.

From their privileged vantage point writers can provide society 'with an area of media life which is free'. And it is important that they do so.

Ultimately, for Kureishi, the political significance lies not so much in what writers say, but in the fact that they say it at all. ■

Jane Ure Smith

A taste of power



Blood of Spain
Ronald Fraser
Penguin £5.95

1936 SAW not only the start of the Spanish Civil War, but also the birth of workers' power within that war.

Blood of Spain is a marvellous recreation of those years, written from the standpoint of revolutionary socialism, and composed of literally hundreds of interviews with survivors from all sides. It is their memories and their stories that bring the history to life, explaining as they do the dynamics of revolution and counter-revolution.

The interviews cover the revolution in Barcelona, Madrid, the Asturias and the villages of Aragon, and the book would be worth reading for them alone. But what makes *Blood of Spain* valuable is that they are used to carry a carefully argued analysis which focuses on the central question in any revolutionary situation—that of power.

'Fragmented, differentiated, localised, the revolutionary committees ignored state power, drove past it as though it were a corpse; lifeless it indeed appeared, but it was still breathing.'

While the power of the workers' committees had superseded that of the state, they had not overthrown it. Workers' power existed in embryo only. To bring it to maturity it would be necessary for the committees to be linked up nationally in order to pose an alternative form of state power.

This, the dominant force inside the workers' movement, the anarchist-dominated trade union, the CNT, refused to do. Their leaders succumbed to the idea that the war against Franco had to be won before there could be any talk of revolution.

This they justified by the traditional anarchist refusal to have anything to do with party politics, arguing that for anarchists to take power would be a contradiction in terms.

Two months after the start of the war the CNT joined the bourgeois government driven by the pressure of the situation. If Franco was to be beaten there had to be one central authority to direct the struggle.

If workers' power was not on the agenda then that meant strengthening the power of the old state, which in turn necessarily meant weakening the power of the workers' committees, taking back the gains that workers had made in control over their everyday lives. The logic was inescapable.

If the CNT followed that logic reluctantly, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) 'grabbed it with both hands. A thoroughly Stalinist organisation, the Popular Front was the corner-stone of



Refugees who fled Malaga as Franco approached

their strategy. As one of their leaders put it, 'We are motivated exclusively by the desire to defend the democratic republic.'

For more bourgeois historians—and much of the left—the dominance of the PCE is explicable *solely* in terms of its control of the flow of Russian arms to the Republic. While this was obviously a crucial factor in their rise to power (the Republic had no other source of arms), it is not the sole explanation.

For, as Fraser makes clear, what the PCE was also able to provide was a clear and unambiguous strategy and leadership—one that led explicitly away from any idea of revolution, but effectively the only one on offer.

It was in the defence of Madrid in November 1936 that this aspect came to the fore. As Franco's forces arrived at the outskirts of Madrid, the government showed its faith in the city's ability to defend itself by moving to Valencia.

After two days of panic, a defence junta was set up dominated by the PCE, who organised the beating off of the fascists.

At the same time the first consignment of Russian arms, and the first contingents of

the International Brigades arrived. Despite all the myths, their main contribution was in raising morale—Madrid was saved by the heroism and the determination of its armed population.

But the roles of organisation and of leadership were decisive, and the PCE could claim much of the credit for that. They came to seem, in Fraser's words, 'the only ones able to offer a coherent alternative to the power vacuum which seemed inevitably to be leading to defeat'.

There was, of course, an alternative strategy which Fraser calls 'revolutionary war'. Workers had not risen to defend the Republic out of respect for the sanctity of parliamentary democracy, but to defend the gains they had been able to make under it.

A strategy of building on those gains, and on the organs of workers' power, to fight the war *politically*, could have beaten Franco by undermining his strength in the fascist-held areas. But such a strategy meant first of all breaking with the politics of the Popular Front.

The CNT was not prepared to do that. Nor was the one party that supposedly

Four for you!

stood for a socialist solution to the war, the POUM. Though verbally they were revolutionaries, in practice their strategy was to win over the CNT leadership to their positions rather than attempt to organise independently.

Since the defence of Madrid, the PCE had been using its new-found power to steadily roll back workers' power and crush any opposition to their left. This culminated in the 'May Days' of 1937 in Barcelona. Following a PCE-led attack on the workers controlling the telephone exchange, the workers of the city rose in armed opposition to defend their gains.

To their incomprehension, they were betrayed by the CNT leadership, who broadcast constant appeals to bring the barricades down. The POUM vacillated, at first directing their members to join the street fighting, but later withdrawing them having failed to persuade the CNT to go onto the offensive against the counter-revolution.

The lack of any effective leadership sealed the fate of the rising. After five days of fierce street fighting the barricades came down.

There followed a vicious repression. The POUM was outlawed, its leaders murdered by Stalin's secret police. Hundreds of CNT militants were jailed or shot, and the power of the workers' committees broken. The defeat was the end of any hope of a successful revolution.

The only serious criticism to be made of *Blood of Spain* is the account of this period. For Fraser, the possibility of workers' power had already disappeared before the 'May Days', and consequently his account of the events is too short. In particular, his position leads him to be far less critical of the POUM than they deserve, presenting them as making the best they could of a hopeless situation.

But that is a minor fault in what is otherwise a marvellous book. What stands out perhaps above all is example after example of ordinary workers taking control of their everyday lives.

As a railworker said of the start of the revolution:

'It was incredible, the proof in practice of what one knows in theory: the power and strength of the masses when they take to the streets. All one's doubts are suddenly stripped away, doubts about how the working class and the masses are to be organised, how they can make the revolution until they are organised. Suddenly you feel their creative power; you can't imagine how rapidly the masses are capable of organising themselves. The forms they invent go far beyond anything you've dreamed of, read in books. What was needed now was to seize this initiative, channel it, give it shape...'

At a time when it's very difficult to see much evidence of those truths in the world about us, *Blood of Spain* is an enthralling reaffirmation of the revolutionary potential of the working class. ■

Charlie Hore

ONE OF the major functions of the revolutionary party is to be the memory of the class—to retain within it the lessons of past struggles. In these days of, on the one hand long drawn out battles that usually end in defeat, and on the other high levels of political debate, members need to have a much deeper understanding of politics so that they can respond to events. In this process, the role of education beyond the level of the branch meeting is crucial.

This is the reason for the production of the *Education for Socialists* packs. They are to be used as part of each branch's education series, and are short, cheap and available at all branches.

No 1, *Marxism and the Modern World*, deals with questions that face socialists when trying to understand political developments in the world this century. There are articles on State Capitalism, Imperialism East and West, National Oppression and National Liberation Movements, and Permanent Revolution.

Each article is a reprint of one that has appeared either in *SWR* or the *ISJ*.

Each piece is short and designed to be read before the educational so as to form the basis of a discussion. There is further reading suggested at the back, as well as questions for discussion.

No 2, *Socialist Strategy and Tactics*, covers: The Changing Struggle, Agitation and Propaganda, The United Front, and The Popular Front. The booklet is concerned with how a revolutionary party and revolutionaries operate—the relationship of the party to the working class. It covers a brief history of the revolutionary tradition of the past 70 years and what we can learn from this.

In particular, it looks at the difference between the tactic of the United Front and the Popular Front, and the lessons from the experience of the Communist Parties just after the 1917 revolution.

No 3, *Marxists and the State*, covers one of the most crucial questions that has faced the left—its understanding of, and reaction to, the state. It covers State and Revolution, Democracy and the State, From Parliament to Workers' Democracy, The Workers' State, and The Road to Workers' Power.

It deals with the issues of the nature of existing states, how a workers' state would be different and how it can end state oppression altogether. These are central issues that everyone arguing with a member of the Labour Party should be familiar with.

No 4, *The Basic Ideas of Marxist Economics*, is the latest one, and differs from the others in that it is not a series of reprints. Written by Pete Green it is a pamphlet explaining Marxist economics in plain English. This much needed pamphlet fills a gap in our education material.

It is well written, explains how the system works and is the perfect basis for a series of educationals on economics.

It's important in using the packs that branches think about the needs of new members. It is not a matter of simply going through the series from No 1 to No 4, but discovering the areas where comrades' politics need developing and aiming study and questions at those areas.

Branches should order the packs from Bookmarks through their bookstalls. ■

Noel Halifax

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Rocking the racists

Beating Time. Riot 'n' Race 'n' Rock 'n' Roll

David Widgery
Chatto £6.95.

THIS book looks back at the late seventies when the National Front were growing at an alarming rate. Dave Widgery traces the history of the response to that growth, through the Anti Nazi League, and Rock Against Racism.

He remembers the Asian murders, the swelling NF vote, the racist and fascist statements of rock musicians like Clapton and Bowie.

Then there were the fightbacks, the launching of RAR (following the Clapton statement) in 1976, the battles of Wood Green and Lewisham in 1977 and the launching of the ANL in the same year.

He describes the events at Lewisham, how the Socialist Workers Party were running very much against the stream in arguing for physical confrontation against the NF, yet how the idea lit a spark amongst West Indian youth, and indeed white youth in the area.

The carnivals, those days of joy when the fascist menace seemed to be evaporating in front of our eyes, are wonderfully described by Widgery:

'Outside a couple of pubs near Brick Lane there were a few Fronters with their mates... They had come for a good laugh at the do-gooders. Three hours and 100,000 demonstrators later, the smiles were well and truly wiped off their faces and their bloated egos had evaporated into the swill at the bottom of their glasses.'

Widgery's book, then, in many ways captures the times beautifully. Yet there are shortcomings, some of them quite serious.

The first thing that struck me about the book was that the style of design and layout was dated, photographs thrown around the pages in chaotic style. A style, which like the fanzine, belongs now to another era.

To add to this dated feel, assorted quotes are distractingly scattered through the book. Some of the quotes are good, some incomprehensible and some irrelevant or downright bizarre; personally I couldn't care less whether Little Richard (or come to think of it, Cliff Richard) said that 'Jesus told me only one thing; love one another. And don't judge each other.'

More importantly the book also has political shortcomings. For those of us active at the time there is little doubt that the ANL was the key to the growth of RAR yet Widgery tends to put the thing the other way round.

What's more although there is no doubt that RAR and the ANL breathed excite-

ment and imagination into the anti-fascist movement, it was political organisation, struggle, and activity that were the key to the whole process.

Widgery begins by acknowledging this (the importance of Lewisham etc) but seems to lose his way as the narrative goes on. By the end, the imagination of the guardians of youth culture seems to be as important as the political groundwork.

Yet for all the fun of the carnivals, without a specific type of political input they can become something quite different, leading in exactly the opposite direction.

I can remember from my own period on the National Union of Students executive how Sue Slipman and others would invoke the ANL experience to propose a series of stunts and gimmicks which had as their main objective the prevention of a serious militant campaign.



None of this is to say that the ANL was wrong to combine culture and politics, in doing so they drove a huge wedge between the NF and youth, but the limitations of 'cultural struggles' have to be understood or else you end up with all sorts of illusions.

It is a serious failing of Widgery that he helps spread these illusions. He claims for RAR rather too much influence on the subsequent development of music.

RAR, argues Widgery, pioneered the idea that 'pop music can be about more than entertainment' and that this idea has 'endured and deepened'—Band Aid and Live Aid are the proof of this.

'The political problem with Live Aid', argues Widgery, 'is that it neglected its declared intention, to really hammer the big powers' refusal of effective aid.'

This seems to me strange, for although the politics of Live Aid are clearly off-key (and Geldof is using his prestige to attack the IRA in America), I would have thought a man with a great deal of concern for form as well as content would have noticed a crucial difference.

Every ANL carnival, every RAR gig was built by political activists, each was in itself a political activity.

Live Aid was advertised in the media, in much the same way (although on a much grander scale) as a K-Tel greatest hits

record, or a Wham farewell concert.

It asked people to part with money, but little else.

It is strange that Widgery should confuse the two, and strange that he should think RAR provided the precedent for these other events; for I seem to remember an event taking place some years before RAR was thought of that fits much more snugly into the Live Aid tradition.

That was the 'Concert for Bangladesh'. It was a concert at which many of the superstars of rock appeared to raise money for the victims of the famine in that country. There was later a live box-set album released, all proceeds from which were intended for the same cause.

Now I don't ever remember anyone arguing that RAR was a direct descendent of this 'charity show' neither do I remember anyone wanting to make such a claim.

It seems to me that if we didn't claim the parent nor should we claim (or indeed want to claim) the offspring.

Which leads me on to one final criticism. RAR made an important political contribution, and it introduced an element of cultural activity quite new to the left. That activity fitted a specific audience in a specific period.

RAR was able to do this thanks to the huge success of the ANL which in turn could only have come into existence through the experience of Lewisham, and the efforts of a revolutionary organisation, the SWP.

Yet if Widgery's description of the pre-RAR left is anything to go by, they (we) were a very dull and grey set of people, with a few outstanding exceptions.

He talks about the left aiming its papers and arguments at a working class

'Leadership composed of hypothetical male, white, happily married, union activists heavily into carpet slippers, Brylcreem and whippets.'

Leaving aside the renewed interest of today's youth in Brylcreem (which Dave clearly hasn't caught up with) it is a description that seems a million miles away from the International Socialists that I joined in 1974.

The miners' strike that brought down a government, the Portuguese revolution, the struggle in Ireland were inspiring and exciting. The left, inspired and excited by these issues, grew with barely a whippet in sight.

I missed the political atmosphere of the late sixties, looking back on it the period sounds excitingly chaotic and fun. It was certainly not dull. How do I know?

I read a very good book called *The Left in Britain* by David Widgery!

Unfortunately *Beating Time* is not in my opinion as good a book, but it does play an important role in keeping alive a period which we should remember and be proud of, for that we have to say a big 'thank you' to its author. ■

Pat Stack

Technological sexism

Machinery of Dominance—Women, Men and Technical Know-How

Cynthia Cockburn
Pluto Press £5.95

Cynthia Cockburn's new book looks at how technological change is affecting workers in the 1980s. She is especially concerned with the relative access of men and women to skilled jobs. Her conclusion is that changing technology is making no difference whatsoever to women's disadvantaged position in the workforce.

Of course it is perfectly true that women are massively under-represented in many technical fields, but Cockburn overestimates the importance of technology in this process.

This is partly because she slips from talking about class relations to talking about 'power' relations with startling ease and rapidity.

Cockburn's belief in the magic of technology also leads her to downgrade the skills women *do* possess. The problem of women's poor relative position in the workforce is also to do with the fact that they are often employed in areas where they lack economic muscle.

This means that extremely highly skilled women (albeit in non-technological areas) remain badly paid: teachers and nurses being good examples.

The failure to take a clear look at skills is also reflected in Cockburn's ascription of the magic of technology to anyone who knows what happens inside a machine. Thus the craft engineer and the elite technologist, the latter naming his own price and moving from company to company, are presented as similar simply because both possess technological skills.

In fact the differences between them are immense. The elite technologists of Cockburn's study are largely graduates, and she quotes them saying such things as 'a software engineer can name his price'. A personnel manager says (of the software engineers), 'They have a lot of freedom, it is a creative innovative job. It is not easily controlled... Compared with the shop floor it is impossible to exert the same kind of discipline.'

Cockburn uses this example to illustrate key differences between male and female work patterns. She says:

'Consider the difference between a job like that of the assembler-wirer where the work cycle is a matter of minutes, endlessly repeated, and that of the

typical male hardware or software development engineer where the start-to-finish period of any one project can be months, sometimes years.'

Because she sees gender relations as being as important as class relations, Cockburn makes a totally false comparison between men who are members of the new middle class and unskilled working class women. A comparison between, say, a woman doctor and Cockburn's development engineers would have been fairer, as would one between a production line worker in a car factory and a female assembly line worker.

Such comparisons would show that, in terms of control over work, wages, conditions etc, the female doctor is in a far better position than the male car worker. But it would also show that women suffer systematic disadvantages in employment compared with the men of their class.

The reason for this is not hard to find. The interruption in women's working life to have children prevents those in jobs with a structured hierarchy reaching the higher levels. For other women it means leaving full-time jobs to take on part-time employment. Because of the effects of child-bearing, women reach their highest earning potential before the birth of their first child.

The fact that women, especially married women with children, are trapped in low paid jobs and at the bottom of the career structure in white collar jobs has several advantages for capitalism beyond the obvious one of the enhanced profitability achieved by low wages for women. Capitalism gets a reliable, usually docile workforce and in white collar work it is able to fill the lower paid, routine jobs and thus control the male workforce with promises of promotion.

For the working class family this means poverty. For male workers it means overtime to make up the family income, for women it means being pushed into wretched boring jobs. Yet Cockburn argues that men benefit from their relatively privileged position in the labour market. Her reason for saying this is because she sees the world in terms of gender as well as class. Thus although she will admit that workers (both male and female) are exploited by capitalism she will also argue that there is such a thing as 'male power'.

The trouble is that this notion does not fit reality. In the first place 'men as a sex' do not have the power over women which Cockburn suggests. The fact that a man may be a skilled engineer might mean that he is relatively privileged compared to an unskilled worker, but it certainly does not mean that he has any real control over his own life let alone anyone else's.

Although his work experience may be different from that of the women around him it pales into insignificance when compared with the difference between the work experience (indeed the whole life) of a

worker and the existence of a member of the ruling class.

The fact that Cockburn constantly slips between a class analysis and a gender analysis draws her inexorably to reformist piecemeal conclusions. She says:

'If this book has a single urgent message it is a plea for more commitment of support to women-only projects.'

Given Cockburn's own analysis of the persistence of the sexual division of labour, such solutions are feeble in the extreme.

But Cockburn's conclusions are hardly surprising; for she separates class politics from the position of women in society.

Women's position in the workforce is structured into capitalism because capitalism needs not only to exploit this generation of workers but to reproduce the next.

From this basic premise stems a whole plethora of sexist ideologies and practices; these cannot be reduced to single moments or instances, such as access to one type of knowledge as mediated by capitalism.

Cockburn's book is a useful exposition of a certain form of sexist ideology and practice; it is unfortunate that it gets sidetracked when it comes to tracing their origins and plotting their overthrow. ■

Ann Rogers

Left redundant

Friends of Alice Wheeldon

Sheila Rowbotham
Pluto Press £4.95

ALICE WHEELDON was sentenced to ten years hard labour in early 1917 for allegedly plotting to kill Lloyd George by poisoning him.

She, along with her daughter and son-in-law, served two years of their sentences, being released as an 'act of clemency'.

But Alice Wheeldon did not live long. Suffering the effects of ill-treatment in prison, she died in early 1919 from a fatal dose of the flu.

Sheila Rowbotham, in her book, attempts to trace the history of the Derby socialist feminist and to establish the political milieu in which she operated.

In doing so Rowbotham conveys, although often disjointedly, the various trends, theories and practices within the labour movement at the time Britain was plunged into the First World War.

This was a period when hundreds of thousands of workers throughout Britain defied the patriotic calls of their rulers by striking and demonstrating to defend their hard-fought-for conditions.

In the early part of her book Rowbotham manages to express, with some feeling, the existence of a mood to challenge and change.

In delving into Alice Wheeldon's background we find a whole range of people challenging the status quo. Suffragettes, pacifists, Irish Republicans, socialists and syndicalists all combine in an alliance against the state.

But Rowbotham denies us any real insight into why these strands, and the strength of feeling against the system, did not combine and converge into creating a new society.

The book would have been strengthened by having a serious examination of the difference between the British Socialist Party and the Scottish Labour Party. A critical analysis of what the divorce between economics and politics meant, not only in organising revolutionary opposition during the war, but also for the tasks facing the Communist Party—which united almost every militant throughout the country in 1921.

Instead the British Socialist Party is largely ignored, the formation of the Communist Party glossed over and the Russian Revolution almost scorned at.

This does not stop her spending most of the book berating today's revolutionaries, mostly those of us who identify with the aims and objectives of the Russian Revolution and Leninist forms of organisation.

For Rowbotham socialism is about developing new forms of relationships, of having a 'wider vision' of a new society. Moreover she identifies the period as one in which 'the making of socialism involved change in the here and now... The socialist tradition never abandoned such concerns, but they ceased to be central and passionate and vehement. So we have to labour to reconstruct socialism as a vision of freedom.'

The problem of the 'left', according to Rowbotham, is the inability to see how both Labourism and Communism (presumably the traditions of the Russian Revolution) are redundant forces because 'neither strategy led socialists to put detailed thought into how the existing state was to be dismantled and socialised'.

So what are these alternatives? They are 'about extending the experience of democracy, not just about voting the Labour Party in or seizing state power through revolution'. In other words, building co-operative movements, campaigns for childcare facilities etc and putting demands on the state in the here and now. Not as a step towards getting rid of this system, but as a means of reforming it from within.

Rowbotham's book may talk of revolution—but it is only talk. Her revolutionary politics are confined to rhetoric while her reformism shines through like a blinding light. ■

Julie Waterson

To fight or conform

If He Hollers Let Him Go

Chester Himes

Pluto Liberation Classics £3.95

Black Skin, White Masks

Franz Fanon

Pluto Liberation Classics £4.95

BLACK responses to racial oppression form the primary concern of both Himes' novel and Fanon's psychological diatribe.

Himes' fast-paced novel is by far the more accessible of the two, presenting the misfortunes of Bob, a black steelworker in wartime Los Angeles, constantly held back by the entrenched racism of American society.

He is torn between a desire to rebel and lose any gains he has won through conforming with white society, and to give in, marry his middle class girlfriend and ignore the problems of other working class blacks.

Bob's confusion and disgust at society are reflected in his troubled dreams. In the most important of these he sees himself being beaten by poor whites on the orders of their bosses, who then commiserate with other blacks, 'All of us responsible white people are trying to stop these things from taking place, but you boys must help us.' The blacks agree, adding that Bob was probably a troublemaker anyway.

This is exactly the response he comes up against in real life, when he asks his white shop steward to get the union to do something about some of the white workers' racism. He is fobbed off with calls for unity, and loses his temper. He is then dismissed as a troublemaker.

In prose I found almost impenetrable, Fanon also argues that in Western society blacks are only accepted if they reject their blackness and work within the rules as laid down by white society.

Fanon goes further, saying that blacks are driven to accept the same rules of society, to want to wear a 'white mask', to show contempt for blacks who don't conform to white standards. He presents this as a psychological problem. The answer is to stop this desire; to reject the division into white worlds and black worlds.

His conclusion is to ask people to question. Throughout, he has put his argument in terms of philosophy and belief. The problem has been made abstract.

Through this abstraction change is seen as starting from the idea, rather than material circumstances. Despite quoting Marx, he seems to have little idea of the class nature of society, which pervades

Himes' book.

Fanon's declamatory style, and butterfly references to poets, political figures and philosophers make his book both difficult to read and to pin down. By concentrating on raking through the guilt in individual consciousness he encourages the very elitism he hopes to be breaking down: a concern with redefining your own consciousness rather than changing the society which created it.

The introduction proudly announces that Fanon's ideas lead away from 'labourism' towards autonomous struggles, not seeing how these struggles are inextricably linked to class.

One of the great strengths of Himes' novel is that it starts from a working class viewpoint, and shows how racism affects different classes in society. He shows that middle class groups affected by racism cling onto their gains by ignoring or justifying the oppression of the majority.

Fanon's praise for people such as the Vietnamese peasants who found their own identity and fought imperialism can easily be turned into contempt for a group that has not 'found itself', if there is no understanding of the material requirements for changed consciousness.

So it is possible for black groups in Britain to reject the white working class as inherently racist.

Himes' world is a grim one of defeat and humiliation. Nonetheless it presents a better starting place for socialists looking for a solution to racism, quite apart from being a gripping book. ■

Ken Olende

Rubbish on Russia

The Soviet Union Demystified

Frank Furedi

Junius £5.95

THIS book is the long-delayed 'analysis' from the Revolutionary Communist Party. It argues that the Soviet Union is quite different to and separate from other parts of the world. It does not discuss any of the other countries we describe as 'state capitalist' eg China and the Eastern European states.

Furedi argues that Russia is non-capitalist but avoids the question of whether he believes this is true of these other places, and if so how capitalism was overthrown without the conscious efforts of the working class.

He believes that the state bureaucracy in Russia is neither a class nor a 'caste' but is a

'political order', but we are spared an explanation of what this means and how it helps us.

The Soviet Union is, for Furedi, an 'exception'. He describes exhaustively the economic inefficiencies of Russia, and argues that the central problem is that the capitalist market has been abolished, but that no other 'automatic' method of distributing labour-time has replaced it.

For this reason the bureaucracy has had to use its political power to shift resources to areas it decides are priorities. Our theory of state capitalism explains how these priorities are enforced by international capitalist competition. But Furedi only looks at Russia in isolation and argues that:

'Any alternative to economic regulation through value relations must confront the problem of spontaneity. Spontaneous or unconscious forces are the socially mediated way in which nature-imposed necessity is experienced by society. The capitalist market is one form of social organisation through which spontaneity reminds human beings of its lack of control over its own creations.'

This is complete gobbledegook. These 'spontaneous forces' reappear at every stage of Furedi's argument although we are never told quite what they are.

Furedi's belief that Russia is so different to capitalism is helped by the view he holds of capitalism itself. His book nowhere mentions the inbuilt contradictions of the system which lead to periodic crises, he ignores the ways that western capitalism, like Russia, is a system which is anarchic, irrational, and wasteful of resources.

He does not understand the real changes that have taken place within capitalism—for instance the developing role of the state and the significance of this for the form that crises take.

Instead Furedi sees capitalism *only* as a system for the distribution of the labour-time in society (which it is) and for him this system works 'automatically'. It is his obsession with this constantly repeated idea of the 'automatic' nature of capitalism that blinds him to contradictions, crises and the state.

The idea that capitalism works 'automatically', like clockwork, leaves very little for the ruling class to do in capitalist societies. The capitalist state has *never* ignored the process of capital accumulation within its national borders. Furedi, though, only sees capitalist states as intervening in exceptional circumstances. Pinochet's Chile, Franco's Spain, Nazi Germany, wartime Britain and most 'third world' states are only exceptions in Furedi's ahistorical scheme.

The key section of the book is an outline of so-called 'Marxist method'. For Furedi, 'The laws of nature, mediated through society, are expressed in social laws.' In the same way that natural laws operate quite separately from the existence of human beings so, he implies, social laws operate

behind the back of humanity. Now its true that social laws operate independently of human consciousness (a capitalist doesn't need to understand Marx's *Capital* to survive) but that *doesn't* mean that they operate outside human agency. Social laws are the patterns of real human activity.

Furedi repeatedly falls into the trap of 'reification'—making human activity into a thing separate from human beings.

Furedi wrongly argues that Russian workers do not sell their labour-time and that there is no labour-market. He therefore argues that their 'experience is quite different from that of the working class under capitalism'.

'Nevertheless...we can still loosely refer to this section of Soviet society as the working class...because...history has assigned the workers of the Soviet Union a role parallel to that of workers in capitalist society.'

History, of course, can't 'do' anything. This is a classic case of 'reification'. In fact the Russian working class has exactly the same task as any other section of the world working class in the overthrow of world capitalism and the building of socialism.

As a theory of Russia, Furedi's book has nothing to offer except an absurd overstatement of the technical backwardness of the economy. As an example of Marxist analysis it is both wrong and mystifying. ■

Derek Howl

Philosopher of revolution

Georg Lukacs: From Romanticism to Bolshevism

Michael Lowy

NLB. £2.75 from Bookmarks

GEORG LUKACS, in *History and Class Consciousness*, wrote the single most important work of Marxist philosophy since Marx himself.

In his short book *Lenin* he demonstrated conclusively how securely Lenin's thought was rooted in, and a development of, Marx's view of history.

Lukacs was by turns a utopian, almost religious, intellectual, a People's Commissar during the Hungarian revolution of 1919, an ultra-left who supported the March Action in Germany, a fervent supporter of the Popular Front, an apologist for Stalin and, at the age of 83, a prophet of the new era of struggle which broke over the world in 1968.

Lukacs was immersed in and buffeted by the major struggles of the century. Lowy is sympathetic to Lenin and Trotsky's ideas,

hostile to Althusserian dismissals of Lukacs and should be well placed to account for Lukacs' times and thereby his ideas.

But the chance is thrown away by the approach he adopts. The book substitutes an intellectual genealogy for mapping the history of the era and tracing Lukacs' ideas in that context.

Whole passages are spent tracing the exact meaning of Lukacs' various literary analogies, and of various literary references to Lukacs, but we are told that, 'It is not possible to study *History and Class Consciousness* systematically given the limitations of space.'

Lukacs was, perhaps more than most and despite the clarity of his philosophical thought, someone who *reacted* to events.

When the First World War broke out he was repelled by it, but primarily into an academic disdain for what was happening. The revolutions in Russia and Hungary drew him rapidly and dramatically into their orbit.

His conversion to the workers' movement was permanent, but when the counter-revolution took hold in Russia he accepted it as an inevitability, even to the point of renouncing his masterwork in the process.

At every crack in the post-war Stalinist monolith he reacted by drawing fractionally further away from the system he had debased himself to support. He was a minister in Imre Nagy's short-lived government in Hungary in 1956.

And as Czechoslovakia and Vietnam in 1968 began to shatter the cosy certainties of the post-war boom, East and West, he once more seemed to feel his way toward a non-Stalinist socialism.

To do Lukacs justice would be to give a full account of the revolutionary era and its defeat. The nearest that Michael Lowy gets is to give an over-long description of the intellectual milieu in which Lukacs' thought was formed, plus an all-too-brief account of his passage to Bolshevism.

Even this analysis is flawed. The intellectuals are treated as a layer apart. And so the influence of the other classes and the general national and international situation on the formation of this layer and on Lukacs is reduced to the margins. This is a mistake. Consciousness is not simply a product of the immediate class environment, especially among intermediate layers like left intellectuals.

Consciousness is the product of interaction between a particular class and other classes. This dimension, insofar as it is treated at all, is analysed by taking Trotsky's views of Russian society and saying, 'Well, Hungary is much the same.' This is less than helpful, since it avoids a detailed and original look at the structure of Hungarian society, and its political tradition.

Whatever the fate of its author, his major work certainly provided the philosophical framework for an anti-Stalinist Marxism

which dovetailed with the Trotskyist political tradition. Stalinism claimed the author but the opposition claimed his best work, fired in the heat of the revolutionary era.

An account of how and why the text came to occupy such an important place in the scheme of things, in spite of the best efforts of its author, would be of immense value. There is no such account here.

What Lukacs achieved in *History and Class Consciousness* is of enduring value. He rescued Marxism from the vulgar determinism of the Second International and developed a dialectical method which has remained invaluable for those who wished to combat the return of determinism in its orthodox Stalinist form and idealism in its Althusserian guise.

Perhaps there is no greater tribute to those ideas than the fact that when Marx's early philosophical writings finally became available, more than a decade after Lukacs wrote *History and Class Consciousness*, they mirrored Lukacs' concerns almost to the letter. ■

John Rees

Impossible realities

Black American Politics

Manning Marable

Verso, £6.95.

'One, two, three, four. Finish off the Civil War. Five, six, seven, eight. Forward to a workers' state!' This picket line chant of black militants in the US is Manning Marable's starting point. The struggle for black liberation, far from being over, is inextricably tied to the continuing class struggle in America.

Black American Politics looks at how black people have fought for basic reforms and political power. It cites literally hundreds of examples of strikes, boycotts, slave insurrections and election campaigns to sketch a history of blacks as activists and not victims. It analyses the development of several traditions of black resistance, including socialists, trade unionists, preachers and especially separatists.

However, this is not a glorious history of the Black Panthers, Malcolm X or Paul Robeson, but a seven-pound, paragraph-a-page academic study of black political representation. It defines its terms (race, class, democracy, etc) carefully but occasionally lapses into impossible jargon.

The main bulk of the book is devoted to one particular strategy of advancing black interests in modern America—electoralism.

Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984 and Harold Washington's victory the previous year, in the election for the mayor of Chicago, provide the ammunition for Marable's criticisms of the leadership and direction of the black rights movement.

Washington's victory was due more to the loyalty of black voters in the face of a racist opponent than to any promises to challenge the old Democratic machine that had run the city for years. Washington's election in no way broke the power of the racist Chicago police. Almost all the legislation Washington tried to push through was blocked by the old-guard: corrupt, white and 100 percent Democrat.

The tragedy is that although Washington's campaign mobilized large numbers of working class blacks, their activity had ended at the ballot box. While his election was a blow to white racists' confidence and a corresponding gain for black workers, no power changed hands. Oh yes, a fair number of middle-class blacks got jobs with the city administration.

Jesse Jackson wanted to repeat this all across the country. His 'Rainbow Alliance' argued that 'Blacks need trade, not aid.' A moderate Democrat, so impressed by him, admitted that 'If Jesse Jackson was a white man, he would win the presidency hands down.'

And that's the crucial point. Jackson was defeated primarily because he is black—not because he's a socialist or a militant. Jackson's answer is not to challenge the very deep roots of American racism, but to encourage blacks—and any oppressed people—to claim what's due to them as US citizens.

In answer to a poet who asks, 'Where are today's Malcolms?', Marable says that 'they are created only when black people make demands that are seemingly impossible. Yet the impossible, through struggle, becomes the probable, and the probable becomes reality.' For us, that 'impossibility' is the unity of black and white workers, fighting together. ■

Des Freedman

Bookbrief

IF YOU have lots of money, a poacher's overcoat or access to a library that still gets new books, look out for *Trotsky*, a glossy picture book to be published by Blackwell, £20.00, with over 400 photos, an intro by Tamara Deutscher and the text by James Ryan—a book you might see on a coffee table in Stoke Newington.

Also very expensive and worth looking at if not actually buying is *Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* by Charlotte Wolff Quartet, £25.00(!). A bit quirky but fascinating because of its subject—the early gay

activist Hirschfeld and the sexual liberation movement in Germany from the 1890s to the late 20s.

Still with the expensive tomes are two dictionaries, *Biographical Dictionary of Marxism* and *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism* both edited by R A Gorman (*Mansell*). Could be useful if you are a student and need to quickly refer to someone for an essay. Similarly the *Penguin Dictionary of Political Quotations*, £3.95, has its uses but is rather thin and predictable.

Books aimed at budding intellectuals are *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* by Rick Roderick (*Macmillan*) which attempts to make sense of the more obscure of the Frankfurt School theorists and *The Foucault Reader* (*Penguin*). Both Foucault and Habermas start from wildly different points but end up writing off the working class as a revolutionary force.

Landscape for a Good Woman: a Story of Two Lives by Carolyn Steedman (*Virago*) is difficult to categorise. It mixes childhood autobiography, psychoanalysis and politics in the style of John Berger—haunting and powerful a book that looks inward, more like a novel than anything else.

A book that shows the lie that its only today's youth which has rebelled is *The Hooligan Nights* by Clarence Rook (*Oxford paper*, £2.95) about the street life of Elephant & Castle in the 1890s.

Two books that deal with the issues of nuclear energy and energy policy are *Nuclear Politics* by Tony Hall (*Pelican*, £3.95) and *The Energy Fix* by Andy Porter, Martin Spence and Roy Thompson (*Pluto*, £5.95). Hall's book outlines the awful record of the nuclear industry while *The Energy Fix* presents a greenish alternative economic/energy strategy aimed at the Labour left.

Feminism is a word that covers a multitude of sins. *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* by Mary Daly (*Women's Press*) is unashamed mysticism. In a similar field of mysticism *Virago* have published an anthology of the writing of Simone Weil.

The Essential Left published by *Counterpoint*, £3.95, is made up of the *Communist Manifesto*, *Value Price and Profit*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, *State and Revolution* and oddly *On Contradiction* by Mao Tse-Tung.

It would in fact be cheaper to get the four worth reading in the Chinese editions.

Also out is the new edition of *Granta* (*Penguin*, £3.95). James Fenton's description of the Philippines during the overthrow of Marcos is the major story in this magazine which is published in paperback. It is a fine piece of journalism which translates the political and economic crisis of government into the motivations of ordinary Filipinos. Well worth getting by the man who wrote the excellent *Fall of Saigon* in an earlier issue of the same magazine. ■

Noel Halifax

Wrong on rape?

JULIE WATERSON'S general contention (June *SWR*) about rape is one with which no Marxist could quarrel. Rape is a product of the distorted and oppressive relations between people created by class society as a whole and capitalism in particular. It is not, as some would argue, inherent in masculine nature or an 'above-class' conspiracy of all men against all women.

Unfortunately some of the arguments which Julie uses to support the Marxist case are both confused and confusing.

For example Julie contests the idea that rape is primarily an expression of aggression against women, of a wish to dominate and humiliate them, as opposed to an expression of frustrated sexual desire.

'Although indisputably this happens', she writes, 'it is not the reason men have for raping women. More likely...it is "stemming from a need to find or prove their masculinity".'

Now if Julie means by this simply that rape cannot be seen as a conscious instrument employed by 'men as a whole' against 'women as a whole' (analogous to the role of the police as an instrument of capitalist state power) then all well and good. But she seems to extend this into a generalisation about the individual motives of rapists.

There seems to be every reason to suppose that in this 'violent and brutal society' (Julie's description) in which women have always been oppressed, men's need to prove their masculinity may often express itself in the need to dominate and humiliate women.

Moreover the Marxist view that rape is a product of a society in which the fundamental division is class, not sex, in no way requires us to insist on one particular motivation for rape rather than the other.

The confusion in Julie's argument is demonstrated when she tries to cite substantiating evidence on the characteristic forms of rape.

'Gang rape', Julie tells us, 'is common. Overl violence and sexual humiliation is not'. But surely gang rape is inherently violent and humiliating.

'In Amir's study', we are told, '43 percent were gang rapes' and 'in two out of every three rapes "non-brutal" physical violence was used.' We are not told the definition of 'non-brutal'

violence—a rather important point—but even so these figures suggest a high rate of violence rather than the reverse—a conclusion supported by findings of 50 percent gang rapes in Toronto and 30 percent in Washington DC.

In the next breath, and without comment, Julie says that a study in New South Wales in 1973 showed 'violence occurring in 13 percent of all rapes' and that: 'A study in Denver showed that in nearly all rapes there were demands for affection and co-operation.'

What has happened to the gang rapes and the 66 percent 'non-brutal' violence in New South Wales and in Denver? Perhaps Australian rapists are a more kindly lot than Americans (except in Denver)? Perhaps we should ask what happened when the demands for affection and co-operation were refused?

The central point is this: rape by its very nature is a fusion of violence and sex. Whether it is predominately a sexual expression of violence or a violent expression of sexuality can only be established by careful investigation.

It certainly cannot be dogmatically asserted on the basis of the slapdash and uncritical citing of inconsistent statistics.

What Julie seems to lose sight of is the importance of the argument about the element of aggression, hatred, wish to humiliate etc involved in rape. It is important because it acts as a counter to the reactionary sexist view of the rapist as someone who fails to control his 'natural urges' when subject to temptation by a 'loose' woman. ■

John Molyneux
Portsmouth

Soft on porn?

REGARDING Maureen Watson's article 'Bans breed backlash' (May *SWR*), one or two points of criticism need to be made.

As I understand it, Clare Short's position was that the soft porn on display in the *Sun* is available in *Penthouse* and *Playboy* but need not be so readily accessible in a national daily newspaper. Clare Short's bill was not about banning pornography (less still about changing the world) as Ms Watson's article misleadingly suggested, but simply about banning naked women from the *Sun*.

Having started on this false premise, further absurdities follow. To accuse Ms Short of

failing to understand how to fight sexism because she believes that 'the way to change the world is through Parliament' is simply crass. Clearly using the law has limitations, but dogmatically to discard its use as no value at all is an oversimplification.

There is something ill-thought out about a position which holds that an attempt to make small inroads into women's oppression and degradation caused by the pornography in the *Sun* is called 'repressive'.

Finally, the argument that Ms Short plays into the hands of the 'reactionary, backward, repressive ideas of the Mary Whitehouse brigade' may have some justification, and at first seems plausible. But this is specious.

The view that opposition to Ms Short's bill plays into the hands of the reactionary, backward, repressive ideas of the Rupert Murdoch brigade is conveniently omitted. ■

Peter F Jones
London SE27.

On the sidelines

I CANNOT agree with the view expressed in your review of union conferences that the division between the two Broad Lefts has 'no significance outside the kaleidoscope politics of the CPSA'.

In fact quite the opposite is the case. The BL 84 group has developed substantial links with the ever rightward moving Labour Co-ordinating Committee, and BL 84 members at the LCC conference last December supported a resolution that called for 'further developments in union Broad Lefts' that would lead to the 'further isolation of the ultra left'.

In other words the main Kinnockite think tank has in mind a strategy that would undermine the unity of the left in all unions.

The Broad Left National Committee has recognised this fact and has started to link up with those elements in the Labour Party that can be relied on. An effective fight against the 'witch hunt' has to be linked across the unions and the Labour Party if it is to be effective.

It is here of course that the reason for the SWP's incorrect line of analysis lies. If your tunnel vision of rejecting the fight inside the Labour Party is not changed then your organisation will continue to be marginalised in the

unions, which would be a pity, as many of your comrades have a useful contribution to make.

The only useful place for socialists to be in the present period is within the Labour Party, for despite all that's wrong with it, the LP provides a base for a long term opposition.

A socialist organisation will be built by splits and fusions within that framework. It's not an easy task, but certainly one that can be more effective than operating with 'pure' principles on the sidelines. ■

Howard J Fuller,
(National Organiser CPSA Broad Left 85/86),
London.

Mistaken profits

THE NOTE on the economy, 'A new slump?', in last month's issue somehow lost a line in its passage from my script to production.

Between '*Profits in Britain have risen substantially in the last three years*' and '*On the one hand demand is depressed. On the other hand wage increases are running well ahead of inflation*', there should have been:

'The rate of profit on British capital is back to the level of 1973. But it is about to start falling again.'

In other words, depressed demand, and wage increases well ahead of inflation are explanations of why profits are going to fall, not why they have risen in the last three years.

The point is important. Profits rose because productivity gains and falling raw material costs more than offset the impact of rising wages. But, as the latest Labour Research stresses, productivity 'declined to 2.8 percent in 1985. The big productivity increases of 1982-84, gained mainly by sacking workers and closing obsolete plant, have come to an end.' ■

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We welcome letters and contributions on all issues raised in *Socialist Worker Review*. Please keep your contributions as short as possible, typed, double spaced if you can, and one side of paper only. Send to: SWR, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.

Spain at the crossroads

BY JULY 1936 Spain was breaking apart along class lines. Since February strikes had spread like wildfire deep into the working class, affecting even the most backward areas.

On 1 June, 70,000 Madrid building workers struck. The strikers, weapons in hand, forced the shopkeepers to serve them, seized restaurants and ate without paying. The police were powerless but the fascist Falange sent out hit squads to pick off isolated workers.

Even when the Ministry of Labour accepted the workers' demands and the UGT (the Socialist Union) ordered its members back to work the majority stayed out. They were supported by the CNT (the Anarcho-syndicalist Union). They wanted a trial of strength with the bosses and the state. The government closed down the CNT offices and arrested the workers' leaders. But the strike continued.

On 12 July a left wing member of the Asaltos (the pro-republican police force), Jose del Castillo, was gunned down by fascists. His company decided to take revenge, seized Calvo Sotelo, one of the parliamentary leaders of the extreme right, and executed him.

The funerals of Castillo and Sotelo were the final parade before the battle. Gil Robles, head of the Catholic right screamed in the Cortes, 'Sotelo's blood will drown the government.' All over Spain the workers dug up arms hidden since 1934.

The military took power in Spanish Morocco on 17 July. Even as this spread to the mainland the Popular Front government denied anything was happening. On the evening of the 18th a general strike was ordered by the CGT and the UGT. The government fell, and was replaced by one which tried to make peace with the rebels. This too fell within the day. Finally a government was formed which was willing to distribute arms to the enraged workers.

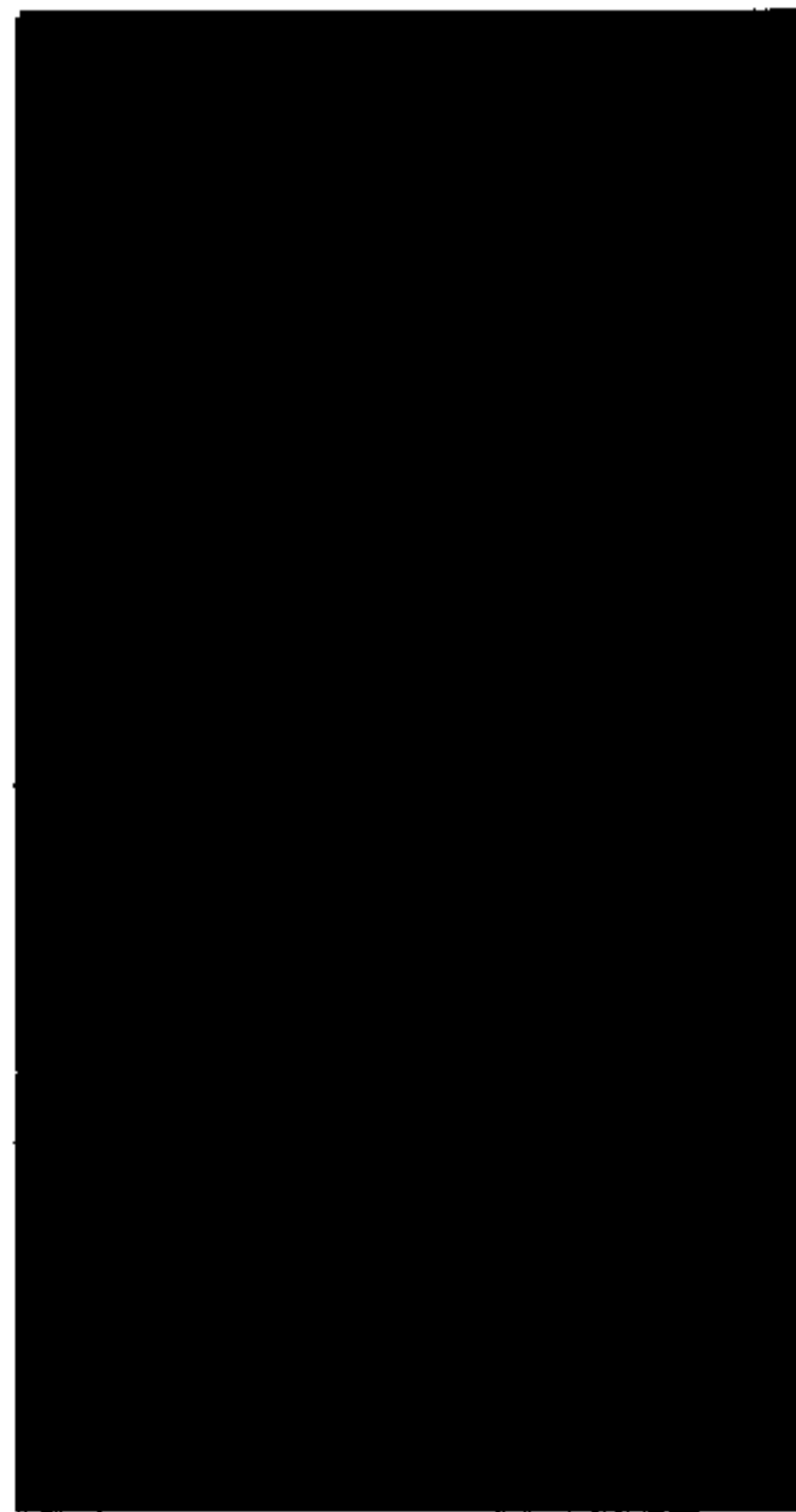
The outcome of the conflict depended not on the rebels but on the response of the workers, their parties and unions. Each time the workers were paralysed, by respect for the law or believed the promises of the authorities, reaction prevailed.

For example, in Seville rebel General Queipo de Llana announced he was master of the town over the radio—though he had few forces at his disposal. The workers' organisations did not react—in fact the town's Socialist MPs stayed at home (where they were arrested). By the time resistance began thousands of Moroccan troops had arrived at the airport. There was a horrible massacre.

But where the workers seized arms and set about destroying the army, the uprising was defeated. In Catalonia the government feared the CNT more than the military re-

volt. Refused arms, the militants seized everything from shotguns in shops to dynamite from the dockyard. Anarchist dockworkers took the arms from the ships in the harbour. They were ill-armed, there was no central direction, but they had the will to win and they had the numbers. By the 20th it was all over. The fascist officers were shot on the spot, often by their own troops.

In Madrid the strike was called on the 19th. Guns were distributed. Barricades were erected. Workers' militias patrolled the streets. The workers' casualties were huge but the Montana barracks (the rebels' stronghold) was taken—and all the besieged killed.



'Between the streets and the government there emerged new revolutionary powers'

In the Spain of small peasant farmers the uprising was victorious. But in the rest of the countryside there was fierce fighting. In Andalusia there was a war of kill or be killed. The farm labourers fought hard against a superior enemy. But here the outcome depended on the progress of Franco's troops as they brought terror to the south of Spain.

As the 20th of July ended the pattern was clear. The uprising had failed. The rebels had provoked the revolution they had feared most.

In the fascist held zones there was systematic terror against every activist of the left, whatever their shade of politics.

The news of these massacres spurred on workers in the rest of Spain. General strikes began everywhere. Every worker acquired arms. The prisons were opened. Officers, civil guards, falangists were shot. The right, however, wasn't the only victim of the workers' victory. The state had collapsed, authority had crumbled away. The government still existed but it had no authority.

Between the streets and the government there emerged new revolutionary powers—the countless local committees organised to fight the war and deepen the revolution.

Everywhere there were committees. They had been formed in many ways. In villages and workplaces time had often been taken to elect them. In the towns the activists had elected themselves. Political representation varied according to local strength.

In Catalonia and recaptured Aragon many committees were exclusively anarchist. Everywhere they were based on the armed workers. Here was the beginning of Workers' Power. But it was only the start. Would these committees link up, centralise, become the sole power in the land?

In the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, the process had gone furthest. The city blossomed red and black flags, banners and slogans. The bourgeoisie went out in old clothes. There were no more nightclubs or luxury hotels—they were being used as popular eating houses.

Barcelona, however, also showed the political weakness of the movement. On the 21st the CNT leaders were called to meet the Catalan government.

President Companys congratulated them:

'You are masters of the town and Catalonia because you defeated the fascist soldiers on your own. You have won and everything is in your power. If you do not need me, if you do not want me as president, say so now, and I shall become just another soldier in the anti-fascist struggle.'

The fate of revolutionary Spain hung on their response. Here the failures of anarchist politics were decisive. The anarchists equated all dictatorships—of the bosses or of the workers. They were hostile to all politics. They thought power in the streets and factories was sufficient.

So they accepted Companys' presidency and allowed his government to survive. A revolutionary solution to the question of power was being lost.

What happened in Barcelona was repeated in different forms throughout revolutionary Spain. Nowhere else were the workers as strong as in Barcelona, but everywhere the question of who was to rule—the committees or the Popular Front government—was posed. On that decision, on the resolution of that conflict, the fate of the workers was to depend. ■

Neil Rogall