

socialist
REVIEW

“Let’s all move
 one place on”



It's party time and they're fighting for seats
 we get the crumbs

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Election 79

Labour's dead end

It would be difficult for any socialist to mourn the Callaghan government. By any reckoning the last five years have been a disaster for the British working class.

Labour came to power in March 1974 on the crest of a wave of mass working-class resistance to the Tory government of Ted Heath, pledged by its Manifesto 'to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families'.

Any shift has been in the opposite direction. This is what an economist writing in the *Observer* had to say about the effects of Labour's policy of wage restraint:

"The past twelve months have almost certainly seen the sharpest fall in the real living standards of Britain's working population in any year for at least a century, including the wars. Indeed, to find a comparable fall, it would probably be necessary to go back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century" (1 May 1977).

Even in its own terms the Labour government has been a failure. The National Enterprise Board was intended to mark a new break-through in state control of the economy by buying into the profitable sectors of private manufacturing

industry. No longer was the state sector to be reserved for unprofitable but essential industries which private enterprise was no longer interested in running.

The NEB's most important stake turned out to be British Leyland the biggest lame-duck of them all. There, in British Shipbuilding (another creation of the outgoing Labour government), and in other nationalised industries (for example, steel), Wilson and Callaghan have presided over lay-offs, reduced manning levels, productivity deals, closures all designed to squeeze ever more work out of a shrinking labour force.

The biggest joke of all was Labour's slogan during the February 1974 election: 'Back to Work with Labour'. Production has still to recover from the levels to which it fell during Heath's three day week. Unemployment remains firmly at a post-war high of around 1½ million.

Denis Healey, who promised 'to squeeze the rich until the pips squeaked', has become the toughest of hard-money men, beloved and trusted by the City for cutting public spending and company taxation and keeping interest rates high at the price of employment and output.

Even the proudest of

Labour's post-war achievements, the welfare state, has not been sacrosanct. Healey's public spending cuts have hit social services, not defence or subsidies to private industry. The result is there for everyone to see, in the deterioration of the National Health Service and public transport, and the revolt of the low paid.

"But we had no choice". Labour's defenders will whine. "What else could we have done during an international economic crisis? If only the times were better".

The trouble is that the time will never be right for Labour. The last five years have seen the most serious economic crisis the capitalist system has faced since the war. Internationally the system has been struck a variety of serious blows: mass working-class militancy in Spain and Italy, a near-revolution in Portugal, victorious liberation movements in southern Africa and Indochina, and now revolution in Iran.

The British working-class movement was at its strongest in 1974, having just brought Heath to his knees. Even in the face of mass unemployment and falling living standards, trade union membership has continued to rise over the past five years. What could have been a

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more favourable opportunity for making serious inroads into the very foundations of the capitalist system?

The truth is (and it has long ceased to be a secret) that the leadership of the Labour Party do not want to overthrow capitalism—they are committed to making it work. The logic of making capitalism work during a crisis is to cut living standards, to lay off workers and close down factories, to make those that are left work harder, to cut social expenditure.

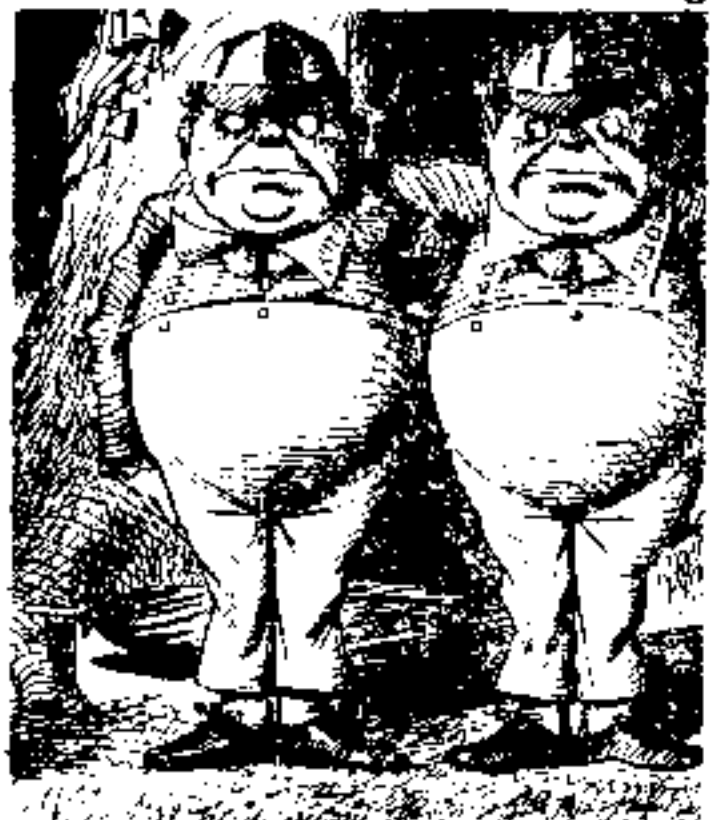
No wonder a *Financial Times* columnist commented:

"I cannot for the life of me think of any reason why anyone should consider voting Conservative at the next general election. In terms of what Mrs Thatcher's Tories have to offer, we are already served by about as good a conservative government as we are likely to get. For a start Mr Callaghan's government has sat out a level of unemployment that no Conservative government would have dared to accept" (29 November 1977).

The loss in 1977 of Labour's overall majority in the House of Commons provided Callaghan with the perfect excuse to follow his natural bent and do nothing. Should any Tribune try and remind the government of the long-forgotten Manifesto, Callaghan could reply that to stay in office he dare not offend the Liberals / Scottish Nationalists / Enoch Powell (delete where appropriate).

For much of his premiership Callaghan was fortunate. The TUC general council backed wage restraint. Thanks to North Sea oil and Healey's hard money policies the pound rode high, helping to bring inflation down from the peaks it reached in 1975-77.

Callaghan could safely adopt the role of a complacent father-figure who knew best. He reminded many commentators of Stanley Bladwin, do-nothing



Tory prime minister during the last slump, in the 1930s.

But once the going got rough especially during the industrial struggles of the past three months—the government disintegrated. Abandoning the most basic tradition of the Labour movement—solidarity—Callaghan called on workers to cross picket-lines. He agreed with the TUC a Concordat which opens the way for anti union legislation under a Tory government (see our last issue).

He scabbled around for the parliamentary votes necessary to ensure his survival for a few more months offering lower energy prices for northern Ireland to the Ulster Unionists, quarrymen's compensation to the Welsh Nationalists, engaging in the crudest sort of pork barrel politics.

Watching the creeping paralysis of the Labour government over the past few months called to mind Disraeli's description of a decrepit Liberal administration of the last century:

"As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench, the ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest".

Callaghan's desperate efforts to stay in office have finally failed and we are now in the middle of an election campaign. What can socialists expect from the result?

Election 79

5 years hard Labour

1974. The year of two elections—February, when Labour under Harold Wilson wins the largest number of seats but not a majority, and October, when Wilson scrapes in with a majority. The miners' strike is settled and the Industrial Relations Act repealed. After caving in before the Ulster Workers' Council's opposition to power-sharing in Northern Ireland, the Labour government introduces as a 'temporary' measure the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which permits detention without trial and summary deportation, and is still in force.

1975. Troops are used to break dustmen's strike in Glasgow. The referendum on Common Market membership in June is turned into an opinion poll on wage restraint. After a massive 'Yes' Wilson removes Anthony Wedgewood Benn, the most vocal left-winger in the Cabinet, from the Department of Industry, and, with TUC backing, introduces a £6 limit on wage increases. When Chrysler threatens to withdraw from the UK, the government dissuades them with a massive bribe.

1976. Harold Wilson resigns and is succeeded by James Callaghan. One of his first acts is to sack Home Office Minister Alex Lyon, who calls him a racist. During the wave of racist propaganda in the *Sun* and other papers, giving rise to the murder of a number of blacks and stimulating the growth of the Nazi National Front, in the spring and summer of that year, Labour continues to implement the racist Immigration Act inherited from the Tories. Denis Healey uses the pretext of a loan from the International Monetary Fund to cut public spending by £1 billion.

1977. A wave of strikes notably in British Leyland, threatens the survival of the social contract. To stay in office Callaghan makes a pact with the Liberal Party. Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason openly deploys Special Air Service terror squads in the Six Counties. Aubrey, Berry and Campbell are prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act for their interest in signals intelligence. The TUC continues its support for wage restraint. Troops are used against the Firemen's strike.

1978. The end of the Lib-Lab pact forces Callaghan to rely on the support on the Scottish Nationalists (in exchange for the Devolution Bill) and the Ulster Unionists (many of whom admire Roy Mason's firm way with 'terrorists'). Despite the TUC's decision to return to 'free collective bargaining' Healey proposes a five per cent limit on wage increases.

1979. The success of Ford workers and lorry drivers in busting the five per cent limit, encourages widespread strike action in the public sector. The failure of 40 per cent of the Scottish electorate to support devolution brings to an end Callaghan's alliance with the SNP. On 28 March the Tories win a motion of no confidence in the government by one vote.

Election 79

The Tory enemy

The day after the Labour government fell share prices rose to their highest level ever. The stock market is a very imperfect indicator of the desires or intentions of big business. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the British capitalist class wishes to see a Tory government elected.

This situation represents a marked change. Until very recently big business was quite happy to see Labour continue in office. Callaghan and Healey, as shown in the previous article,

implemented impeccably pro-capitalist policies.

Furthermore, they had been able to mobilise the loyalties of the trade union leadership, and indeed many rank-and-file activists at convenor and senior-steward level, in support of, or at least acquiescence in, these policies.

A Tory government, especially one headed by Margaret Thatcher, would, it was feared, disrupt this consensus and re-awaken old hatreds. After all it is only five years ago that trade

union militancy crushed the Heath government. Would Thatcher fare any better? Why bother, since Labour was implementing Tory policies anyway?

What changed this situation was the collapse of the social contract. The trade union leadership were unable to prevent the strikes of the past six months, even though they did their best to sabotage them once under way (see, for example, the article by Martin Jones on the Ford strike on page 20.)

Rank-and-file organisation showed, especially during the lorry drivers' strike, that it still packed a punch than could bring the government and the employers to their knees.

These events have strengthened support within the ruling class for a strategy of confrontation. The autumn already saw a united employers' offensive on a number of fronts (see Steve Jefferys' article in *Socialist Review* No 9), an offensive which still continues, for example in engineering (see page 8).

Labour's formula of reliance on the trade-union bureaucracy no longer seems to fit the situation. The Concordat, in the concessions it makes to the Tories on issues like picketing, is an extremely dangerous document because it strengthens the ideological case for attacks on trade union rights.

However, many employers, while they may well use the Concordat to back them up, clearly believe that the trade union leaders are no longer reliable allies.

The alternative strategy is that offered by the Tory right-

wing, which adds up to reliance on two weapons (unemployment (via control of the money supply) and anti-union legislation. Since the lorry drivers' strike the demands that 'secondary' picketing and strikes in 'essential services' be banned have reached crescendo pitch.

The Tory employment spokesman, James Prior, is opposed to using the law against the unions after the disastrous experience of the Industrial Relations Act and is in favour of a Tory version of the social contract. However, his position within the Tory leadership has become far weaker in the past few months, and it is rumoured that he will not be appointed Employment Secretary should Thatcher win the election.

Thatcher herself won the party leadership thanks to a right-wing revolt among Conservative back-benchers. Should the Tories win the election with a large majority, the House of Commons will be packed out with real-estate agents, solicitors and stock-brokers buying for blood. They may get it.

Election 79

The left's choice

A Tory victory in the general election would bring to office the most right-wing government of the century. It would provide a mandate for a programme of viciously anti-working-class policies.

Thatcher has promised to reduce the tax burden on the rich, increase indirect taxes (and therefore prices), cut public spending (except, of course, on defence and law and order), prevent Britain from becoming 'swamped' by black people, and take on the unions.

This is the heart of the case for voting Labour in the general election. Callaghan may be bad, but Thatcher will be much worse.

We should not, however, allow ourselves to fall into the opposite trap. If the Tories win the election, we will hear a great deal from those on the left of the Labour Party about how things might have been different, and

no confidence) in 1924.

They continue to hope that next time it will be different, that next time the right people will control the cabinet and that we can then take the first steps on the parliamentary road to socialism.

Left and right in the Labour Party alike see politics in the same light -- as a struggle at the top, in the National Executive Committee, the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Cabinet, the House of Commons, the TUC general council, union executive councils. The rank and file of the labour movement are left to look on and cheer.

But once in office the lefts find themselves caught in a trap. Committed to change within the existing structures of power, they find themselves forced to defend these structures and make them work as if they were right-wingers. Consider the sorry fate of Michael Foot, the



It's going to be a race between an election and inflation getting back into double figures. The latest government price index showed a rise of 9.6 per cent over the year to February; the March figure might just fall short of Healey's magic ten per cent. It's a certainty, however, that prices are now rising faster than late last year.

The government's Price Commission admits that the period before the December-January wages offensive is already showing a big rise in price notifications from large companies, and the rate of retail price increases -- even excluding big rises in seasonal foods like fresh vegetables -- has been rising since October. Apart from the big oil price rises coming through, other raw materials are now costing much more than a year ago, and the cost of food as measured by the Price Commission rose by a massive 17 per cent between January 1978 and 1979.

The total value of all price increases notified to the commission (only larger companies have to give notice) was £38,013 million.

can still be different in the future, if only Labour had followed a different course and adopted an 'alternative economic strategy'.

Let us not spend too much time considering the merits of such a strategy. Essentially it rests upon the introduction of import controls -- a device for exporting unemployment and raising prices which is quite irrelevant to a situation of international economic crisis.

The important point is that the left of the Labour Party have been living on 'what might have been' ever since the first Labour government was pitched out of office (also by a vote of

lion of the left who has ended up as Jim Callaghan's tame tabby.

It is time for a new strategy -- one that relies on the organisation, activity and consciousness of rank-and-file workers rather than manoeuvres at the top.

From this stand point it is clear that trade union rights are already under attack and will continue to be under attack whether Labour or Tories come to power. The difference lies mainly in the nature of the attack. Labour must try to carry the trade union bureaucracy with them, (hence the Concordat) while Thatcher will most likely opt for a frontal assault.

A defeat for the Conser-

vatives will be a defeat for those who wish to see more attacks on the workers' movement. There is, unfortunately, no credible socialist alternative to Labour which has a hearing among significant numbers of workers. To abstain in a situation where the mass of workers continue, despite everything which has happened, to support Labour would be the worst sort of irresponsibility.

Socialists will, therefore, be forced, reluctantly and against their wishes, to call for the return of a Labour government (although voting, in the few

constituencies where they will stand, for candidates to the left of Labour).

However, our real task is to build the rank-and-file organisations through which workers can defend themselves from the attacks we can expect in the coming months. Implicit within these organisations is the power, not only to win defensive battles within the existing system, but to overturn that system and replace it with a socialist society. It is here that the real road to socialism, the alternative to Labour's dead-end is to be found.

election 79



Cambodia

Popular contradictions

Not surprisingly, the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea (Cambodia) and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam have caused much heart-searching among the world's far left.

After all, the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against US imperialism was one of the chief inspirations during the revival of the European and north American revolutionary left in the late 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of young students and workers were swept into a movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese freedom fighters and of protest against the barbarities of the Americans and their clients.

The fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh in 1975 seemed to many socialists in the west to open up a new, more hopeful, chapter in the history of the third world. Instead, the new states created by these historic victories over imperialism have been at each other's throats in a struggle culminating in the occupation of Cambodia by Vietnamese troops in January and the Chinese attack on Vietnam the following month.

This situation has created immense theoretical headaches for those who believed that the defeat of imperialism in 1975 had opened the way to the construction of socialism in Indochina. One of the most interesting reactions has been in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

The USFI have long considered China, Vietnam and so on to be 'deformed workers'



states'. For their (largely European based) majority the same went for Pol Pot's Kampuchea, so the war between it and Vietnam was, for them, a 'fratricidal war between workers' states'.

This of course had 'nothing in common with socialism and communism'. Responsibility was put squarely on 'the criminal actions of all the ruling bureaucrats'.

The 'bloody terrorists of the Pol Pot clique' were particularly singled out. 'But the task of overthrowing these tyrants was and remains the job of the Cambodian workers and peasants. Under no circumstances can this task be given to the bureaucracies of other countries and their armies'. And so they called for the

'immediate withdrawal of the Vietnamese regular army from Cambodia'.

But a large minority of the USFI did not share this position. The Japanese section for instance, hailed the victory of the Vietnamese armed forces and their Kampuchean allies as a 'new advance of the Indo-Chinese Revolution'.

The paper of the USFI's British section, *Socialist Challenge*, also welcomed the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

The American supporters of the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party, took a similar position and (this is where the argument becomes interesting) backed it up by asking 'Pol Pot Regime - Was it a Workers' State?'. An article

of this title in their paper, the *Militant* (23 February), answers quite clearly that it was not.

This is the bare bones of their argument. In 1967 'a massive peasant uprising took place in the main rice growing district of Battambang. The rebellion was crushed. But in its aftermath guerrilla forces led by the relatively young Cambodian Communist Party began to grow. By 1970 they had an armed force of about 4000'.

In March 1970 a US supported coup imposed the regime of General Lon Nol. After this and the abortive US invasion in May 1970 'the peasant rebels won the vast bulk of the countryside and held on to it until the fall of Lon Nol in April 1975'.

'As in Vietnam, the military command structure that heads the peasant army was not revolutionary socialist, but stalinist. The Kampuchean CP... adhered to the strategy of "people's war" which called for peasants fighting in the countryside to the exclusion of the revolutionary mobilisation of the urban working class and poor'.

So... 'it failed to take advantage of the massive anti-Lon Nol, anti-war and anti-US demonstrations that shook Phnompenh and other Kampuchean cities in 1972'.

Nevertheless they were welcomed by a further urban mass upsurge in 1975. 'The Khmer Rouge commanders, however, quickly demonstrated they had no intention of organising and relying on the masses to overcome Kampuchea's social crisis or of acting in their interests.

'Having come to power on the crest of a revolutionary upsurge in the countryside, they not only

brutally smashed and dispersed the urban population, but they drove back the land seizures and redistribution begun by the peasants.'

The authors of the *Militant* article then outline the vicious way in which the Pol Pot regime dispersed the urban population but make clear that 'despite the extreme character of the measures taken by the Pol Pot regime, such policies offer no puzzle if it is understood that stalinist and other petty-bourgeois nationalist currents are alien from the working class in programme, and in China and Indochina, in social composition as well'.

Developments such as those of Pol Pot, were, they argue, foreseen by Trotsky, writing on the peasant guerrillas in China in 1932: 'The commanders and commissars appear in the guise of absolute masters of the situation and upon occupying the cities will be rather apt to look down from above on the workers...'

There were they say, tendencies in this direction in China after the 1949 revolution, but 'in Kampuchea, the conflict Trotsky warned of took an extremely sharp form, resulting in defeat for the working people'.

The 'fundamental economic strategy of the Kampuchean regime under Pol Pot'... was... 'to maximise exploitation of labour and minimise consumption, so as to become self-sufficient in food and accumulate an agricultural surplus that could be sold on the world market. Through these exports, it would finance industrialisation'.

'The defeat of Lon Nol's imperialist-backed forces was a devastating blow to Kampuchea's bourgeoisie, almost all of whom had fled by the fall of Lon Nol in 1975. The government came into the hands of the 'Angkar' (the Kampuchean CP apparatus), as did all urban property and a growing portion of the agricultural land.'

'The defeat of Lon Nol's imperialist-backed forces was a devastating blow to Kam-

puchea's bourgeoisie, almost all of whom had fled by the fall of Lon Nol in 1975. The government came into the hands of the 'Angkar' (the Kampuchean CP apparatus), as did all urban property and a growing portion of the agricultural land.'

'For some commentators, this was enough to prove that capitalism had been overthrown in Kampuchea.'

'But the nationalisation of property is not by itself sufficient to establish a workers' state. The intervention of the workers the only force in modern society capable of establishing and maintaining a progressive economic structure is needed.'

'The nationalisations in Kampuchea came about not through mobilisations of the working class even limited and controlled ones but following the Khmer Rouge's crushing of the urban workers.'

'The Kampuchean working class has no stake whatever in the nationalisation of property, carried out without its participation, by the petty-bourgeoisie in the Angkar. These were the actions of a new bourgeoisie gestating in the state apparatus. They were not anticapitalist actions by the Kampuchean workers... the nationalisations under Pol Pot have numerous parallels'

'They are in the same family with the extensive nationalisations by regimes in Egypt, Burma, Mozambique and Angola, which were the opposite of social overturns by the workers... Neocolonial regimes are frequently forced to foster the primitive accumulation of capital through the state apparatus.'

Now the American SWP are not the only people to decide that Pol Pot's Kampuchea had nothing to do with socialism. But what is interesting about their position is that it does not simply throw up its hands in horror at the barbarities of the regime but draws parallels with other developments in the 'Third World' including China and Vietnam.

Not of course that they draw

the conclusion that these too are capitalist. They claim that 'mass mobilisations overturned capitalist property relations in South Vietnam in the spring of 1978' (nearly three years after the fall of Saigon).

And 'when the Chinese government was compelled to take on US imperialism in the Korean War, it had to change course. Land reform was extended to all of Southern China. (Previous waves of reform had affected only the North).'

'The resulting peasant mobilisations spurred urban anti-capitalist mobilisations beginning in 1951. A workers'

and peasants' government thus came into being and began carrying out under the auspices of the Maoist bureaucracy the urban mobilisations and economic measures that in 1953 transformed China into a workers' state.' (Four years after the Chinese Communist Party had taken power).

But alongside their hard-headed analysis of Cambodia it must be said that these claims of 'mass mobilisations' begin to look a little lame. It will be interesting to see if anyone else draws the same conclusions.

Pete Goodwin

Sao Paulo

Ten days...

... from the international press in the first month of the newly inaugurated Brazilian president, right-wing hardliner Figueiredo.

13 March (NZZ, Switzerland 15 March)

Some 200,000 metal workers in the Sao Paulo industrial area (the largest industrial complex in Latin America) began a strike on Tuesday after their wage negotiations had failed and recognition of trade-union delegates in the factories was refused.

A trade union spokesman said 80 per cent are striking. The strike particularly affects subsidiaries of multinationals such as Volkswagen (40,000 workers), Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Chrysler, Phillips, General Electric and Otis.

22 March (Reuter)

A Labour Ministry spokesman said yesterday that the government had the power to arrest strike leaders and suspend striking metal workers without pay indefinitely if the stoppage, declared illegal by a labour court, was not ended.

Sao Paulo busdrivers and Rio de Janeiro State school-teachers also were on strike for more pay.

22 March (later) (Reuter)

Union representatives agreed today to end a nine-day-old metalworkers' strike that has paralysed the motor industry in Sao Paulo's industrial belt.

Labour sources said the settlement was temporary pending further wage negotiations.

23 March (Reuter)

Two of the three striking metalworkers' unions last night rejected agreements reached between their representatives and employers to end a nine-day strike... labour sources said.

More than 100,000 workers overwhelmingly voted against the settlement with a show of hands at the football stadium in the industrial suburb of Sao Bernardo.

At the Sao Caetano suburb where General Motors has its factory, at least 50,000 more workers also voted to continue the strike.

Members of the third union were still meeting tonight to decide on whether to accept proposals.

The unions had previously turned down a staggered 63 per cent increase offered by the Sao Paulo Industries Federation (FIESP) unless an 11 per cent increase won last year went ahead separately.

23 March (Latin America Economic Report)

Workers have also been more audacious in their tactics. Factories run by Souza Cruz, the Brazilian equivalent of British American Tobacco, were closed in several states in the first simultaneous strike in units of a single company. The ABC metalworkers (Sao Paulo) have been mounting pickets.

COMRADE - WHAT YOU CLEARLY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT TROTSKY ALWAYS IMPLIED THAT SUPPORT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO A PRECOCIOUS WORKERS STATE WHEN IN CONFLICT WITH A RANCID WORKERS STATE!



'Nein' is a 4-letter word

Broadway House, Tothill Street, just off St James's Park in London doesn't sound the sort of place where you'd expect the class struggle to be hotting up. And if you had to pick a spot it wouldn't be there you'd choose to hear about the result of the German steelworkers' strike.

But times are changing. Broadway House is the home of some of Britain's most aggressive bosses: the Engineering Employers' Federation. And last month they declared war.

First of all came a document (see box) which spells out publicly what a lot of top companies, and quite a few smaller ones, have been saying in private: now is the time to crush the militant stewards.

Second came the EEF's answer to the national engineering wage-claim. The small but enthusiastic lobby outside the

Lord Scanlon) couldn't have been much surprised by the pay offer: a pathetic £5 in response to a £20 claim. The amount of steam behind the claim would in any case embarrass a leaky kettle.

But as part of the 'offer' came a demand for union 'commitments' on productivity and against strikes outside procedure. And the employers further generously proposed long-term agreements on conditions (with no reduction in hours for many years) and alterations to the engineering lay-off agreement—because firms had to pay out a lot during the lorry strike.

German Lesson

From their reply to the Confed unions and from their now hardline document on disputes it looks as though engineering bosses have been watching what's been happen-

ing in Germany and have liked what they've seen.

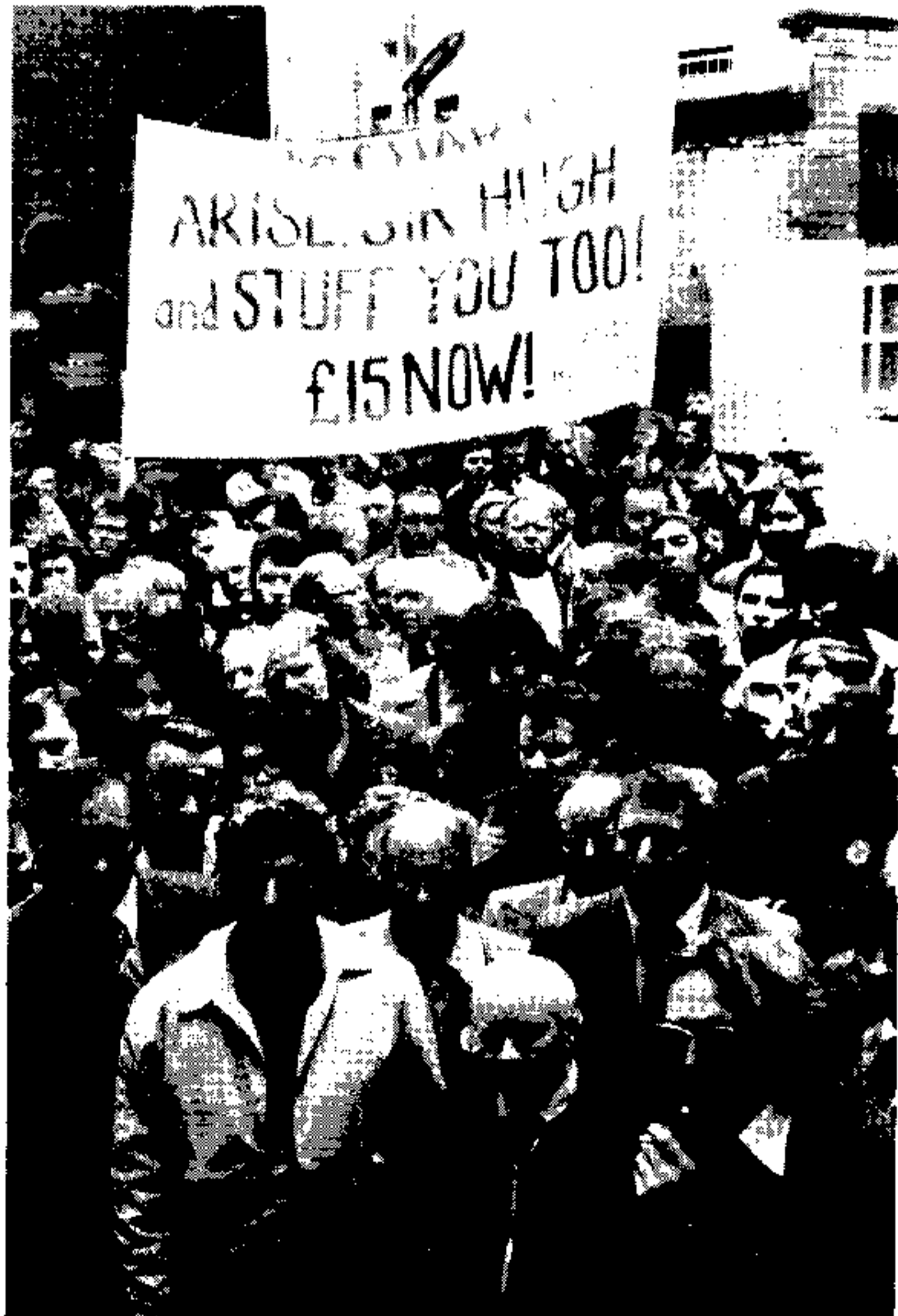
Their reply to the unions first of all quotes with approval the 'highly respected' Council of Experts in West Germany—a so-called impartial body which advises government and employers on the economy, rather like the set up proposed in the Concordat.

This body came up with their views last year on the 35-hour week and, surprise, surprise, condemned it. Its conclusions, say the EEF, 'are the background to the recent agreement in the German engineering industry which confirms the

standard 40-hour week until at least 31 December 1983, that is the next five years.'

The EEF also throws the German agreement in engineering (reached in the aftermath of steelworkers' defeat) into the argument about productivity. German employers can afford to pay very much higher wages than British ones 'and yet we all know that German employers in the engineering industry settled for a wage increase of just 4.3 per cent on 1 January this year'.

And just to encourage Terry Duffy, and his favourite hobby-horse of harmonising shop-floor and office conditions, the employers suggest they copy Germany and have a long-term agreement, perhaps like the new one 'which maintains the 40-hour week until 1983 and fixes holidays for the next seven years.' David Beecham



TUC lobby, Blackpool 77

"We need to restore authority and discipline on the shop floor" said the Director of Manpower from Delta Metal at a conference last month, to nods of approval from assorted industrial relations managers of such companies as GKN, APV, BOC and Esso. He is not alone, nor a member of the 'loony right'. The clearest indication of the tough line management now wants to take comes in the policy document released to the press by the Engineering Employers' Federation on March 14.

The EEF document doesn't just invite its 6,000 member companies to take a hard line. It virtually orders them to. It says:

- "these guidelines aim to help employers achieve greater confidence and coherence in the practice of collective bargaining, and in responding to the threat or fact of industrial action".
- the guidelines aim to ensure "any employer following them will not feel isolated".
- "where an employer has rights under a national, local or domestic agreement, he must be vigilant to exercise and maintain them".
- employers "should press the need for appointment of stewards with proper qualifications who are competent for office".
- "abuse of the position and power of stewards should not be accepted".
- "employees should be made aware that their employer is willing to provide facilities for secret ballots".
- "to maintain the authority of Procedure, of union officials and management, companies should refuse to negotiate where Procedure has been breached".
- "lay-off pay should not be offered for those affected by disputes in the same plant or wider bargaining unit".
- "industrial action such as go-slows, refusal to work normally, and blacking of employees, products or machines should not be tolerated for more than a few days. After a warning, with a sufficient period allowed for reflection, suspension without pay should be the normal response".
- "lump sum payments should not normally be offered by way of settlement as an inducement to return to work... as regards income tax refunds, companies can limit their obligation to pay them during the course of a strike by giving notice, and passing the obligation back, the Inland Revenue".
- "a company's striking employee should not be recruited by other companies while the strike lasts: nor should its work be carried out by other companies, unless by agreement. A customer company should not pressurise a supplying company whose employees are on strike to make an unsatisfactory compromise settlement. Any company subjected to such pressures should feel free to invoke the influence of its Association or of the Federation".

The employers' offensive

There is now a quite clear pattern of moves by leading companies and employers' associations to take the offensive. The lead-up to a probable Tory election victory, with hints of changes to the picketing laws, and the Concordat's guides on weakening trade unionism have been quite important encouragements. But the real reasons lie deeper than this.

First of all the employers recognise the ultimate failure of the social-contract strategy. The tremendous wave of strikes which shattered the government's pay policy and exposed union leaders' inability to control the rank and file have convinced a lot of managements that they've got to take the initiative themselves in confronting the workforce, forcing redundancy, rooting out militants etc.

Right wingers like Chapple, Duffy, Boyd and Co are trying to do their best to convince employers to leave it to them. But for the time being management don't believe the union leaders can do the trick.

Solidarity appeal

This feeling lies behind a series of appeals by CBI leader Sir John Methven for more 'employer solidarity'. Partly this is an attempt to enhance the CBI's ailing prestige. But it also represents the same forces behind the new engineering employers' document 'Guidelines on Collective Bargaining and Response to Industrial Action' (see box).

The origins of the EEF document go back some months. Several major firms and GKN in particular threatened to quit the EEF if it didn't produce a policy which would enable management to fight stewards' organisation and involve right-wing AUEW officials in stamping out militancy.

This attitude may seem odd to readers of this magazine who've become accustomed to the weakness of most AUEW organisation. But the EEF itself has recently come out with figures which show that the number of strikes in engineering went up last year from 862 to 946, of which 90 per cent were

unofficial (government figures for the same period show strikes falling from 449 to 402)

GKN was far from alone. Hardline companies like Westland Aircraft, Serek, Birmid Qualeast, Johnson Matthey, Powell Duffryn, Edgar Allen, Low & Bonar have all been exerting their influence to get a tough line agreed in the EEF.

Not surprisingly these are the same companies that always impose lock-outs (five in the past few weeks in South Wales alone). They are the same companies that fund blacklisting organisations like the Economic League, and many of them supply members of the Economic League central council.

Reasons

The reasons why this should be happening now are not hard to find. Apart from simple hatred of shop-floor organisation, engineering firms at the heavy end of the market have not benefitted greatly from last year's the 'mini-boom'.

Of 86 significant takeovers last year, 18 were at the heavy end of engineering, with weak companies being swallowed up and rationalised. Latest interim profits in the mechanical engineering sector are only up 1.5 per cent on the previous year; metals fell by 0.7 per cent.

This is a much worse performance than any other part of the capital goods sector, even building. And latest annual profits are relatively even worse (in actual terms of cash mechanical engineering still leads the field, though).

Financially, many engineering firms need a continuous offensive on productivity, jobs, conditions and discipline. The smaller ones to survive; the bigger ones to grow, to compete internationally and to reward their friends.

A second major reason is the degeneration of the AUEW into an increasingly bankrupt union both financially and politically. Some companies have played no small part in this anyway, with financial aid and time off for 'moderate' candidates and facilities for the right side to distribute literature

and hold meetings.

The problem now is that companies need to bolster full-time officials at the expense of stewards—hence the lovely phrase in the EEF guidelines on maintaining 'the authority of Procedure, of union officials and management'.

The employers are not helped by the fact that the AUEW is led by, let's say, some fairly inadequate right-wingers in the main. The bosses too are given to making snide cracks about 'poor Terry'.

And the employers attack coincides with one of the most powerful rank-and-file offensives in years almost entirely outside heavy manufacturing industry. A huge gap is opening

up in the centre of the industrial stage. A crude right wing in charge of a decrepit union structure.

The AUEW's traditional left almost played out on a national level and catastrophically weak in certain areas. And an offensive on jobs, conditions and organisation which could wreak havoc in many areas and industries.

The potential for a major disaster exists. But equally if the small signs of returning confidence on the shop floor, and the new generation of youngish militants, are linked together, the lessons of successful rank-and-file organisation elsewhere can be quickly relearned.

Certainly there have been enough signs of determination in the past few weeks—at ICL, Hawkers, Caterpillar, GEC, General Motors and other firms for the employers not to be too confident about winning their well-planned offensive.

Reg Holt

More workers went on strike in January alone than in the whole of 1971, 1975, 1976, 1977 or 1978. And the numbers who took industrial action of some sort were probably larger than in any month since May 1926. So many in fact that the normally-confident Department of Employment admits that its figures of 1,428,100 involved in stoppages and 2,585,000 strike days in January are 'provisional and especially subject to later revision'.

As usual the DE's figures don't include overtime bans, go-slows etc and it says that 'a substantial part' of January's public sector action took this form. February's figures hadn't appeared as this issue of *Socialist Review* was printed, but it looks as though the government's experts are going to have a lot of head-scratching to do before they work out how massive the revolt against the five per cent was.

Spain

After the vote

The general elections of 1 March were, with the exception of the Basque country, a victory for the ruling UCD and their right-wing policies. Although expected to lose seats, prime minister Adolfo Suarez' party ended up with 168 a couple extra.

The major electoral challenge of the Socialist (PSOE) failed to materialise. In fact, while gaining three seats, they actually lost votes.

The UCD won above all thanks to fear. The threat of a victory by the left united the right behind the UCD. This was reflected in the failure of the far-right UCD (Democratic Coalition, formerly the Popular

Alliance) whose seats fell from 16 to 9, although this was partly because it lost votes to the fascists for having supported the new 'democratic' Constitution last December.

The PSOE, which won 121 seats, obviously failed to break new ground among middle class and, above all, rural voters. The Communist Party (PCE), which spent most of the campaign attacking the Socialists, increased their seats from 20 to 23.

Since the election the PCE have continued to insist on the need for a 'government of democratic co-operation' (ie a coalition uniting the UCD and the reformist parties) or at least

a pact between the government and the left—otherwise, 'the country will be faced with four years of instability'.

The low turnout (67 per cent—ten points below the last election in June 1977) was surprising and reflects a considerable degree of apathy and disenchantment after 20 months of bourgeois-democratic rule.

However, the real blow against Suarez was struck in Euskadi (the Basque country). Much to the horror of *all* the big parties, the radical nationalists (Abertzales) won four congressmen and a senator.

Here are the results for the Basque country (the Abertzales are starred):

PNV (Basque National Party)	290,000
UCD	248,000
PSOE	240,000
HB (Herri Batasuna—Popular Unity)*	173,000
EE (Euskadiko Eskerra—Basque Left)*	85,000
PCE	46,000

Between them the two radical nationalist coalition polled nearly 260,000 votes, not far behind the bourgeois PNV, which won seven seats. The Abertzales stand for national independence, socialism and a complete break with francoism.

Two of the four parties which make up HB called for abstentions in the 1977 election, and their support undoubtedly comes from sympathisers with ETA (militar), the wing of the Basque liberation army currently engaged in armed struggle against the police and the army. Thus the myth of the 'terrorists' isolated from popular feeling has been shattered.

Although HB is a coalition of social democrats, libertarians and revolutionary socialists, the



Long struggling workers against redundancy in Euzkadi

latter are closest to ETA and enjoy the greatest influence on HB's predominantly youthful supporters. Their programme differs from those of the main revolutionary groups mainly in its emphasis on national independence.

On other issues—women's rights, opposition to class collaboration, the revolutionary road to socialism HB's position is broadly similar to that of the far left. HB seems to have won votes mainly from the PSOE in the large working-class areas.

HB's deputies will not sit in the 'Spanish parliament' unless certain conditions, also put forward by ETA (m) as a basis for a cease-fire, are met, notably the right of self-determination, withdrawal of the Spanish security forces and their replacement by forces under Basque control, amnesty for all political prisoners, the legalisation of all Basque political parties (two of HB's component organisations, HASI and LAIA, are still illegal), equality for the Basque language and a wide range of social and economic reforms which 'would benefit the working class'.

One HB deputy recently

emphasised that 'the struggle for our liberation and for socialism won't take place in any parliament but in the factories and in the streets'.

Essentially, EE is 'more moderate' than HB. It is prepared to go to Madrid and is prepared to work with the PNV in demanding a statute of autonomy for Euskadi. Nevertheless, EE is to the left of the PCE on *all* issues. It is linked to ETA (politicomilitar), a group which specialises in spectacular propaganda stunts, kidnappings and bombings—hardly the image of a respectable parliamentary party.

The PSOE and the PCE accuse the Abertzales of splitting the working class in Euskadi between Basques and immigrants. In reality, many of the radical nationalists' supporters are 'immigrants', as the election results show.

'Anyone who sells their labour in Euskadi is a member of the Basque working class', affirm the Abertzales. Many of them, despite their intense and sometimes mystical nationalism, argue that only the working class can win genuine independence for Euskadi, and

that independence can only be guaranteed by international socialism.

The radical nationalists' case has been strengthened by the consensus politics of the reformists, the continued repression practised by the state apparatus and the relative passivity of the working class in the rest of the Spanish state, which have made it increasingly difficult for the revolutionary left to argue against the radicals' often sectarian and adventurist behaviour.

Radical—nationalist parties did well elsewhere (with the exception of Catalonia)—particularly in Galicia and the Canaries. At the same time right-wing nationalists have lost ground.

Over a million votes were cast for parties to the left of the Communists (although over half went to the radical nationalists), representing serious dissatisfaction with the slowness of the reform process, opposition to consensus and the demanding for national self determination.

The right-wing maoists, the PTE and ORT, got around 315,000 votes. Since both organisations confidently predicted that they would have deputies elected, they have gone into crisis since the election.

The two main revolutionary organisations, MC (Communist Movement) and ICR (Revolutionary Communist League—Spanish section of the Fourth International) won 89,000 and 45,000 votes respectively, improving on their performances in the 1977 elections, when they were still illegal.

Given the relative down-turn in workers' struggles outside the Basque country, these results were reasonable. Both organisations did best in Euskadi, respectively winning 17,000 and 10,200 votes there.



Carillo:
'Long live the constitution'
'Long live democracy'



'Long live the king'
'Long live Spain'



Bishop:
'Don't forget the family'



'Long live the family'

The election campaign itself was like a gigantic battle between soap companies. Most parties reached unimaginable heights of banality in their electoral propaganda, which could have been swapped around without making any noticeable difference. 'Firm government' and 'moderation' were the watch words.

The campaign was marked by the censorship of numerous left-wing broadcasts by the openly pro-government television and radio. The main targets of censorship were the revolutionary left, the radical nationalists and a coalition of 4-50,000 media workers called the Union for Liberty of Expression.

The ICR had the demand that fascists be purged from the army and references to repression in the Basque country cut from a TV broadcast. The MC had two programmes completely stopped when they refused to accept similar cuts aimed particularly at references to the king and republicanism.

Meanwhile the fascists were allowed to pedal all their filth unhindered. Their illegal use of the national flag was conveniently overlooked.

Predictably the campaign involved numerous fascist attacks on the left. Often the assailants were well-known Fuerzā Nueva members, or even candidates. But the police did little to hinder their friends.

One of the most vicious incidents took place outside the PTE's offices in central Madrid. Three fascists attacked the party's youth leader. Announcing they would 'change the pretty face on the PTE's election posters', they proceeded to slash her face and chest with knives.

Meanwhile a number of strikes continue to trouble the UCD government and its reformist allies. Numerous disputes have again broken out in the metal industry, with big demonstrations and strikes in Bilbao and Galicia.

No sooner had the elections finished when electricity workers in the Canaries and metro-workers in Barcelona were threatened with 'militarisation' (one of the dictatorship's favourite remedies) if their strikes continued.

One of the most important disputes during the election was in the hospitals. The failure of wage negotiations affecting 160,000 hospital workers led to

widespread stoppages and lightning strikes. However, under the new Constitution it is illegal to strike in 'essential services', so the government decided to ban the strike.

The situation came to a head in the massive La Paz hospital in Madrid. Here, as elsewhere, hundreds of police were drafted into the hospital to prevent a strike. They then proceeded to chase strikers from building to building to stop them holding a mass meeting. In one day alone 74 strikers were arrested and four wounded.

The workers responded with barricades and occupied part of the hospital. In the end the government backed down over the strikes' illegality as the issue became increasingly an embarrassment for their 'democratic' electoral image.

However, the militancy of the hospital workers owes nothing to the official union leaderships. The Socialist UGT opposed the strike from the start, telling the workers to wait until after the election, when the new, no doubt Socialist, government would solve their problems, while the PCE-controlled Workers' commissions (CCOO) withdrew their support as the strike radicalised.

The real leadership fell into the hands of the workers' assemblies, which included members of all unions, as well as non-union members. The

workers demanded not only higher wages but a genuine public health service for the working class. After further government and union intervention, negotiations are continuing.

At FASA-RENAULT in Valladolid, the CCOO, having sold out the massive strikes (see *Socialist Review* 10), has now expelled six MC members for supporting 'unofficial' action. The disgusting behaviour of the official leadership during the strike has led to a mass exodus from the unions: an estimated 50 per cent of the CCOO membership have left, despite the opposition of the expelled MC militants.

Meanwhile, over 500 pickets have been detained during the first few weeks that the new anti-terrorist laws have been in operation. Near Madrid riot police attacking a demonstration against water shortages killed a 14 year old boy with a rubber bullet.

This incident highlighted the terrible housing conditions under which so many workers live. Apart from the police, the municipal administrations are one of the main relics of the dictatorship. These administrations, directly responsible for the denial of resources to working-class areas, are run by francoist and notorious for their corruption and incompetence.

The much postponed municipal elections, the first since 1933, are now due to take place on 3 April, of course, they won't solve these problems, but they do give socialists an opportunity to intervene in many localities where the neighbourhood committees have played a militant role.

In many places the whole of the local francoist bureaucracy has joined the UCD. The left is expected to do well in most major cities and so the CD and the fascists are standing down in favour of the UCD to ensure the widest possible unity on the right.

The radical nationalists, greatly encouraged by their victories in the Cortes elections, will play a prominent role in the municipal elections as well.

Already illegal demonstrations, street battles and strikes have broken out in many Basque towns and cities, as the Abertzales and the far left have taken to the streets in support of political prisoners and against the persecution of Basque refugees in France. During one such clash, two of HB's newly elected deputies were beaten up by the police after showing their identity cards.

The real struggle against the UCD government and for the elimination of all vestiges of francoism continues. *Doug Andrews and Mary Reid.*

France (1)

Blowing the lid

In recent weeks the world's press has been full of news of the French steelworkers' revolt. Pictures not only of mass demonstrations but of besieged police stations and battles in the street have illustrated the determined nature of the steelworkers' answer to the announcement of 25,000 to 30,000 sackings.

However, although the reaction to the problem in France has been more dramatic than elsewhere the problem itself is one faced by workers of all the advanced capitalist countries.

Bourgeois economists estimate that there is a surplus in steel production on the world scale of between 15 and 20 per cent and for the Common Market countries alone between 100,000 and 140,000 sackings are planned.

The massive nature of the investment necessary for a modern steel industry and its importance for each national capitalism has meant an increasing amount of state intervention whether through subsidies, participation or complete nationalisation. The crisis since 1974 has only accelerated this process.

In France over the last ten years over £1000 million has been given to the steel barons in handouts culminating in the decision last December by the government to become the major shareholder in the steel industry in order to prevent its liquidation and the disastrous effect this would have had on the rest of French capital.

The attempts of the government to 'rationalise' the steel industry are only part of

rationalisation plans throughout France which are all the more drastic for having been delayed till after last year's general elections. In a whole series of industries the bosses, with the government's backing, have been on the offensive. The elections were hardly over before the lay-offs started and factories began to close.

Encouraged by the government's almost immediate abolition of price controls, by the demoralisation of workers after the defeat of the left and above all by the total lack of any organised response by the union leadership the bosses went on the attack.

Some defensive struggles did take place but they remained isolated and were defeated often with the violent intervention either of the riot police

removal of workers occupying sections of the Cleon and Flins Renault factories, or of hired thugs -attacks on the picket lines at Moulins.

The reaction of the unions has been typical although all the more disgraceful given the nature of the situation. The national one-day stoppage as a safety valve has over the years been a commonly used tactic to defuse rank-and-file militancy and to strengthen the bureaucrats' bargaining hand but in no way does it force any change in the capitalists' basic plans.

However since the elections the one-day stoppages haven't even been national but by industry and often regional at that. This has been true for both of the two major unions—the CP-dominated CGT and the CFTD, which is closer to the Socialist Party.

This flagrant attempt by the union leaderships to divide and weaken struggles has not gone unnoticed by the government who have only tightened the screws further. On top of the price 'thaw', social security contributions have been reorganised to the benefit of the employers, the law concerning the 40-hour week has been made more 'flexible', and the law allowing in certain cases for unemployment benefits of 90 per cent of wages for a year has been scrapped! All this with no more than a whimper from the unions.

No wonder, you might think, that the lid finally had to blow. And blow it certainly has in the north and east. In fact these are two areas which already had high levels of unemployment—the Nord Pas-de-Calais up to 23 per cent in 1978 to 8 per cent with 115,000 unemployed and in Lorraine 30,000 or 7 per cent of the active population out of work.

It was in the heart of Lorraine at Longwy, where out of a working population of 20,000, 7,000 steelworkers were threatened with the sack, that the first explosion came. In previous 'reorganisations' many workers had been given special early retirement so this time round it is mainly workers between 35 and 45 who are for the chop with all that that implies—family ties, children at school, mortgages etc.

For over a month Longwy has been the scene of demonstrations of one sort and another but things really exploded at the end of February

when the police station was stormed, the local 'chambre patronale' (employers' federation) ransacked furniture and documents chucked out of the windows and burned, and finally the local television transmitting station occupied and a pirate programme popularising the struggle sent out.

A week later the steelworkers in the north took a page out of the Longwy book and after a series of skirmishes in different towns, Denain erupted in response to continued provocation from the police—arrests, beatings up of demonstrators etc.

Late into the night they fought it out with the riot police not only with the usual stones, nuts and bolts, and catapults against truncheons, tear gas and anti-riot grenades but also with petrol bombs and somewhere in the crowd a rifle.



Demonstration at Denain

In the wake of what happened at Denain the government, the French CBI and the press were full of stories about irresponsible minorities stirring up violence and the prime minister, Raymond Barre, openly accused the Communist Party and the CGT of planning the troubles.

The CP hotly denies this and with sincerity for it is no secret that on every occasion they have tried to hold back the workers or at the most channel their disgusting nationalistic propaganda has led to such 'commando operations' as blocking trains full of German coal or 'foreign' iron-ore and tipping it out on the tracks. The CP, having often been accused of being manipulated from Moscow, are always keen to

show that they are good patriots, but in recent months their chauvinist campaign has reached a high pitch.

In addition to the well known poster 'Fabriquons Français'—Build French, (strains of I'm hacking Britain) the walls are now adorned with 'Against a German Europe', 'France will not be a suburb of Bonn' and so on.

The CP's anti-Germany propaganda dates back to the war with such slogans as 'A chacun son Boche' ('Each man get his Jerry') or 'Make Germany pay'. Campaigns in the 1950s against German rearmament have led to the recent support for the French nuclear deterrent (which is crazy enough) and a campaign to stop Germany having the bomb.

In the steel industry the CP claims that all the problems are the fault of orders coming from

tracts for Concorde or the latest Mirage jet fighter!



dans l'Humanité...

Attacked for being natinalist the CP say they are for a workers' Europe and point to the meeting last year in Lorraine of European Communist Parties, but this was no more than a talking shop and when the crunch came shortly afterwards with the German steelworkers' strike there were a few articles in *Humanité* but no

a German-dominated Brussels. The Davignon Plan', which is nothing more than an attempt by the European ruling classes to regulate steel production and face the existing crisis in steel production without cutting each others' throats is bitterly attacked by the C.P. as the *cause* of the crisis.

In the build up to the European elections the defence of France, of French culture and French sovereignty are the recurring CP themes, of which the logical conclusion must be an inevitable rallying behind French capital and an unholy alliance with the Gaullists who are playing the same tune. *L'Humanité*, the CP daily, is forever singing the praises of 'our successes in industry' by which they mean export con-

action, no solidarity, no blacking of French steel sold to Germany during the strike, no meetings, no collections, nothing.

And yet the rank and file of Longwy and Denain have shown that action does indeed speak louder than words. The first 'explosion' brought the government to the negotiating table, and second managed to extract (the following day) the suspension of the sackings, £5000 redundancy payments, and the reintroduction of the 90 per cent dole for a year.

Crumbs they may be if you consider the prospects of finding another job but the lesson has surely not been lost on many that the only way to win further results is to use the real strength they possess to being

the government to its knees. The French revolutionary organisations have very little influence in the steel areas although an increasing amount of interest is shown for their ideas which are coinciding more and more with the lessons the

steelworkers are drawing from their own experience.

Whether this leads to the development of strike action and an all-out attack on the government's plans the coming weeks and months alone will tell. *John Bennett*



A FRANCE ne sera pas la banlieue de Bonn

'France won't be a suburb of Bonn'

France (2)

Testing ground

Whatever its outcome, the French steelworkers' struggle is of Europe-wide significance. They are the victims of an ambitious industrial rationalisation programme which Giscard and Barre hope will transform French capitalism into a first-class economic power.

A recent survey in the *Economist*, which referred to Giscard fulsomely as 'a latter-day French Galileo', described the 'economic revolution' he inaugurated after the defeat of the left in the March 1978 elections in the following terms:

'By launching what he calls a new liberal economic policy, he hopes to move France towards a more open capitalist system of the kind operating in the United States and west Germany. His analysis is that French prosperity will depend on the vigorous development of industry, and that French industry can only become competitive and efficient if it is freed from the strait jacket of state controls.'

One basic element in Giscard's 'economic liberalism' has been to allow company profits to rise freely by scrapping price controls, in operation since the second world war.

The result is that the inflation rate is still around ten per cent, despite the austerity programme (whose main feature is wage restraint) introduced by Barre when he

became prime minister in 1976. Meanwhile the Bourse has been booming - share prices rose by 70 per cent in the nine months following the elections.

The other main element in the Giscard-Barre strategy has been to scrap subsidies to ailing firms. Lame ducks like the bankrupt Boussac textile empire were allowed to go to the wall.

The aim was to encourage the rationalisation and modernisation of French industry, especially since the higher profits resulting from the scrapping of price controls are intended to serve as an incentive for companies to invest in new plant and equipment.

In order to impose the discipline of the market even more firmly on French industry, Giscard has been one of the main advocates of the European Monetary System. Under the EMS the franc is now tied to the Deutschemark.

French firms can, therefore, no longer use the devaluation of their currency to give the prices of their goods a competitive edge over German goods. They must match German technology and German industrial discipline if they are to survive on the world market.

The brunt of these policies is being borne by the French working class. Barre has stabilised the franc and got the balance of payments into sur-

plus thanks to tough deflationary policies. Gross domestic product rose only 2.6 per cent in 1978 and is predicted to rise by three per cent this year.

A growth rate of 4.5 per cent per annum is required merely to keep unemployment from rising. It is now at a post-war high of nearly 1.3 million and is still going up. The rationalisation of the steel and other industries, of course, simply makes matters worse.

All of this is of no little interest to British socialists. After all, the Tory Party promises exactly this sort of 'economic liberalism' 'freeing industry from the state', allowing unprofitable firms to go bankrupt etc., if they come to power. Giscard's policies give us an idea of what to expect.

Of course, much of the talk of eliminating the economic role of the state is so much eyewash and is either cynical rhetoric or idle day-dreaming on the part of those who advocate it.

Giscard's decision to step in and take over the French steel industry last September is a sign that there are definite limits to a policy of letting lame ducks go bankrupt. Modern capitalism could not survive for a day without massive state intervention.

Nevertheless, the ideology of 'economic liberalism' can serve to justify a policy of partial disengagement of the state from industry in order to stimulate a brutal process of rationalisation, speed-up and mass lay-

Malaysia

MAS action

More than 20 members of the Malaysian Airline Employees Union (AEU) are in jail: 874 union members have been ordered out of the union by the trade union registrar and the union itself is threatened with total closure just one month after a crisis in the Malaysian State Airline, MAS.

The union is claiming parity with airline employees in Singapore which amounts to a 30 per cent overall pay increase and an improved system of allowances. MAS has only offered 8.8 per cent to date. After the breakdown of negotiations with MAS in

December last year, the union, which represents 4,000 of the estimated 7,000 employees of the airline, staged a 9 day work-to-rule. AEU members, further infuriated by government steps to ban the 874 members from membership and by the airline's decision to suspend 9 union officials, continued their go-slow throughout January causing considerable disruption to flights and other services.

In this light, the success of the French steel-workers' struggle is of vital importance to British workers. Not as a matter of sentiment, but of common interest. France today is a testing ground for policies that Thatcher may well be implementing in Britain in the very near future.

Nothing could be a more crushing indictment of the pathetic nationalist solutions advocated by the French CP and British Tribune MPs. The convergence of ruling-class strategies in Europe today is the most powerful argument possible for us to link arms across the Channel and the Rhine. *Alex Callinicos*



Disruption was further aggravated by a number of cancellations during the month. By the end of January, 221 employees had been suspended. The next desperate move by

the authorities and the airline was to accuse a number of workers of 'tampering with MAS planes', to indefinitely suspend services and to arrest union officials and rank-and-file militants.

Among the detainees is Donald Uren the Asian representative of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF). Fortunately for the rank-and-file militants in jail, they are in good company. Uren's arrest aroused the indignation of the ITF at its London headquarters which vigorously protested to the Malaysian government and demanded Uren's release.

The ITF's international network of affiliates is one of the most sensitive to attacks on its members. On previous occasions, it has campaigned effectively for union recogni-

tion and decent working conditions for seamen on Greek and Indian cargo vessels.

On this occasion, MAS planes were blacked for 4 hours in Frankfurt by the German Public Transport Union, OIV, and also, for several days by Australian workers at Melbourne airport.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian TUC claims to be representing the interests of the AEU in negotiations with the government. The AEU appears to have lost regard for the MTUC a good two years ago when it allowed its membership of that organisation to lapse. It looks as though the MTUC places greater faith in its own ability to negotiate concessions from the government than it does in organising through the international labour movement.

What remains to be seen is

whether the authorities will successfully buy the flimsy 'class' loyalties of the MTUC with a few releases—Uren and other VIP's for example. And of the 20-odd prisoners, will some have to serve sentences or simply be left to rot in jail?

The MTUC, and the ICFTU to which it is affiliated, have consistently turned a blind eye to the fate of at least two trade union officials who have spent 11 years in Malaysian jails without so much as a trial under the provisions of the notorious Internal Security Act.

It is fairly certain by now that without massive international support, those airline workers are not going to be permitted the space to negotiate the decent wage packet for which they have fought so hard, even if their union is allowed to exist any longer. *Jill Dalgleish*

it was the bureaucrats' ability to divert and diffuse rank and file militancy that ensured defeat for the low pay workers.

The rank and file wanted an all out strike. COHSE, the major union in the hospitals, managed to postpone that and keep its members busy with lightning half day stoppages, protest marches, overtime bans, selective stoppages. These actions looked militant and got lots of publicity.

But it wasn't an effective method for organising a united fight. The bureaucrats of the hospital unions were divided over tactics. But when finally in late January the majority of the northern unions agreed to plan a five day stoppage the national executives of each union in Britain voted against.

Not that anything different was expected. Chances of getting approval were thought to be 'wafer thin.' And local leaders did not organise to go it alone in the North, or to try to organise a rank and file fight throughout the UK.

In late March many hospital workers are still on strike. The Coleraine laundry is still shut. But mostly the strike has just crumbled away because of the ineffective union leadership.

The ambulance men are better organised and the majority are in the more militant union NUPE. The rank and file are insisting on staying out. But how long they can last on their own is problematic.

Rank and file militants have been particularly active in the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union. When plans came from the British executive for the low pay action, The Belfast committee wanted an immediate strike, not a one day stoppage.

Department of Environment drivers had plans to block the roads—a tactic more usually used on Loyalist or H Block protests. The rank and file didn't want the officials to run the strike so they elected their own strike committee.

The need for rank and file organisation in the Transport union is not new. Over the past six months, water workers and workers in Michelin and Ballantyne are but a few who have been defeated after long strikes that received either no help or direct opposition from the leaders in Belfast or the national executive.

So the petrol and lorry drivers and the general workers

Northern Ireland

Down, but not out

Women cleaners and laundry workers from West Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital ended their march to the city hall on Jan 22 by singing The Red Flag in a city centre pub. They had never been on such a union march before.

They were in a euphoric mood. They usually join in H Block protests—which means they don't get to the city centre. But this winter they were part of the new wave of militancy among public sector and other workers who have rejected the government's 5 per cent limit, the rotten standard of living in Northern Ireland and the increasing differentials between British and Irish workers.

In the course of the negotiations and the strikes, rank and file union members became increasingly disenchanted with their union leaders, both here and in Britain. But the strikes also showed up the weaknesses of workers here.

There is no rank and file organisation, there are few direct links with British workers and because the unions are British dominated it was difficult for workers here to continue resistance when British workers had settled.

The militancy of workers is in total contrast to

last year when economists could safely say that most workers had settled within the guidelines. Only BOC and Fords workers fought and won. The firemen fought, received little support from other workers and lost. Mackies and other workers beat the guidelines without a fight.

This year it was a different story. As in Britain workers had to fight against the ridiculous 5 per cent limit while the inflation rate was at 10 per cent. But Irish workers had to fight for more.

Their wages are lower and the cost of living is higher than in Britain. So whatever British unions were ready to settle for would not be good enough in Northern Ireland.

For a typical family in NI the food bill is 6 per cent more than the national average, transport 9 per cent, fuel 25 per cent and car insurance 60 per cent. Overall prices average out at 8 per cent above British levels. And the average wage is 10 per cent below that in Britain.

The response to these differentials has come in various ways. EETPU members who work for Plessey, STC, and GEC put in a claim for a special regional allowance on top of their normal rise. The Ulster Teachers Union was looking for a flat £500 bonus.

Civil servants and post office engineers were asking for parity with their London counterparts who presently receive allowances of £300 to £500. The petrol drivers rejected their union decision and stayed out after the British drivers went back. They got themselves up to the British rate.

That meant they had to win a higher percentage increase. They didn't win more than British workers. Calling in the troops to deliver the petrol plus the rotten media coverage combined to break their strike.

The lorry drivers and health workers wanted regional agreements. The teachers already have separate pay machinery and will be looking for parity with British teachers. During the health workers stoppages this point kept coming up. COHSE leaders, said, 'Nurses are 22 per cent below the national average'.

In February when the request for a special supplement to compensate for the high cost of living in NI had been turned down by the British leadership, there was increased pressure among rank and file hospital and school workers for a full five day strike.

It was this rank and file pressure on the union leaders that dominated the strikes. And

found only opposition and calls to quickly get back to work from Transport House. In both the petrol and lorry drivers strikes, the rank and file rejected the union's directions, but did not have the organisation and strength to maintain their resistance.

More confused has been the response of the rank and file to the politicians. NUPE members at the Polytech, mostly extreme Loyalists, picketed Lord Melshett, Northern minister for Health and Social Services. But politicians were invited to speak at the COHSE rallies. Loyalists like Paisley and Baird who consistently support spending cuts and DUP Gerry Fitt who supports the Labour Government and its pay policy were all there hypocritically supporting the strikers.

The wave of militancy must be linked to the tremendous growth in the public sector since the introduction of direct rule. Since the abolition of Stormont, the number of people working for the state has jumped by nearly 40 per cent.

In 1972 just under a quarter of the workforce held jobs in the public sector but by the end of 1977 one in every three workers, 165,000 in all, were dependent either directly or indirectly on Westminster for their weekly wage packet. As either civil servants, teachers, doctors or utility workers it's the government that feeds their families.

The growth in government controlled employment is accounted for mainly by the policy of Westminster administrations of removing from the local political arena sensitive areas of economic and social life. Modernising the province's antiquated social services has increased the government payroll. These expanded services have brought into the workforce a new layer of militants who now confront not the Unionist dominated local councils but the British government directly.

Also brought into the public service jobs are large numbers of women workers. Women are now 32 per cent of the workforce. 50 per cent of married women are working. The women workers have been an important focus for the low pay workers strikes. The women in the Transport and General are mainly part-time cleaners. 5 per cent would have meant about 80p per week to them

This round of wage negotiations has shown the militancy and increasing organisation of rank and file workers. But it has also pointed out the weak position of workers in the North. The British government, through the Northern Ireland Office, is determined to resist a regional allowance or higher wage settlements for NI.

Low wages are an essential selling point as the government

attempts to sell the North to American and German investors. With unemployment still at 11 per cent and industries constantly closing down workers in foreign owned and weak private sectors are particularly vulnerable. A closure threat by German owners quickly ended a strike at Grundig's.

And Mackie's workers, still the lowest paid engineering workers in the UK, are particularly quiet this year because

of closure rumours.

The basis for increased struggles on wages still exists. Many workers have just had their first experience in fighting back on wages. The strikes have not killed any determination to do better next time. But they will certainly have raised a number of questions about the union bureaucrats and the links with British unions and the British government.

Joan Kelly

Italy

Historic eurofailure

Italy, like Britain, is moving rapidly towards an election. And, like here, the major working-class party looks as though it is heading for a major defeat at the polls.

The Italian elections, which will probably take place in June, will see the final end of the 'historic compromise': the strategy of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) that proposed a link up with the Christian Democrats (Italy's conservative ruling party since the war) as the first step along the 'Italian road to socialism'.

The strategy was attempted but has been a failure for the PCI and a disaster for the working class. Every informed commentator is predicting a big fall in votes for the PCI.

Yet it is less than three years since the PCI saw its most spectacular growth in votes in its history; the working class was well organised and on the offensive. So what went wrong? We need to have a look since the British variety of eurocommunism is recommending a similar strategy here.

The elections of June 1976 were the pinnacle of the Italian CP success. 36 per cent of the voters agreed with the PCI that Italy was ungovernable without them. The Christian Democrat majority had to offer some compromise if they wished to continue their 30 years of rule.

The compromise offered was small indeed: the PCI would be 'consulted' on major issues of policy and in return would abstain in Parliament to let the Christian Democrats continue in power.

The PCI was indeed con-

sulted; for instance they were consulted in June 1977 on an emergency programme, which as the *Economist* said 'contained precious little a British Conservative would sniff at'. What it meant for Italian workers were increased taxes, reductions in spending, a fall in pensions and a huge increase in unemployment.

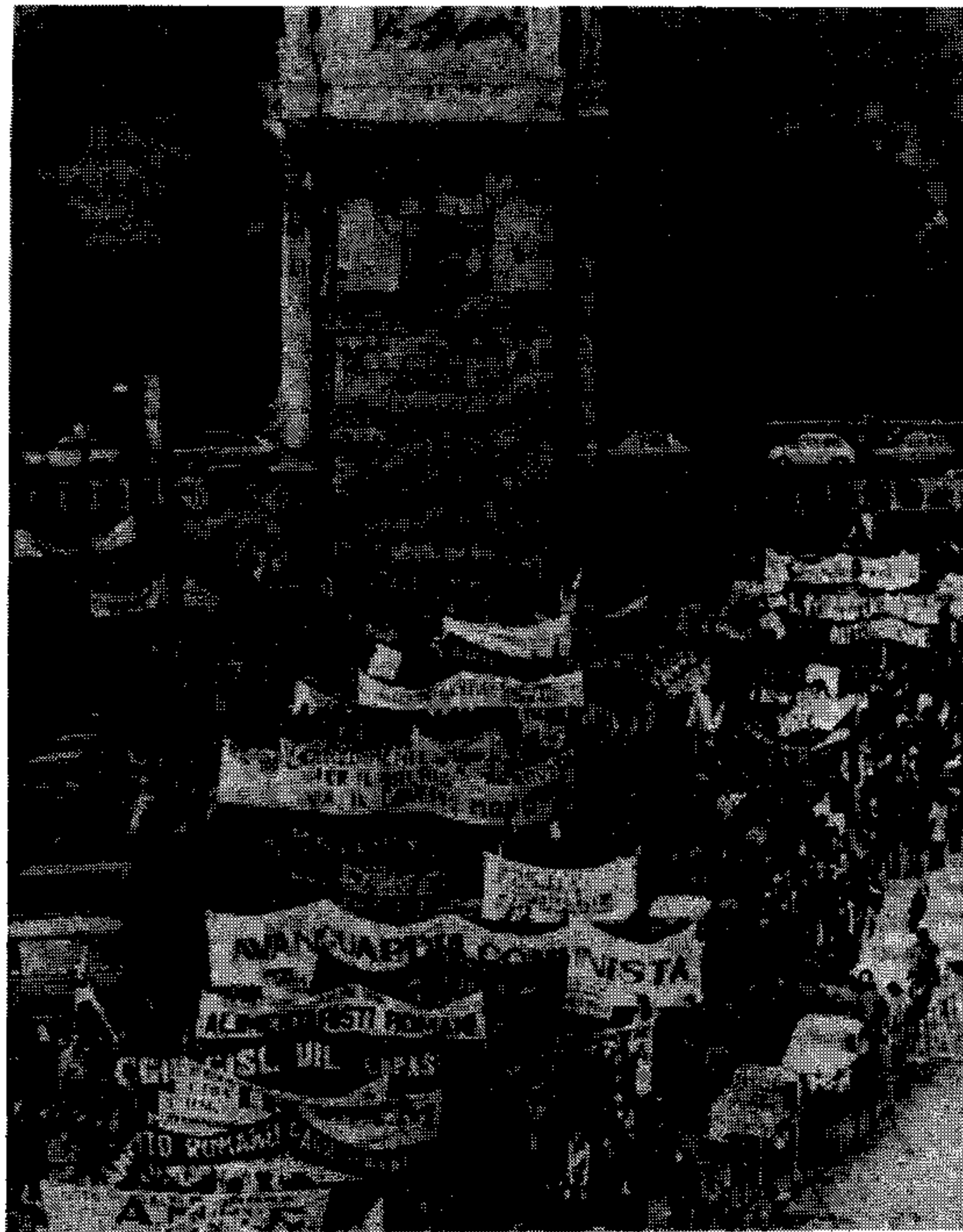
The PCI was also consulted and voted for the extension in police powers used to persecute the revolutionary left and in the trade unions initiated a witch

hunt against those who spoke out against their line. On abortion, the PCI were involved in a series of concessions to the Catholic Christian Democrats which meant that the new abortion law is almost totally ineffective throughout most of Italy.

The traditional supporters of the PCI were at first trusting then confused, they became worried and then disillusioned or angry. In various elections the vote of the PCI has slipped badly. Last May they lost nine



PCI President, Longo, (left) & Berlinguer with friend



attempted to polarise the situation and thus win the mass of the population to a revolutionary alternative.

The real blame for this lunatic strategy, however, lies squarely with the PCI who have supported a government which has pushed up youth unemployment to well over a million, who have given the police increased repressive powers and who have made no attempt to clean up even the most corrupt aspects of the state. (Only last month, two fascists who had been convicted of killing 17 people in a bomb explosion 10 years ago managed to escape just as their trial came to an end).

The failure of the 'historic compromise' is a tremendous setback for the PCI but it was not really unexpected. The last time the Communists shared power with the Christian Democrats, just after the second world war, they were used in just the same way they have been used today.



per cent in the local elections. In November, they lost five per cent to a radical leftist alliance in north east Italy.

Most dramatically, their membership fell last year for the first time in 25 years. In the unions the hold of the PCI was threatened as hospital workers acting outside the official union structure went on militant strike action against the government's pay policy—a policy on which the PCI had been 'consulted' on and voted for.

This disillusionment explains why the Christian Democrats precipitated early elections. Opinion polls show them leading the PCI by over 12 per cent; after June they will be able to dispense with any Communist involvement and probably fix up a deal with the Socialist. The PCI out in the cold again.

But if the 'historic compromise' has been a disaster for the PCI, it has had a shattering effect on the mass movement which looks looked so powerful at the time of the elections of 1976. The revolutionary left was thrown into crisis after the elections and was totally unable to construct a viable alternative to the PCI as it galloped to the right.

The vacuum was filled by 'autonomous' movements of the unemployed, women, students and, to a lesser extent, workers who, repelled by the PCI's line, saw the left's crisis and rejected all contact with the official structures. The problem with this was that they cut themselves off from the mass of workers who still followed the traditional organisations.

Whilst this led to a re-assertion of the best traditions

of rank-and-file self-activity it meant that such movements could not construct an overall alternative to the line of the PCI and their rapid rise has been followed, in many cases, by an even more rapid decline.

A much less healthy spin-off of the movement has been the highly publicised revival of terrorism as young people sickened by the cynicism of the official organisations of the workers' movement have

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Then, they were welcomed into power since they were the only party that could control the armed and extremely militant workers' movement. When the capitalist economy and state were safely re-established thanks to the PCI's moderate

policies they were unceremoniously booted out of power.

The same thing has happened in a less dramatic form today. The Italian economy is in a much better state today than it was three years ago thanks to

the PCI's control over the majority of working-class militants. The Communists have done their job for capital and will only be brought back when they are needed again.

The tragedy is that this failure of reformism will be felt by

many militants as a set-back for the whole class. That demoralisation could last until the revolutionary left sorts out its own problems and puts forward a political alternative to the disastrous line of the PCI.
Tim Potter

take out a SUBSCRIPTION

Socialists have always been short of cash. Karl Marx was only able to write his masterpiece *Capital*, thanks to the financial support given him by his lifelong friend and co-thinker, Friedrich Engels.

Engels' income came from his job as Manchester representative of the family firm, Ermen and Engels. He hated 'filthy business' as he called it but stuck to it for over 20 years in order to keep the Marx family going.

Marx acknowledge his debt to Engels when he finished Volume I of *Capital*: 'It was thanks to you alone that this became possible. Without your self-sacrifice for me I could never possibly have done the enormous work for the three volumes. I embrace you, full of thanks!'

Now, although we wouldn't dream of comparing *Socialist Review* with Marx's *Capital*, we too are short of cash.

Our hopes of finding our Engels were dashed when Ermen and Engels went bust in February (perhaps the final crisis of capitalism is really here).

So we will have to make do with your subscriptions. All we ask you is less than six pounds a year (a lot in Engels' day, but very little in these inflationary times.) Or else maybe we will end up the same way as Ermen and Engels.



election 79



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Books for antifascists

I was glad to see that you had included a review of Phil Piratin's *Our Flag Stays Red* and Joe Jacobs' *Out of the Ghetto* (Colin Sparks, *Socialist Review* No. 8). I was astonished, however, to read Sparks' conclusion that Piratin's book should be kept in the pocket of every opponent of the NF.

To me, Piratin's book comes across as an adroit piece of Party propaganda, a sort of CP version of Pathe News. It is most noteworthy for what it leaves out: the Moscow trials, the CP leaders' unwillingness to meet the Fascist threat head on, the part played in the anti-fascist movement by members of the Labour Party and I.L.P., and, most sinister of all, the shabby expulsion of Jacobs from the Party are glossed over or omitted altogether. The omissions appear all the more glaring when the book is read in conjunction with Jacobs' own work.

While Piratin was busily following the parliamentary road to socialism, culminating in a rousing chorus of the 'Red Flag' in the House of Commons, men and women like Jacobs were working actively and ceaselessly where it really mattered - in the streets and workplaces.

They held meetings on every corner, they organised their own factories and sweatshops, they wrote and distributed a stream of leaflets, they whitewashed walls, they marched; surely it was this activity, and not the last-minute call from the Party leaders, which

laid the foundations of the mass turnout against Mosley.

I disagree with the puritanical way in which Colin Sparks dismissed the details of Jacobs' personal life as "secondary to the political purpose of the book", as though they were mere trimmings of human interest. In fact they are absolutely central, both as an indication of the conditions in which East End radicalism thrived, and as an illustration of the dedicated fervour of Jacobs and his comrades.

These details give the book its authentic ring. Politics was meat and drink to these East Enders, it shaped their whole lives: it wasn't just another way of idling away a Monday night when the music hall was shut.

Above all, they were ready to probe and argue and question what they were doing, while Piratin seemed content to swallow whole every line which the party 'fed him'. *Our Flag Stays Red* shows only the tip of the iceberg on a sunny day, but it is Jacobs who takes the cold plunge; his book is the one to lend to your budding antifascist friends.

They will discover how to build the struggle, and will also have a salutary reminder of the dangers inherent in trusting too much in party hierarchies.

Jane Salvage

POBox82

New techno-inspiration

I would like to comment on Margaret Chinn's article on the new technology in *Socialist Review* No 9 (February 1979). Working as a NALGO rep and town planner in Manchester, I am beginning to see the implications of, and socialist opportunities created by, the

new technology. We have the chance to open up a broad ideological offensive.

First a bit of back history. I have recently been studying wartime government reports and the general political climate of the period which led after 1945 to the passing of town planning legislation and other Acts on new towns, national parks, the location of industry, nationalisation of the mines and the railways, and the National Health Service.

I was struck by the mass enthusiasm for these moves and the broad ideological climate which was for a 'People's Britain' in place of the evils of the 1930s and the ravages of war.

Needless to say, these 'socialist' ideals were replaced once, during the boom of the 1950's, capitalism began to deliver the goods. The ideological initiative passed to the advocates of the free market, who emphasised personal material wealth, individual security, personal mobility (cars as opposed to public transport), choice in schooling and health care, etc.

However, with the first hiccups of the system in the mid 1960s, Labour was elected and 'socialist' ideas once more came to the fore: national and regional economic planning, reinvigoration of the public sector, massive slum clearance schemes, more school building, a new generation of new towns etc.

Now in the 1970s the ideological climate has led Labour to abandon 'socialist' ideas in favour of an almost total accommodation to the short-term needs of British capitalism—wage-cuts, public spending cuts, monetary targets, etc.

There is not much in this policy package to generate mass enthusiasm among the electorate. That is presumably why Callaghan and Healey adopt the paternalistic 'you know it makes sense' approach.

But North Sea oil and to a great extent 'new technology' are being used as part of a right-wing offensive where the way to a better life is offered via higher productivity, reduced manning levels, greater flexibility and increased competitiveness.

Of course, revolutionary socialists see the need to combat

these ideas in trade-union terms and point to the implications for unemployment rather than jam tomorrow, but like the fight against the cuts, the fight against the anti-working-class effects of new technology will be very uphill, especially where regrading of low-paid jobs (albeit fewer of them) is offered as the carrot.

However, new technology does give us a greater opportunity to do something which we are not very good at - to say a lot more about the sort of society we want to build: no rigid blueprints, no instant utopias, and certainly no glossing over all the political difficulties to overcome, but general ideas about the vast potential which new and existing technology has.

This brings me back to the ideas behind post-war legislation. We do need new towns, but they must be planned and built by the working class; we do need to rebuild our cities as we want them and not as capital wants them; we want massive investment in public transport, we want more hospitals and nurseries, we can offer millions more people opportunities to study; we can build study ships so all our kids can go and see the world and offer real help (political and material) to workers in developing countries; we can restore the battered natural environment and really set about ending the pollution of our rivers and seas etc.

So let's seize the time and begin an ideological offensive. Let's express our dreams more concretely, rather than talk clinically about the need for a 'planned economy' with all its stalinist undertones.

As well as the usual audience to whom we address ourselves, I feel there is a much wider audience of isolated women at home, tenants' and residents' group activists, unemployed, bored or threatened workers and active environmentalists (some of whom show an amazing commitment to their ideas—digging out canals for the hell of it) who will want to talk about the fight for something better.

Many such people have been reached and inspired by the Anti-Nazi League. Can we do it again?

Russ Haywood
Manchester

The search for decency

On the cover of the latest George Orwell paperbacks, you will find a photo of the author. It shows Orwell in early middle age trim and conventional in his sports jacket and tie — a 'gentleman' you might think, and Orwell certainly had some good qualifications for this title. He attended prep school and Eton and after the first world war, set off for the far east to join the Burmese Imperial Police. A smooth and profitable career seemed to be in prospect.

But it did not happen. By 1936 Orwell had become a socialist. And the following year, the ex-policeman was to be found carrying a rifle alongside the revolutionary anarchist militia men of Spain. Orwell had, literally, deserted the army of the bosses and joined the army of the workers. Why? Because he had become convinced through his own experience that society was no longer 'decent': that it was callous, sentimental and dishonest and had to be changed.

It was Burma that first opened Orwell's eyes. The colonial regime which he describes in *Burmese Days* has neither mission nor morals nor ideas, or any purpose at all beyond organised robbery and its own survival. The British, he remarks, have bestowed on Burma religion, and VD. They have destroyed the indigenous culture and built prisons.

Their 'freedom' rests on servitude of the natives: and their justice veils injustice, for the rule of law is actually the rule of profit, corruption and racialism. Orwell refers disgustedly to the 'slimy white man's burden humbug'. Finally, in 1927 he left Burma, ashamed and worn out by the whole sordid business.

Back in Europe Orwell did not at first launch any major attack on western society. In *Down and out in London and Paris* (1933) and *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) he is concerned for individuals who have been shabbily treated or faced with impossible choices. But he gives the impression that with enlightened goodwill, such ills might be easily set to right.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying is different altogether. Orwell's first broadside at the system as a whole. The strange title is a jibe at the snobbery of the lower middle class. These people are forced to sell their labour-power — they wear white collars but are part of the mass. To conceal this, to keep up

appearances, is their life's work. And so, in the window of their semi-detached they display the aspidistra, as a badge of respectability.

The aspidistra is a symbol for Orwell too, the symbol of another mouldy wodge of humbug. Decency is no longer a question of decent honest living, but of pretence. Gordon Comstock, the hero of the book, determines to opt out of such a world, to turn down the 'good job' in favour of work in a dingy bookshop. He eats frozen tripe and composes bitter poems.

Gradually poverty corrodes his ability to write and to think straight. He begins to treat his friends as enemies, to rant obsessively about the 'money god' which is the cause of everything and even to dream about blowing up the docks. Eventually he gives in and takes that 'good job' in advertising, appropriately, where dishonesty and money jointly form the ruling order.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying is the most politically intense book that Orwell ever wrote. Comstock rages at the system and damns it like a hellfire preacher. But he can do nothing because he is powerless. And he is powerless because he is isolated — declassed. For having opted into a little bookshop and an individual struggle, collective action seems unreal to him. Orwell probably felt the same way at this time for similar reasons — the book is really about its author. But while Gordon Comstock gave up, in humiliation and despair, luckily his creator didn't.

Up until this time Orwell had made little contact with working people, and rarely wrote about them. But in spring 1936 he travelled to the coalfields of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and stayed for several weeks, mainly in the homes of miners. The experience gathered here provided the core of a new book (*The Road to Wigan Pier*) and also helped make its author a socialist.

Orwell was appalled by the harsh and dangerous conditions of the pit, and by the incurable diseases, injuries and deaths suffered by those that worked down below. He was impressed by the miners, and found in them some of the decency, generosity and straightforwardness which his own class had abandoned.

But was it possible that working-class people could take hold of society and remould it in the spirit of these ideas? Reluctantly, Orwell thought not. For now, any attempt at revolution 'could only lead to futile massacres and a regime of savage repression'. Faced with this, Orwell might have accepted the lesser evil, a decade more dole to numb the spirit of rebellion, if that had been all. But that was not all.

On 7 March 1936, when Orwell was still in Yorkshire, learning about mines, Hitler's troops entered the Rhineland. Two months later Italian forces attacked Abyssinia, and in Spain, in July, Franco declared war on the republic. Back in Britain it was the year of Cable Street: the struggle for the East End boiled on through the summer and into the autumn.

The alarming progress of international fascism forced Orwell to take sides. He finished *Wigan Pier* in mid December 1936, and set off for Spain. On New Year's Eve, at the Lenin barracks in Barcelona, he enlisted in the militia of the semi Trotskyist POUM. In Catalonia, the struggle against Franco had rapidly developed into a struggle against the bosses themselves.

In many towns the workers organisations, factory collectives and militias had taken the power, and in Barcelona they 'breathed the air of equality':

'Waiters and shopwalkers looked you in the face and treated you as an equal . . . Servile and ceremonial forms of speech had temporarily disappeared . . . there were no well-dressed people at all . . . All this was queer and moving but I recognised it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for . . .'

But in Madrid the central state machine continued to control both credit and the bulk of military power, and soon it moved to curb the workers' independent military and industrial organisation. Two methods were used. First, persuasion: the bourgeois parties, the right wing socialists, the communists and even inconsistently, the anarchists argued that winning the war depended on foreign arms, on an efficient regular army, and on the unity of all anti-fascist forces. Workers' power had therefore to be ruled out.

Second, sabotage: the state withheld funds, raw materials and fighting equipment

Walters

• REVIEWED •

GEORGE ORWELL

from the factory collectives and militias to cripple and demoralise them. By these devices, workers power was curbed, and later, in a purge of anarchist and POUM militants, crushed. The backbone and the inspiration of antifascism was broken in exchange for Russian guns and the hollow words of Britain and France.

But neither of these methods could save Spain from Franco. The fascists own territory was not disrupted by revolt—the bourgeois republic dared not encourage it and could not inspire it. And yet, urged Orwell, it was the only way to set ablaze the whole of Spain in a struggle for workers power: this the most visionary and utopian road was also shown finally to have been the most realistic.

Orwell's position earned him enemies. The *Daily Worker* called him fascist and trotskyist by turn, though he despised the former and never really understood the latter. His stand was a lonely one and for years, socialist critics have treated him unfairly. We should be clearer. For a brief period Orwell shared most of the beliefs which guide us today.

First, he was clear that fascism had to be opposed through the building of socialism. Second, building socialism meant building a movement of masses. The 'crankiness' and 'dialectical hairsplitting' of the little left wing clubs made this task more difficult.

Third, socialism needed ideals: 'I am well aware that it is now the fashion to deny that socialism has anything to do

with equality. In every country in the world a huge tribe of party hacks and sleek little professors are busy "proving" that Socialism means nothing more than a planned State capitalism with the grab-motive left intact.'

This repelled Orwell, Socialists needed, not bureaucratic nightmares, but human dreams of justice, equality and a new and better freedom.

Fourth, to win socialism a party was needed—a party with genuinely revolutionary intentions, numerically strong enough to act.' Orwell was not anti-party—he joined the Independent Labour Party and regretted not having joined POUM. His party commitment faded quickly, as did the organisations themselves, and the movements which gave life to them were coopted or crushed.

Orwell had believed in socialism, not from loyalty to theoretical method, or to Russia or to party, but because he found his ideals in the inspirations and activity of working people. The collapse of the movement and the declaration of war dealt to his commitments a blow from which is never recovered.

Compare *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949) with Orwell's earlier writing. They are fables; timeless stories bearing timeless moral lessons. The animals ~~workers everywhere are~~ and will be too stupid to run the farm or to resist new oppressors. And in *1984* (or actually at any time) the Price of Liberty is Eternal

Vigilance which is the province of liberals rather than proles.

Orwell was no longer interested in the struggles of ordinary people. From about the beginning of the war he had begun to retreat, into literary criticism, into the superficial and/or trivial journalism of his *Tribune* column and into fantasy and allegory. This is not to say that he wrote nothing of value. The selection *Inside the Whale* (1940), for example, contains some of his best work especially the title essay and the brilliant piece on Dickens.

The famous style survived. 'Genius', of course, had nothing to do with it. Writers do not 'create' like gods: their work and its style is a product of their experience. There is evidence that in the 1920s Orwell had a very poor style. Later, he developed a simple, well-defined moral standpoint and a reporter's ability to describe clearly and think up striking images. It is these attitudes and skills together that make his style distinctive.

Throughout his writing life which was overwhelmingly a period of despair for socialists, Orwell remained a critic of society. If socialist writers can be judged by where they stand in a class war, then *Homage to Catalonia*, and the bullet in his neck ought to vindicate Orwell.

And if we have to apportion blame for *Animal Farm*, then Joseph Stalin who shaped the reality should bear more than George Orwell, who made a fable of it.
Steve Wright

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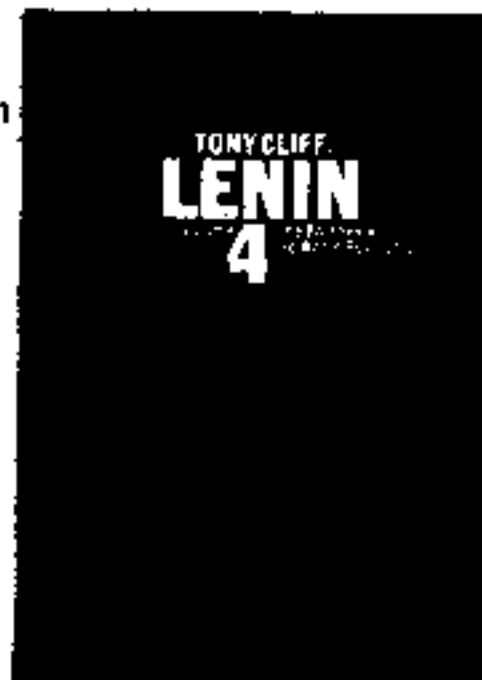
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Fraud

Four months ago, the Ford strike ended with the first real breach in the government's wage policy in three and a half years. It was the all-important breakthrough that led to the massive wave of industrial struggle in both the public and private sectors. Since then of course Ford has been out of the news. The company is claiming considerable success for its 'anti-strike' clause in the November agreement, but there's evidence that the stronger groups of rank-and-file workers within the plants are maintaining their strength.

Here, Martin Jones, a shop steward and an active member of the rank and file Fordworkers' combine until he left the company in January, describes what happened during the strike, how the combine organised and stresses how the politics of the official leadership prevented the workers winning a crushing victory

Back in the Ford plants after the nine weeks' strike workers kept on making the same slip of the tongue. 'What did you do during the holidays, sorry, I mean strike?'

Shop stewards were doing it. 'Remember the agreement we got before the holiday er, strike.'

Everybody was making the same slip. Not surprisingly; for the vast majority it was just a holiday. Out of a workforce of 57,000 only a few hundred were actively involved in the strike.

It was the officials' strike. They controlled it, they took the decisions, they determined the outcome. It was their strike.

At the beginning they had to move quickly. The walkouts came as a surprise to them. The convenors, for once, had printed 40,000 leaflets arguing for the claim, but they were to remain undistributed in the district office. The workers walked out before the leaflets could be distributed.

The pay talks had begun on Thursday morning - 21 September. Halewood workers heard of the company's five per cent offer at lunchtime and began to go out. By the next day when the officials and convenors on the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) met to consider the offer, Halewood and Swansea were all out. Dagenham Body was out and Dagenham Transport was out and picketing.

The NJNC quickly supported the action. They called on Ford unions to make the strike official and said they wouldn't talk to the company until they agreed to 'bargain freely without reference to the Government's 5 per cent'. They had no alternative but to support the action if they were to control it.

The votes in the plants had been overwhelming, often amid scenes of jubilation and jokes about 'see you after Christmas'; but when the Dagenham shop stewards met the following Tuesday the officials took a firm grip on the strike.

Rank-and-file stewards had already been in touch with dockers and seamen in Hull and Harwich about blacking Ford imports and received enthusiastic promises of support. But when we proudly raised this from the floor the platform came down on us like a ton of bricks.

'We don't want everyone going off in all directions', they said. 'Blacking will be organised by district office. Leave it to the officials'.

The pattern for the strike had been established. Convenors and their deputies were proclaimed to be a strike committee and began by not organising picketing. It was three weeks before picketing was coordinated between the five Dagenham plants and at best two Dagenham plants decided that only shop stewards would be allowed to picket. Rank and file workers were turned away.

Stewards who the previous year had stood 12 hours on picket and who had even got arrested went home in disgust. Getting the strike made official turned out not to be a great thing after all.

Nevertheless the strike was magnificently solid. Security men were out for the first time. The Ford fire brigade were out and there was no emergency cover to keep essential services going as in previous years.

Blacking was effectively organised. In the docks this was essential as Ford normally import large numbers of vehicles and could have broken the strike with imports.

The story of a boatload of Cortinas denied entry to Harwich bears repeating. Ford rerouted them to southern Ireland and drove them over the border into the North where they were registered and riven onto the ferry to Stranraer, six at a time, masquerading as tourists' cars.

Dockers at Stranraer saw through this and refused to unload them, as did Northern Ireland dockers. And so, the story goes, six Cortinas, stuck on the ferry, shuttled back and forth across the Irish Sea for a few weeks.

On 19 October the company agreed to 'bargain freely' and negotiations were reopened. The company offered £5.40 (8 per cent) plus further talks 'on improvements in wages in return for cooperation in reducing problems'. The trade union side walked out saying it wasn't a realistic offer.

Mrs Susan Charlton, wife of a Southampton Ford worker, disagreed. She thought the 5 per cent should be accepted, so that her husband could get back to work. This was an attitude that Southern Television could support.

Mrs Charlton said she was just an ordinary housewife but the TV treated her like a real celebrity. An appearance on local television led to national coverage and culminated in extensive promotion of a meeting she called to mobilise all 'scab-wives' who were against the strike.

Wives and girlfriends in the Fordworkers rank-and-file group (combine) called a counter-demonstration. Combine supporters from Southampton plus two carloads from Dagenham and Langley marched into Mrs Charlton's meeting to neutralise her efforts.

The numbers of scab-wives and women supporting the strike were about even. The third group of participants in this media event was only slightly smaller. With two camera crews, radio, local and national press the media made quite a crowd. The pro-strike women were, of course, more determined, better organised and, with banners and placards, made a much bigger impact.

The planned rally of scabs turned into a

vigorous debate and the anti-strike movement was stopped in its tracks. When the TV took Mrs Charlton to Liverpool she got a similar reception from the Halewood combine women's group.

It was a crucial intervention: little more was heard of the anti-strike movement; the media couldn't promote it as a national movement in the face of determined opposition.

In Dagenham, one convenor, a Communist Party member, had delighted in attacking the combine for its policy of allowing wives and girlfriends (dependents) of Ford workers a voice and a vote at our meetings.

'Allowing outsiders into trade union meetings, he thundered, 'you're not trade unionists'. The events in Southampton vindicated our policy and this particular attack was silenced.

The first final offer came two weeks later. Ford proposed to give us £6.52 on the basic (9 per cent), time-and-a-third for holiday (1 per cent) and an attendance allowance of £3.48 conditional on good timekeeping, attendance and more significantly on 'normal working'.

The NJNC recommended rejection and the subsequent mass meetings were the high point of the strike. Ron Todd took the Dagenham mass meeting and made a fighting speech calling for rejection. His efforts were instrumental in getting a rejection vote (2:1 at Dagenham).

The pattern was repeated round the country. Convenors did an excellent job. In particular Halewood voted overwhelmingly for rejection.

Why did the officials do this? The same officials who a year before had done their utmost to break us had pulled out all the stops to continue the strike. After three years of social contract it was quite a surprise.

The union officials had no choice but to lead the strike that had begun spontaneously and they had to make their reputations and further their careers. But the real justification for their militancy can be found in Todd's speech to the mass meeting in which he continually emphasised Ford's profits.

Because Ford had declared a profit of £265 million the union leaders felt justified in sticking out for more. Usually political considerations limit their support for strikes.

Careful not to upset governments or the media, careful not to jeopardise the status quo, union leaders hold back their members and take care to limit actions. This time Ford could afford to pay without threatening the economic system and so Ron Todd could press on with a clear conscience.

But if Ron Todd thought it was simply a question of an economic battle about pay, Ford had other ideas. The company stood firm and didn't make another offer. Two weeks went by without further movement.

The strike was now approaching its ninth week and really beginning to bite. It takes six to eight weeks for shortages of vital materials to affect an international operation like Ford's, and by mid-November every Ford plant in Europe was laid off or on short time, including Cologne, the heart

of the European empire. Predictably the NJNC began to come under pressure from the top and they soon caved in and approached the company for more talks.

The company came up with a modified offer which was little different from the one we had rejected. The money remained the same with the addition of time-and-a-third holiday pay for Christmas 1978. The attendance payment was retitled Supplementary Payment with the attendance clause watered down and the lateness clause virtually removed.

The anti-strike clause remained intact. The £3.48 supplementary payment would be made only for a full week's 'normal working'. Ford management expressed confidence that it would significantly reduce strikes.

The negotiators recommended acceptance. First they said that if they didn't resume talks there was a threat that ACAS, the Government's arbitration service, would come in and take negotiations out of their hands. An unconfirmed rumour said that Boyd and Chapple had approached ACAS.

Second, they said that Ford wouldn't make a better offer until after Christmas and that the membership wasn't prepared to stay out that long (this was on the 20 November).

Were the negotiators right in saying that the company could hold out until after Christmas? It's debatable. But their estimation of the resolve of the strikers was accurate. The passive strike had had its effect. There was no hard core of pickets who were committed to the strike and who would fight hard for the full claim.

More crucially the strike was isolated. It was obviously a test case that was going to establish the new 'going rate' above the Government's 5 per cent. The weight of the Government and CBI was being thrown behind Ford. Strikers were aware of this and were estimating their chances.

There was little enough to boost morale and the one thing needed to change the situation was lacking. There was no news of other workers coming out against the 5 per cent. In this atmosphere would the Ford workers stick out for more?

There was no doubt about it at the mass meetings on 22 November. The vote to return was overwhelming. Only at Halewood did the local stewards recommend rejection and there too the strikers voted to go back.

The officials led the dispute up to a point. They held out for free collective bargaining—a subject dear to their hearts. They had recommended continuing the strike for more money. But they hadn't been prepared to take the necessary steps to win the full claim.

While Ford workers were out and getting demoralised, they hadn't got other workers out against the 5 per cent. On the contrary they told other workers with claims in to wait for the Ford settlement. While the employers were united, the workers were divided with British Oxygen and council workers told to wait and see.

The unions adopted this disastrous policy because although they rejected the Government's 5 per cent they maintained their loyalty to the Government and its

politics. A generalised strike against the 5 per cent would have transformed the situation, but it would also have caused a political crisis threatening the government and even the union leaders's own position.

Their militancy had strict limits. They felt justified in demanding £20 and 35 hours from Ford with £265 million profits. But their reformist position ruled out the type of action that could have won the claim.

The officials won their spurs and learned their politics in the years of post-war boom. Then an isolated action could win - not today. A fight for £20 and 35 hours was never a simple economic fight, for it brought the whole government strategy into question.

For victory a different leadership to the officials would have to be found. The unofficial Fordworkers' group (combine) aspires to that leadership.

The idea for its formation came in the spring of 1978 after a conference in Cowley to support Alan Thornett and the other Leyland workers threatened with union disciplinary action found militants from different Ford plants in the same room for the first time.

We agreed to get together ourselves and the first meeting in April 1978 attracted 30 workers from Dagenham, Langley, Halewood and Swansea, with apologies from other plants. No one political group had more than six members present, with the SWP and Big Flame the dominant tendencies. The majority considered themselves non-aligned, though in many cases this meant they were ex-members of different sects.

A decision was taken to campaign for the '78 pay claim round the slogan:

'£20 on the Pay; an hour off the day; no strings attached.'

And before the strike two national leaflets were produced which were distributed at all Ford's UK plants.

Our greatest sales success was badges. Nervous at the financial outlay, our initial order was for 500 badges bearing our slogan. These were sold within hours of being taken into the plants and by the end of the strike a total of 6,000 had been ordered and sold.

There were 180,000 leaflets produced and distributed during the strike. We produced a regular weekly *Strike News* which was distributed at almost every plant. We also produced 60,000 broadsheets putting our case to the wider movement. We may have achieved a 'first' for a strike in producing our own strike record.

We passed the acid test for any rank-and-file group in that we were financially self-sufficient. We paid all our bills and expenses through badge sales and with donations from trade union bodies and political groups, raised during speaking tours round the country.

Our greatest achievement was to keep a constant pressure on the NJNC. We made sure that there was a large and noisy lobby at every meeting of the negotiators. We raised the slogan of 'no productivity sell out' in the first week of the strike and according to one NJNC member our activities were a constant factor in the minds of the negotiators and

affected their decisions. The NJNC had been substantially enlarged in 1978 to incorporate all convenors.

It had previously been dominated by full-time officials from all 17 Ford unions. The presence of convenors undoubtedly stiffened the resolve of the strike in the early days. Unlike officials, convenors are accountable to their plants. But the other side of the coin came at the end of the strike when the convenors were implicated in the decision to recommend acceptance.

Convenors hold the reins in shop stewards committees and therefore any opposition has to be firmly based on the shop floor.

Throughout the strike the combine tried to involve rank and file strikers in activity in an attempt which failed to overcome the passivity of the strike. We didn't want to just stand on the sidelines shouting criticism at the official leadership but to put our money where our mouth was and show that that we were prepared to take on the job when the officials fell short. We adopted a philosophy of self-reliance and do-it-yourself.

If the strike committee didn't produce any propaganda of course we criticised them but we also produced the *Ford Strike News*.

When they refused to listen to our complaints about lack of help with Social Security payments we went ahead and involved the Claimants' Union and *Redder Tape* and occupied SS offices.

This technique is the best way to get the officials to do their job. The Dagenham strike committee was so worried by the *Strike News* that they went out and bought a duplicator to produce their own bulletin. When we occupied SS offices they did do something about Social Security.

It was in fact difficult to criticise the officials during most of the strike. As described above they did do a good job up to a point. This shouldn't surprise us or affect our attitude. We supported the officials as long as they supported us but where they fell short the combine maintained the ability to *act independently*.

It's this that's crucial. Let the officials do a good job and be pleased about it; let them make militant speeches; but don't rely on them. Don't expect them to keep it up and don't expect them to do it all for you. We can only rely on ourselves and so our own organisation.

The howls of anguish that come from militants when the officials let them down are the just reward for failing to build what we know we need: an independent organisation that can act when the official leadership bottles out. We shouldn't make the officials the scapegoat for our own failure.

Some members of the combine confused the need for independence from the officials with independence from revolutionary political groups and parties - a bad mistake. The officials fall short because of their reformist political ideas. If the rank and file movement is to succeed it must be led by revolutionaries, or it too will fail.

The combine, like every other rank and file organisation is absolutely dependent on revolutionary ideas and leadership and it cannot honestly claim otherwise.

We have a massive task taking on

the job the officials fail to do. That means uniting the maximum number of workers in campaigns and activity. The strength of the combine throughout 1978 was that we campaigned on the slogan '£20 on the pay, an hour off the day - no strings', and won substantial support on that specific issue.

Rank and file organisations have to respond to particular situations at specific times. We shouldn't be worried if there is a lull in combine activity until the next issue crops up. The links between different plants have been built up; we know one another's telephone numbers; we can keep in touch. What is vital is the ability to respond quickly to a dispute or whatever with leaflets and support.

Already the combine has the opportunity to mount a 'Smash the Supplement' campaign. We should also be prepared to campaign on broader issues, in particular the election of officials.

Activity is the key. When the combine held a meeting in Dagenham for strikers with Social Security problems and then occupied the SS offices we involved workers we'd never seen before and built our organisation. When we held long boring meetings we made little progress. Workers will always seize a chance to fight for rights but meetings don't have the same attraction.

Before and during the strike the combine has been a presence on the factory gate handing out leaflets. We now have to become a notorious presence in the plants, on the shop floor, selling badges, collecting money for leaflets, raising support for disputes; doing the job the official movement fails to do.

The aim must be to build combine groups in every plant - holding their meetings in plant - and providing a focus for all militant opposition to the company. There is a long way to go, but the foundations have been laid and there is every chance of a breakthrough in the next few years.

The Ford strike was important. It demolished the 5 per cent; ended the social contract; removed the threat of sanctions; and established a new 'going rate' at 16 per cent.

The final result for Ford workers themselves was less happy. There were remarkably few recriminations when we got back into the plants but the fact remains that after nine weeks out we only got 10 per cent on the basic, better holiday pay and an unconsolidated 5 per cent for normal working.

This 'penalty clause' supplement equals more discipline and will inhibit action on safety, victimisation, manning cuts etc. Weak sections will suffer, while the strong will have to walk out to establish that they won't tolerate loss of supplement. The result will be fewer but longer strikes, that lead to lay offs.

The pattern of the Ford strike will be repeated. The official leadership will be militant up to a point, then the political considerations will force them to a promise. To do better a rank and file movement must be free of the political loyalties that handicap our present leadership. And in practice this means it must be led by revolutionaries.

IT'S A PART OF OUR HISTORY

The German socialist women's movement before 1933

At the first International Women's Suffrage Conference in 1911, the German Socialist Women's leader Clara Zetkin, inspired by a demonstration of striking New York garment workers in 1909, introduced a resolution declaring 8 March International Women's Day.

To coincide with the conference, tens of thousands of working class women demonstrated in every province of Germany, distributing 2½ million leaflets demanding the vote for women. During Red Week for women's suffrage in March 1914 about 40,000 socialist women demonstrated for the vote in Berlin and Hamburg alone. International Women's Day has been revived in recent years by feminists and socialists. But what was the nature and strength of the German Socialist Women's

Movement to which it owes its origins?

The Social Democratic Women's Movement in Germany, like its parent the Social Democratic Party (SPD), was one of the largest women's movements in the world in the years preceding the first world war. Working under the legal repression of the Anti-Socialist Laws (1879 to 1890), and of combination laws which banned all political activity for women up to 1908, the SPD Women's Movement grew to 175,000 members by 1914. Its members were primarily working class and its leadership marxist.

While as militant as the British suffragette, these women did not confine their political perspectives to the vote. Their political demands resemble those of the contemporary women's liberation

movements: equal pay, the right to work, full equality in the trade unions, paid maternity leave, free child-care facilities, and education for women. Their political theory, internal contradictions and agitation among women workers, are instructive for both the feminist and socialist movements today.

The extremely rapid industrialisation of Germany from the middle of the 19th century drew millions of women into the new capitalist workshops and factories. Women employed full-time in manufacturing, trade and transport, grew from 1.4 million in 1882 to three million in 1907, when they formed about three quarters of the work force.

The superexploitation of their cheap labour by employers and the drastic effects on working class families, led most male workers to demand the prohibition of

women's (and children's) labour. From the 1860s, however, a core of marxist workers argued for *a woman's right to work* as an essential condition for her full equality with men.

By the time of its foundation conference in 1875, the SPD was persuaded to adopt the demand for 'the general, equal and direct suffrage . . . for *all* citizens. . .'

But they also demanded 'the prohibition of all female labour which is morally or physically detrimental', so concurring with the bourgeois ideal of confining women to suitably 'feminine' jobs usually in the home. Women's work was a burning social 'problem' of the time and most male workers were against it.

In 1878, six years before the appearance of Engels' book *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, August Bebel, leader of the SPD and close associate of Marx and Engels, published the first comprehensive marxist book on women, *Women and Socialism*. It became one of the most successful socialist books of all time, to be found among the very few books in every socialist worker's home, despite its 550 pages.

'For the proletarian woman who was intellectually alive, Bebel was almost always the way to Marx'. On the publication of the 50th edition in 1909, an Austrian socialist wrote that it 'went directly to daily life, to the relationship of man to woman, and exposed the sad corollary to the marriage bed found in the brothel, and the moral bleakness of woman's life'.

Bebel's book clearly set out the broad political themes of the subsequent SPD Women's Movement. In the introduction he wrote, 'For us the woman question is only one side of the general social (class) question . . . Its ultimate solution can only be found in the overthrow of the contradictions of (capitalist) society, and the eradication of the evils which flow from these'.

Nevertheless, it is essential to treat the woman question specially . . . This was because

'The female sex . . . suffers doubly: first she suffers social dependence on the male world this would be lessened through formal legal equality but not eliminated and second, economic dependence . . .

'Because of this, all women regardless of their class status, have an interest in changing this situation as much as possible through alterations in the laws and institutions of the existing state and social order. The vast majority of women, however, have an ardent interest in the fundamental reorganisation of the existing state and society, in order to eliminate wageslavery, under which the female proletariat suffers most, as well as sexual slavery, which is intimately connected with present property and income relations . . .

'An essential part of the SPD programme is the true equality of women, their liberation from all dependence and oppression. *There can be no liberation of humanity without social independence and equality of the sexes.*'

Bebel related the particular oppression of women to the relations of production

prevailing in past and present societies. Working class women were exploited under capitalism because of their class position, but 'quite independent of the question whether the woman is oppressed as a member of the proletariat, she is oppressed as a sexual being . . .'

In a true socialist society Bebel foresaw the physical, emotional intellectual fulfillment of women alongside but independent of men. His frank recognition of female as well as male sexuality, and of her right under socialism to choose lovers free of legal constraint, horrified many contemporaries. He shared, however, many of their medical and social misconceptions and prejudices. He implicitly believed that a free choice of sexual partners would result in heterosexual monogamy, with children still basically cared for by women. Prostitution, homosexuality, and masturbation (the *bete noir* of the late 19th century) were, for him, symptoms of the moral degeneration of capitalist society.

On birth control, Bebel and his successors remained ambivalent. On the one hand he divorced sexual relations from reproduction, and supported 'the intelligent woman (who) had no inclination to have large numbers of children, not to spend the best years of her life pregnant or nursing'.

On the other, he disliked 'unnatural contraception.' While frankly recognising the need for sexual relations in women and men, he warned that 'an excess of sexual indulgence is far more harmful than too little. An organism abused through overuse is also ruined.

'Impotence, sterility, spinal damage, insanity, mental weakness, and other illnesses are the results. *Moderation* in sexual intercourse is just as necessary as in eating, drinking and other human needs.

The primary aim of the SPD Women's Movement was the recruitment of women workers to socialism. Essential to this task was the clarification of the woman's role in production and its relationship to the home, of the relations between the women's movement and the parent party and trade unions and the convincing of all workers that there could be no socialism without the active participation and ultimate emancipation of women.

Clara Zetkin was the undisputed leader of this movement from 1889 to 1915. Born in 1857, she was a junior school teacher when she and her husband joined the SPD, because of which she had to move into exile in Paris in the 1880's. As a representative of the SPD at the Paris International Workers' Congress in 1889, she elucidated one of the major principles of the future women's movement:

'It is not female labour as such that lowers wages through competition with male labour, but the exploitation of women workers by the capitalist, who appropriates their labour. . . Just as the male worker is subjugated by the capitalist, so is the woman by the man, and she will always remain in subjugation until she is economically independent. Work is the indispensable condition for economic independence.'

Her early view, based on liberal emancipationist ideas, that 'we (wome demand

no more protection than labour as a whole demands against capital', she shortly rejected as an attempt to impose formalistic equality on an unequal situation. Women workers were socially, economically, and organisationally weaker than men because they also bore the burden of the family.

From 1890 socialist women were champions of legal protection at work because of the appalling physical and psychological super-exploitation women suffered at the hands of employers.

This recognition of the weaker position and different interests of women arising from their distinctive relationship to production and reproduction necessitated a semi-autonomous women's movement, with its own organisations and publications, but with representation in the SPD and trade unions. Otilie Baader, another woman leader, stated:

'If they (the women comrades) wanted to bring socialism to the mass of proletarian women, they had to take into account these women's political backwardness, their emotional peculiarities, their two fold burden at home and in the factory, in short all the special features of their existence, actions, feelings, and thoughts. Accordingly, they had in part to adopt different ways and means in their work, and seek other points of contact, than the male comrades. . .'

Socialist women created an elaborate network of *Vertrauenspersonen* ('spokespeople', changed from 'spokesman' at the 1892 party conference), women elected as local political organisers and informally linked together by a women's agitational committee in Berlin. They continued the tradition of women's 'educational clubs', which had been the front for socialist women in the 1880's.

These discussed questions of specific interest to women marriage, child-care, health, sex and birth control within a socialist framework a form of 'consciousness-raising'.

Under pressure from socialist women, the General Commission of the Free Trade Unions (early TUC) set up a national women's secretariat staffed by women, and recommended all affiliated unions do likewise.

From 1905 local trades union cartels (more influential versions of Trades Councils) appointed their own women organisers in cities like Hamburg and Nuremberg, where socialist women were strong and persistent, and funded large drives to unionise 'difficult' women's workers like domestic servants. Leading women speakers did frequent women's agitational tours for both the SPD and trade unions.

By 1907 there were about 30,000 women organised in the movement, with 407 women *Vertrauenspersonen* spread throughout Germany. Within 18 months of the legalisation of women's political activity in 1908, the SPD counted 62,000 women members.

Legalisation led to renewed pressure to disband separate women's organisations usually against the express desire of women comrades. Women's groups were incorporated into electoral SPD branches, with at least one seat reserved for women on the

local and national executives. The SPD set up a national women's office specifically for women's agitation. 'Reading evening' clubs were formed by the women to replace the 'educational clubs'.

That the Women's Movement retained a separate political identity is clear from its national newspaper, *Die Gleichheit* ('Equality'), edited by Zetkin from 1891 to 1915. The paper, subtitled 'For the Interests of the Woman Worker' aimed at the 'more advanced women comrades'.

It appeared fortnightly and contained general political articles, reports on working conditions, wages, trade unions and strikes, details of the activities of the SPD and member groups, and agitational material.

From the onset in 1906 of the split in the SPD on the question of the political mass strike, *Die Gleichheit* became one of the major publications of the radical left, whose most prominent member was a woman, Rosa Luxemburg.

Recruitment of women to the socialist cause was carried out by a wide variety of often ingenious means. The most effective was the mass meeting addressed by a well known woman speaker, preceded by weeks of canvassing factories and homes (important given the common threat of victimisation), and accompanied by a band or chor.

Local and national party presses printed leaflets and pamphlets on all aspects of women's lives.

Police disruption and the infamy of the speakers provided added drama. Banned meetings were reconvened under other names; banned women speakers dressed up as men, or made hasty exits under the cover of supporters. Mass festivals to commemorate the many days in the socialist calendar (especially May Day), began with processions accompanied by bands and singing through working class quarters smothered with posters, ending at fairs and concerts in parks and beer gardens. Whole families participated.

Strikes were a period of intense women's political activity. During the garment workers' strike of 1896, 14 simultaneous mass meetings addressed by women attracted 40,000 mostly female workers in Berlin.

Feminist revolutionaries carried their politics over into their life style and behaviour, which publicly contradicted the bourgeois ideal of womanhood. They declared war on the 'philistine' view, shared by many workers, that the woman belonged only in the home. Luise Zietz, ex-housemaid, daughter of an impoverished rural weaver, was a particularly fiery speaker. She acidly taunted the political police (always present at women's meetings) with their inability, despite numerous prison terms, to shut her, 'a mere woman', up.

The first world war led to an irrevocable split between the radicals and the majority reformist SPD, which agreed to a political truce with the aristocratic and bourgeois parties. This truce included the complete prohibition of all independent socialist activity and of press discussion of the causes and conduct of the war.

The women leaders refused to be bound by this. *Die Gleichheit*, with a national

circulation of 124,000 in 1914, retained its anti-militaristic politics, with reports on women's peace demonstrations and divergent socialist opinions on the war.

Conflict with the government censors led to increasing amounts of blank space, left deliberately bare by Zetkin. She joined the small nucleus of anti-war radicals led by Rosa Luxemburg, a close friend.

In 1915 the two women organised the International Women's Conference against the war, attended by socialist women from all belligerent countries. *Die Gleichheit* became the internationally recognised organ of women opposed to the war.

Women were very prominent in the anti-war movement, both its leadership and rank and file. Their opposition grew partly out of the severe famines in the latter half of the war, out of the sheer physical exploitation they suffered in factories no longer regulated by government legislation, and from the death of their menfolk at the front.

The political mobilisation of these disaffected women, however, was the result of the agitation and organisation of the women's movement, which had consistently criticised the party for its reformism and internal sexual discrimination. In 1916-17 thousands thronged into the newly formed Independent Social Democratic Party, whose main platform was opposition to the war. The majority SPD lost 40,000 of its 107,000 female members in this period, including many of its national and local women leaders.

Women were the first publicly to demonstrate against the war in 1916, an act requiring great political and physical courage. Women workers were heavily represented in the mass strikes for 'Bread, Peace, and Democracy—in 1917-18.

In the summer of 1915 the SPD national executive moved to smash the internal women's opposition. Luise Zietz, elected women's representative on the national executive from 1908, was expelled. Zetkin was removed from the editorship of *Die Gleichheit*. Mass expulsions and resignations followed.

With increasing numbers of socialist men conscripted to the front, the task of mobilising opposition fell heavily on women such as Luxemburg, Zetkin, Luise Zietz and Kathe Duncker, themselves often in prison.

The failed German revolution of 1918-19 vindicated the marxist analysis of the women's movement: that the emancipation of women was inextricably bound up with the emancipation of the working class, and that within the revolutionary movement women had to act in their own interests.

The National Council of People's Representatives (national workers' council), created in the revolutionary turmoil, soon fell under the control of the majority SPD and pursued its goal of a liberal-democratic state. Equal suffrage was extended to all men and women and much discriminatory legislation was repealed or modified.

Crucial for the stabilisation of the capitalist economy and state was the diffusion of the politically dangerous mass male unemployment following demobilisation. The answer? Women were sent back to the home.

A decree of March 1919 obliged all employers to dismiss anybody not unconditionally dependent on their wages, in the following order of priority:

- 1: Women whose husbands had a job.
2. Single women and girls.
- 3: Women and girls who had only 1-2 people to support.
- 4: All other women and girls.

No mention was made of men, with or without dependents. Women drawn into production by wartime capitalists and the government—the numbers employed in factories more than doubled in these four years—were scrapped when men had to be provided for. By April 1919, the number of women factory workers was less than before the outbreak of war.

Factory councils, with the active encouragement of the 'socialist' government, were often openly hostile to women workers. Women workers' organisations were powerless, their members unemployed and bitterly disillusioned in the face of the political defeat.

The second generation of SPD women concentrated on welfare projects, electoral politics, and routine trade unionism. In 1916-17 *Die Gleichheit* became a 'Magazine for the interests of Workers' Wives and Women Workers', providing 'valuable entertainment', from which politics and trade union affairs were strictly divorced.

Even the title *Gleichheit* had too many revolutionary overtones for the reformist hierarchy, and in 1924 it was replaced by *Die Frauenwelt* ('Woman's World'). Its male editor defended it on the grounds that

'The majority of women comrades in distress...have emphasised...that they do not want to have the misery of their domestic life before their eyes in their leisure time. They want the sun which some day in the future will shine into their lives because of socialism'.

The 'sun of socialism' consisted of edifying stories, patterns and fashions, cookery and child-care.

The alternative was the Communist Party, of which Clara Zetkin was a founder member, and in which she battled for a separate women's section, as well as agitating among women on general political questions in the crisis-ridden Weimar Republic.

International Women's Day was a product of a strong revolutionary movement of working class women. The German Socialist Women's Movement, its achievements, contradictions, and failures, are part of our tradition. The issues they tackled remain very much alive today.

Key Books

The only book currently available in English is

Thonnessen, Werner, *The Emancipation of Women in Germany 1863-1933* (Pluto Press, 1973)

The quotes from Bebel are from *Die Frau und Sozialismus*, 61st edition, (East Berlin, 1964).

Reviews Books

Workers' rights in USSR

Workers Against The Gulag: The New Opposition in the Soviet Union

Edited and introduced by Victor Haynes and Olga Semyonova
Pluto £1.95

"By their unanimous voting... the Soviet people expressed ardent approval and complete support for the domestic and foreign policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet State." The Soviet Central Electoral Commission in March this year recording that 99.9% of the potential electorate had voted to support the government list of candidates for the Supreme Soviet Elections.

"How Many are We? We think we are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. We will not produce high-flowing words. We will simply describe our ordinary human misfortunes and sufferings. Today we are suffering tomorrow any citizen of the U.S.S.R. may become a member of our collective and think as we do." Document of the Free Trade Union Association quoted in *Workers Against the Gulag*.

Workers Against the Gulag is the most significant book on the Soviet Union of this decade. What it does is to document the growth of a new opposition—a working class opposition to the Soviet state. It shows not just the lack of democracy, the laughable absurdity of that 99.9% vote, but the way in which the whole corrupt regime is built upon exploitation, alienation and repression.

It rips the mask off the claim to 'socialism' once and for all. And it does this not by any deep theoretical analysis but by the simple discussion of the problems of Soviet workers who have dared to confront the state.

Take Vladimir Klebanov's experience of 'the workers' state'. For the past 15 years he has been hounded, victimised, persecuted, imprisoned, put in psychiatric hospitals and why? Because as a mining engineer he spoke out against illegally excessive working hours, incorrect wage payments, concealment of industrial injuries, lack of proper compensation, bribery and corruption.

Klebanov is not unusual. Some 50 other individual cases are discussed in much the same terms. They represent the struggle of the Soviet workers for a degree of dignity in a society which in their name denies them their very humanity.

"We... who bear surnames, fornames and have children who bear our patronymics—we are suffering. We are undeservedly insulted, beaten up, thrown into jail and psychiatric hospitals. A dog would not have borne the kind of humiliation and derision we have suffered... People are not animals!"

The book collects together documents produced by the Free Trade Union Association, group that was formed in 1977 by workers forced together when their complaints about their treatment were constantly rejected. Combining these with

Samizdat (self-published) accounts of the 1962 massacre of protesting workers in the Donbass and the problems of protest and emigration, it destroys the myths about the Soviet regime.

Myth no. 1. "There are no worker dissidents only intellectuals, criminals and counter-revolutionaries"

None of these people are intellectuals. They are miners, engineers, teachers, sailors, drivers, labourers. They have all knuckled under—many of them have been decorated for their services to 'socialism'. Their only crime is that they have tried to complain about the way in which the Soviet worker is exploited, ill-treated and used—they have asked for the laws to be enforced.

And for this the state has tried to destroy them one by one. You do not complain in 'the worker state'! Even now their demand is not for capitalism but for their legal rights.

Myth no. 2. "The Free Trade Union is not a trade union."

It is the only trade union in the Soviet Union. It is the only group that fights for workers' rights, that is struggling to defend Soviet workers. The official trade unions are state agencies, as independent as Hitler's Labour Front.

In the late 1960s they were even ruled over by a former head of the KGB. As Eric Heffer says in his introduction "Imagine if the former boss of MI5 or MI6 were to become General Secretary of the British T.U.C." There are no workers' rights in Russia, no right to

strike, to organise, even to work!

There is only the right to be exploited, the right of unarmed workers and their families to be gunned down. Even "If the whole town protests—they'll simply now us down with machine guns as they did in Novocherkassk in 1962" says one worker. This is what makes the attitude of British trade union leaders like Len Murray and Bill Sims, who have refused to take up the Russian workers' case, so sickening. Socialism in one country is fine Brother so long as we don't have to live there.

"... I would like to give you some advice: before talking about Soviet dissidents, put yourself in our place and try to approach this question seriously and scientifically."

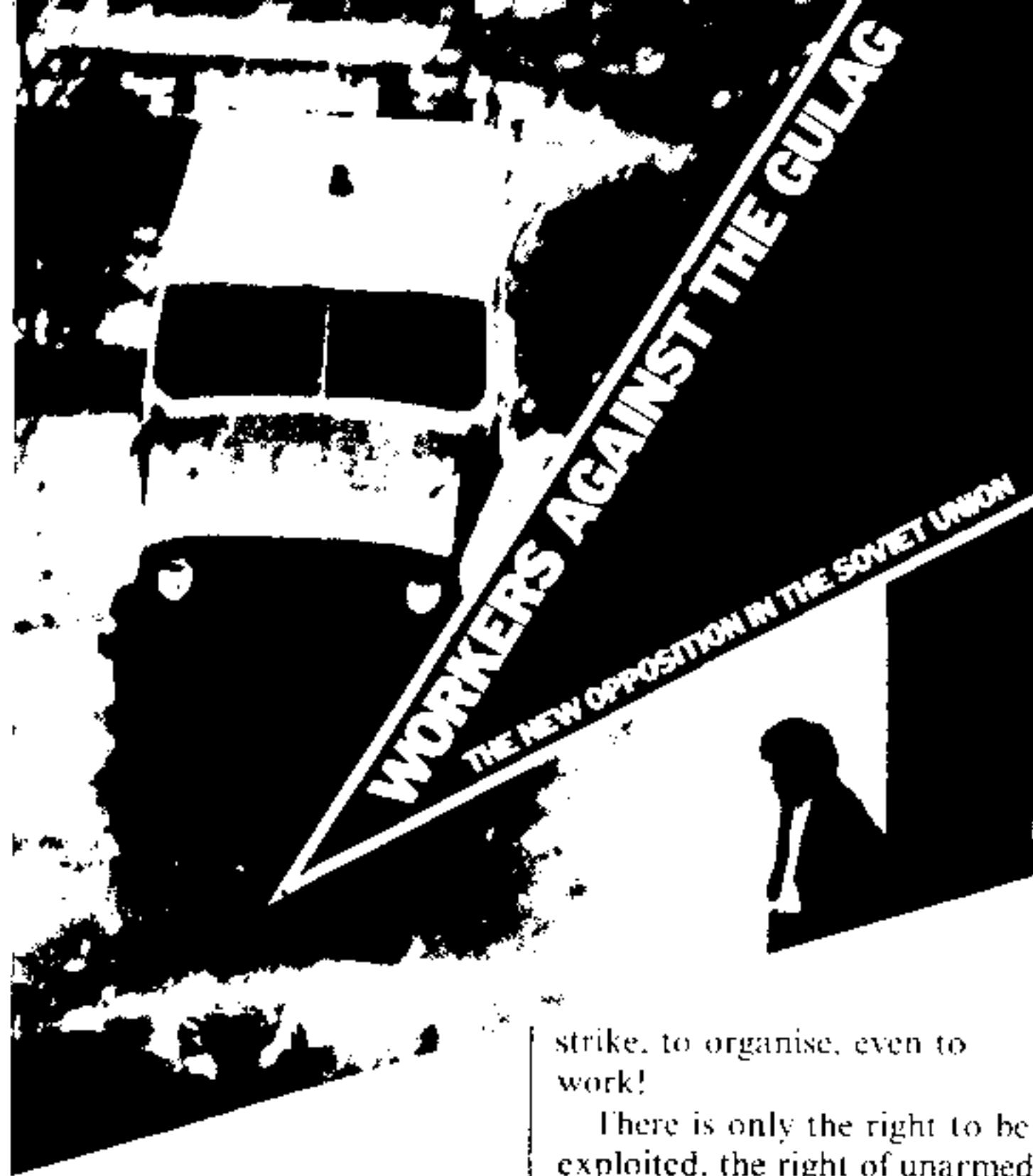
Myth no. 3. "It is just a question of democracy."

It is not! There is no democracy in the Soviet Union and so the workers must fight with the rest of dissident movement for their basic democratic rights. **But they are fighting for more.** They are fighting the whole economic system which denies them any control over their lives. They are fighting for a decent standard of living, for reasonable education, for good housing—for the same thing Western workers are fighting for.

They are fighting against exploitation, against the grind of piece work, production at all costs. It is their experience as workers which shows that restoring socialism in Russia means pulling the whole system down and starting again.

Myth no. 4. "There is nothing we can do."

We can and we must. Already



some trade unions in the West have taken up their case. In France even the massive Communist CGT has come out in full solidarity. In Britain we must take their case up more widely too. No-one else will.

These are not people who can decorate meetings of the Tory Party and the National Association of Freedom. They are ordinary working people most Tories would cross the street to avoid. We can bring pressure on the Soviet government to keep them out of jail and the psychiatric wards.

By bringing up their plight at branch meetings, union conferences, trades councils we can keep this flame alive. Once and for all we can damn the lie that socialism and democracy are incompatible. These people are not revolutionaries, their ideas are often confused, as yet they are few in number. But they do mark a turning point.

Their resistance is no longer passive, individual, they are organised. With immense courage they have begun to build a tradition of open defiance of the Soviet state. As the introduction states "the road to socialist democracy and an authentic workers' state in the Soviet Union lies through the fight for basic political and trade union rights, the fight for a better standard of living.

"This fight can only succeed if organisations like the Free Trade Union Association spread to the mass of Soviet workers. For this, the support of Western trade unionists is vital."

As one Ukrainian worker puts it "Soviet totalitarianism is using Marxism as a cover. It must be put in the stocks." Don't just buy *Workers Against the Gulag*. Read it. Use it. Shout it from the roof tops!
Mike Haynes

Equipped with a rolled gold propelling pencil obtained on one of his many forays into the West End, Tony set off on the round. 'What'll you have?', he asked the little entourage of shop stewards who had come to witness the events. 'And what'll you have old chap,' he said to the nearest man at the bar. Seeing the enormous possibilities in a crowded pub Anthony Delaney kept on asking 'What'll you have?' til he had been round everyone in the whole damned place.

Personal feelings aside, I can as a result of the recent performances of Fleet Street journalists in attacking nurses, ambulance drivers, gravediggers, dustmen and others, understand why Anthony Delaney feels that all journalists are part and parcel of the same category of humanity-scumbags.

But I reckon even Tony would find some regard for a

tuguese circles. This enables him to establish what every other honest journalist and most sensible people suspected all along: that the Portuguese right, respectable as well as Nazi, was engaged in a concerted campaign of arson, bombing and murder against trade unionists, socialists and communists.

This having been achieved, Wallraff then delivers the *coup de grace*. He cons Spinola and friends into coming to Germany on a phoney fund raising trip and engages them in a range of fascinating conversations in which they came mightily close to telling all.

Wallraff has in fact rediscovered Robin Hood and made him operative in our own times and circumstances, the latter half of the century of lies.

Far from being a hired gun for the likes of Axel Springer, Germany's equivalent of Rupert Murdoch, Wallraff uses his talent and his nerve as a journalist against the polluters of society.

He takes a typical lazy-good-for-nogging-hippy apprentice story in *Bild*, the German version of *The Sun* and dissects its supposed fact by supposed fact showing it up for the mendacious garbage that it is.

With Wallraff the reader is spared the sterile sermon on the—comrades this is a serious political question—unchanging nature of the capitalist-yellow-gutter-press. Instead he or she discovers its full terror for themselves.

The undesirable journalist is at his most effective when he probes another tyranny, the daily tyranny of factory work, whether it be in the service of Baroness von Carlowitz or of the former Obersturmbahnführer Bentz, king of the Melitta coffee empire.

The Baroness offers leases on desperate flats to desperate people in return for feudal service. Here in Westphalia, you pay the lady in hours of housework, painting and gardening as well as hard cash. And of course all tenants have to agree not to have children. Like free trade unions at Melitta, they tend to interrupt continuity of production.

At Melitta the nice Mr Bentz has become one of postwar Germany's most successful businessmen. Such a pity that undesirable journalists should dig up back numbers of his company paper the *Melitta Echo* circa 1938-1945.

Pissing on corruption & evil

Wallraff The Undesirable Journalist

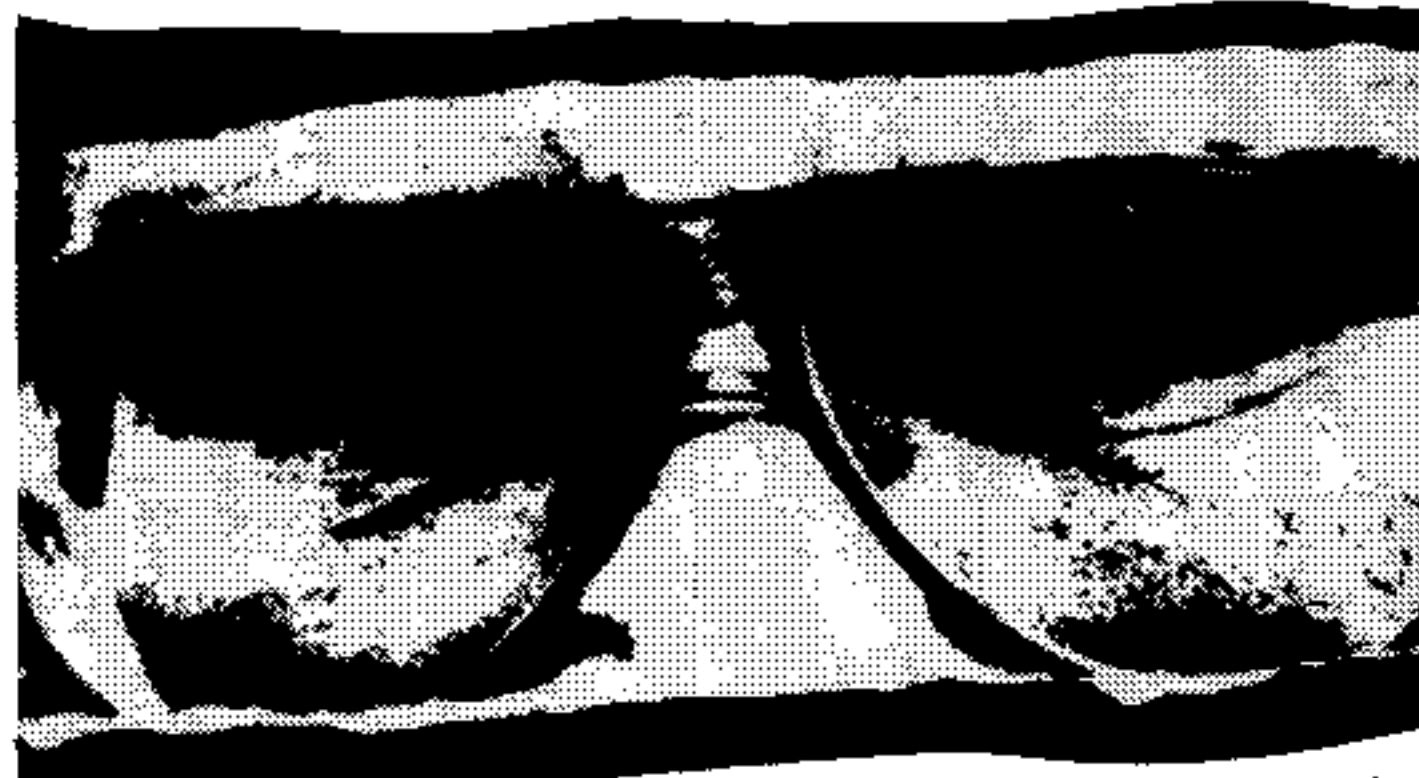
Pluto Press £2.50

A Bookmarx Club Choice

Tony Delaney, London docker, has a mission in life. He likes to get in the company of the worst practitioners of the craft of journalism and tell them face to face that he does not approve of their working practices. When he lights on someone he feels has really transgressed by fingering some low-paid wrecker who is simultaneously holding the country to ransom and engineering the demise of civilisation as we know it, by asking for a £60 a week wage, Delaney always tries to find a revenge.

In the glorious summer of 1972, the dreadful Delaney scored two of his greatest triumphs. He enticed into an East End pub a journalist who had filled the pages of *The Port* newspaper with tales of the dockers' beastly victimisation of the poor Lord Vestey. He plied her with drink—he's a generous man—and told her how wonderful she was, following in the footsteps of Jack London and George Orwell. And then even as the audience around them was drowning in mirth, he peed down her coat without her even noticing.

For *The Observer's* industrial



reporter who titillated his readers with misleading stories of splits in the shop stewards committee, Delaney plotted an even more fearful piece of retribution. He phoned him up, mimicked his suspected contact and lured him to meet in an East End pub where, once again, there would be an audience.

How the man's heart must have fallen when he entered the pub and was confronted not by his trusty contact but by the exterminating angel Delaney. How relieved he must have been when Tony smiled indulgently at him and said: 'It'll be OK. Just get a round in and we'll forget it.'

'What'll you and your mates have?', came the obsequious but still nervous reply. Thinking only of his new-found journalist friend's ease and comfort, Delaney broke the spine of an empty pack of King Size and started to compose a little list, a charming gesture making the order easy to remember,

German writer called Gunter Wallraff, the undesirable journalist. For all I know, the demon Delaney may even have been influenced by the chap. Certainly they have a lot in common. Gunter Wallraff likes to piss down certain people's trousers when they're not looking. Like Delaney, he likes to acquire information in unorthodox and cheeky ways. He too likes to entice them into situations and string them along. The results are sensational.

Wallraff, as the first chapter in Pluto Press's entertaining new book shows in glorious detail, pissed down the trousers of no less a man than General Spinola, the monocled monster who would like to have done for the whole of Portuguese civilisation what his friend General Augusto Pinochet did for Chileans.

Wallraff by an excellent line in bullshit first ingratiated himself into right-wing Por-

In this model employer Bentz is quoted as calling for a boycott of Jewish businesses even before the hideous state-sponsored Crystallnacht, and administers factory oaths like 'Fuhrer, we are yours to a man.'

Wallraff takes a job at Melitta and he is thereby able to establish that the links with the past are still alive at Melitta. Workers there are still abused, insulted and cheated and denied free trade unions.

My own favourite in this collection is 'Rising above the Past', the extraordinary story of what happens to an honest city archivist who in the late 1960s set about researching what the Third Reich had done to the Jews of his community, Paderborn.

On 12 January 1968, the incredible campaign against this man who refuses to bury the past reaches its awful climax. Mr Molinski is committed to an asylum on the orders of the City Fathers.

In this extraordinary chapter, Wallraff once again employs the Delaney stratagem. He goes team handed to meet the ex-Nazi town clerk of Paderborn, a Mr Sasse and tells him they've come from Israel to offer him the Jacob Goldmann Reconciliation Medal for 'Special merit in the field of rising above the past'. Mr Sasse is suitably moved, and composed a most touching reply as you will surely find out if and when you consult the pages of this most enjoyable book. *Laurie Flynn*

The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishing.

Founded in February, 1976 at Manchester, the Federation exists to develop, encourage and publish working-class writing.

Over the last ten years, worker writer and local community publishing groups have been formed throughout the country. Working class people have begun to assert their own experiences in the face of a mass culture that threatens to drown them. Instead of writers struggling in isolation, trying to be different in order to make their reputations or their fortunes, worker writers have been coming together to express themselves through poems, stories and autobiography.

Isolated groups formed and published locally in response to

God Bless America

Films

The Deerhunter

Ten years ago, as the United States still shook under the impact of the mass movement against the Vietnam war, it would have been difficult to imagine that a film about Vietnam which ended with a heart-felt rendering of 'God Bless America' could be acclaimed as 'one of the few great films of the decade' (*Time Out*).

The films of that period very often sought to express the alienation of a generation from American society - think of *Easy Rider*, *Zabriskie Point* or even *The Graduate*.

The Deerhunter (directed by Michael Cimino) is a striking illustration of the conservative ideological climate prevailing in the US today. It is the story of

three Pennsylvania steelworkers who volunteer (note: rather than being drafted) for service in Vietnam and are destroyed or made by the experience.

One, Steve (John Savage) ends up legless in a veterans' hospital. The second, Nick (Christopher Walken), is transformed by the tortures they suffer at the hands of the Viet Cong, who force their prisoners to play Russian roulette with each other, into a heroin-maintaining professional Russian roulette player in the back-street dives of Saigon.

Only the third, Michael (Robert De Niro), makes the grade. It is thanks to him that they escape from the Viet Cong. Unable to settle down happily again when he returns home, Michael restores Steve to his



local conditions. The formation of a national federation reflects: a) an awareness that the conditions we are writing about are not that different for working people in Bristol or Newcastle, b) a desire to see these groups spreading all over the country, c) the fact that many worker writers, as trade unionists, and socialists see things nationally as well as locally.... Working class culture has never been recorded by working people themselves through a national publication. Working class people have traditionally been left out of our history books and our literature - as writers, as readers and as subject matter. Worker writers are trying to break this vicious circle by tackling all three aspects of this problem at the same time. By writing about our lives, we hope to understand them better and through understanding help to

shape our own futures.

The Federation has established a national base on Tyneside in the North East of England. From there we are developing an information and resource centre for the use of federated members and allied community collectives.

A more detailed account of the Federation and its objectives can be found in our first national publication entitled 'Writing' available from local alternative socialist bookshops or from us, Milburn House, Newcastle upon Tyne. A publications list of all federated members material is also available.

Membership of the Federation is open to groups whose aims embrace those of the Federation, subject to approval by member groups. 'E' Floor, Dean St, Milburn House, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 1HF. Phone 0632-20719

family and flies back to Saigon to find Nick in the panic-stricken hours before the city fell to the liberation forces.

The trouble with *The Deerhunter* is that it is an enormously powerful and exciting film. I defy anyone, whatever their political views, not be moved by the scene in which American prisoners huddle together in their half-submerged prison while one by one their fellows blow their brains out and are tipped out into the river.

Yet this scene is entirely fictitious. An article by Richard West, in *The Spectator* of all places, shows that no incidents of this sort ever took place; that the evidence that the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam resorted to torture and massacre as systematic policies is so slight as to be non-existent - although the Americans and their clients were not so squeamish; and that the Vietnamese passion for Russian roulette is entirely a creature of the director's imagination.

The film's defenders will argue that all this is quite irrelevant - that the film is not about the Vietnam war, but about how the experience of War in general tempers and matures (or unmakes) men.

This is, though, a bit hard to swallow: somehow, within a decade, the war that divided American society more deeply than any since the Civil War, the first war the US ever actually lost, has become a mere parable. Perhaps this is an even more subtle form of racialism: the epic struggle for Vietnamese national independence becomes, in *The Deerhunter*, merely incidental to the self-realisation of American manhood.

In this way history is transmuted into myth. Surely it is not accidental that the dominant colours in the scenes where Nick and Michael descend into the Saigon underworld are red and black, signifying that we have entered Dante's Inferno, an abstract Hell rather than a real place.

The Deerhunter, then, 'recuperates' the Vietnam experience, by turning a great national trauma into something that the dominant ideology can accommodate - an episode in which American values put to the test and, in Michael's case, pass with flying colours (which is why the film ends with everyone singing 'God Bless America').

Yet *The Deerhunter* would not be so interesting and effective a film if it did not give the values it celebrates some real content. This is the point especially of the lengthy opening section of the film, which is devoted to Steve's wedding a couple of days before the three friends enter the army.

One of the striking features of *The Deerhunter* is that it is about the American working class in a way that few Hollywood films have ever been. In the wedding scenes a closely knit working-class community of shared ethnic (white Russian) origin is depicted in loving but realistic detail.

The steel-town provides the framework for the film: Michael returns to it from the war and leaves again only to bring his two friends back. The bleak shape of the steel-works physically dominates many of the most important scenes, while the film begins with the three friends at work in the smelter.

In this way values that would otherwise remain abstract and mythical are given definite historical shape. Various ideological themes traditional to Hollywood cinema are reworked—the mystical communion of man with Nature held to be at the bottom of the 'American experience' (the hunting scenes that give the film its title); male

friendship (the principal, albeit largely unstated sexual relationship is between Michael and Nick, while Michael himself is passive and clumsy when confronted with women—despite some fine performances by Meryl Streep and other female leads, this is a man's film in which women are relegated to the sidelines, to await the warriors returning from the war).

Yet these themes are only given life because they are placed within the context provided by the working-class community from which the principal characters spring. The film's power lies in its success in reworking the dominant Hollywood ideology by relating it to the experience of a generation of working-class Americans who were not radicalised by military service in Vietnam but merely endured it. In this respect, the picture *The Deerhunter* paints of Vietnam may not be entirely fictional.

The danger, however, is that precisely because it is, in its way, such a good film, *The Deerhunter* lends itself to a massive rewriting of history. Whether this rewriting succeeds depends in part on whether films are made which use the Vietnam experience to undermine the dominant ideology as effectively as *The Deerhunter* reaffirms it. *Alex Callinicos*

and Jerry have been established they don't interact with their workmates. Most scenes in the factory are either geared to showing the union's ineffectiveness on bread and butter issues, or the repressive role of the foremen. The workers stand around and gawp like the townsfolk in a Western.

Smokey, Zeke and Jerry, in dire financial hardship, decide to break into the safe at the local union branch and take what cash they can find. The plan misfires, and ultimately they come up against the combined power of their corrupt union, the bosses and the FBI.

It is a variation on the theme of the individual v the system with the difference that the movie is rather more realistic: these guys are not Clint Eastwood, and hence, they lose. They may be working-class blokes, but within the framework of the film this is not a significant factor.

The powers that be dispose of Smokey and the other two characters are bought off in different ways. Dazed and psychologically battered, they seem to understand even less at the end than they did at the beginning.

They are smashed because they took on the system as individuals, but the film does not suggest there could have been any other way. The message of the film is that the system is big and powerful and corrupt, and it will smash anyone who takes it on.

Since any opposition is only ever conceived of in terms of individuals rather than a class, then the final message is in no way Marxist.

Blue Collar is unusual in that its heroes are working class. Ordinary working people exist only rarely in Hollywood movies. In this respect there is a difference between British and American films.

British films often contain a notion of class—class in a sociological or moral sense. Films such as *Room at the Top* and *The Hireling* moralise about the tragic consequences of crossing class barriers.

British comedies more often than not base their humour on expectations about behaviour associated with class. The rich behaving richly etc.

During the sixties a series of films emerged which can only be described as "working class" movies. *A Kind of Loving* is one of the best examples. Dated and patchy as it might seem now, there is nonetheless a definite attempt to portray working class people, an attempt to convey the relationships of the workplace.

You feel you are watching ordinary people. Hollywood has never gone in for this kind of realism.

In form, Hollywood films are realist. That is, they don't for example, do funny things with the time sequence: they don't present dialogue which doesn't fit the picture.

In short, they don't do anything which will jolt you back into realising you are watching a movie. Everything is geared to allowing you to identify with the hero, and to sink into the comfortable role of voyeur.

Very rarely are the main characters people you might meet in real life. It looks like real life, but usually it's just that bit larger than life. The heroes are more powerful, more attractive, more articulate than ourselves.

Individuals who have the power and ingenuity to find solutions to the problems which crop up in the world of the film. In a way it would be cutting their own throats to identify these superpeople as members of the working class.

Jane Ure-Smith

You can't win (?)

Blue Collar

"... they pit the lifers against the new boys, the young against the old, the black against the white. Everything they do is to keep us in our place."

You might expect a movie which ends with this message, and has the title *Blue Collar*, to show some understanding throughout of the nature of class struggle. You might expect an understanding of the potential power of workers in the factory.

Given that *Blue Collar* uses the Ford Plant in Detroit as its setting, you might even expect a sense of what it must be like to work on the line. None of these things are present in the movie.

Perhaps that's asking too much of a Hollywood movie, but my expectations were raised by the critics' epithets of 'left-wing' and 'political', and by the comments made by the Director, Paul Schrader:

"I didn't set out to make a left wing film. I had no visions of making this into a concrete political thing ... While I was working on the script, I realised that it had come to a very specific Marxist conclusion."

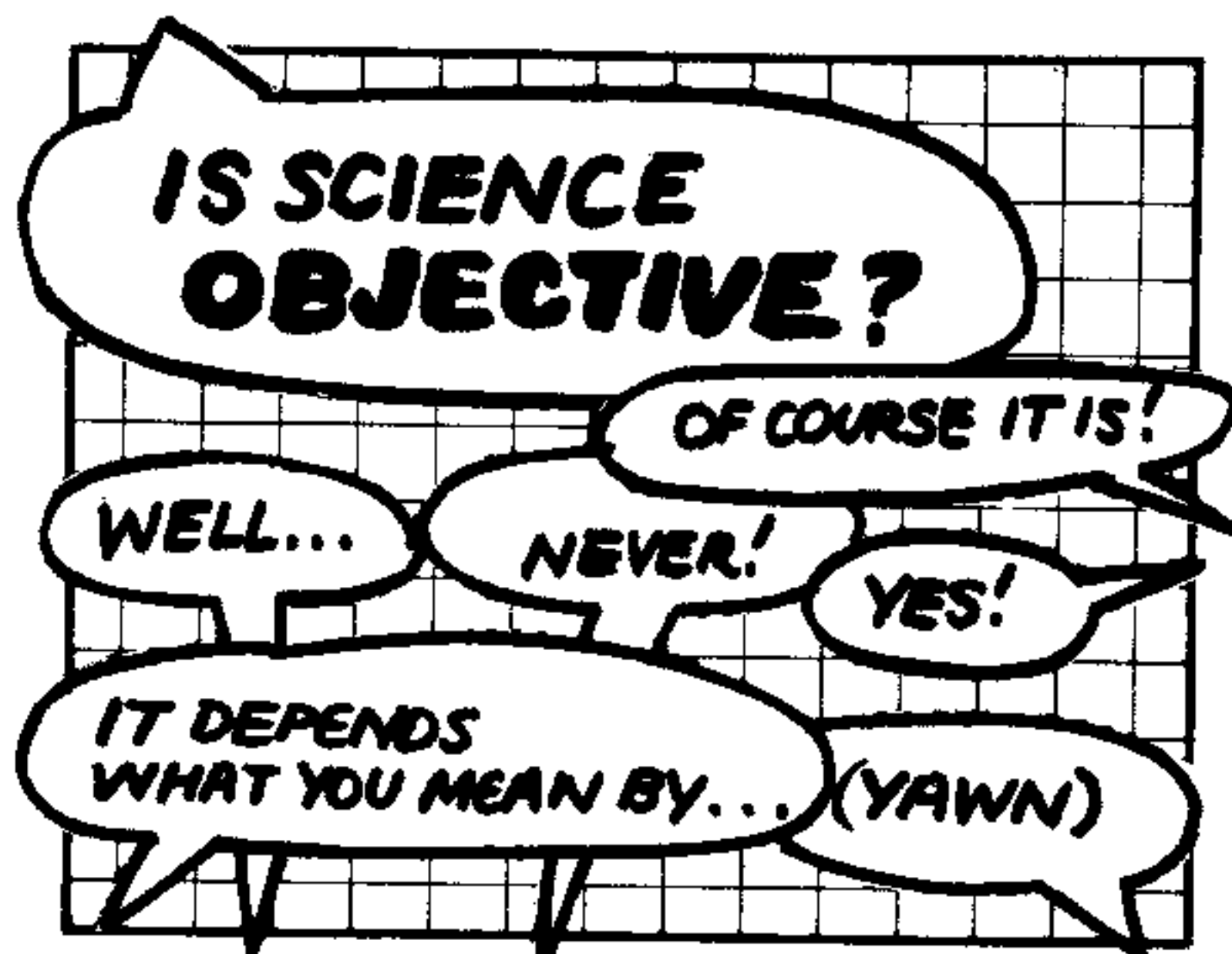
This raises the question of whether it is possible to arrive at a Marxist conclusion when the film was a whole is not based on a notion of class society.

The film gives a strong impression of how the bosses operate. They themselves are never actually visible, but they make their presence felt through the foremen.

They have absorbed the union right down to the level of shop steward. But they are not seen as part of one class which is exploiting another class, because in *Blue Collar* the working class does not exist.

The workers in the factory merely form an artistic backdrop to the line. Once the main characters, Smokey, Zeke





To the deceptively simple question 'Is science objective?' Dave Albury answers 'No' and Alex Callinicos 'Yes' (*Socialist Review* No 8, December 1978). Both make some good points, but each in his own one-sided way misses the point.

Dave rejects any distinction between scientific knowledge and its use in capitalist technology which leads him to the reactionary implication that science is not a progressive force. His crude materialist analysis rests on the unproven—and in my view untenable—assumption that the undoubted influence of capitalist interests on natural scientists **necessarily** means their science cannot be objective.

Alex correctly dismisses this as 'vulgar marxism' but his own argument that science is objective because of its 'relative autonomy' from class interests, is if anything, worse. This idealist approach divorces the sciences from their social purposes and is particularly inappropriate where he extends it from natural science to a defence of marxism's scientific objectivity.

'Science' refers to a diverse range of socially produced knowledge and theories about the natural and social world. Because of the class contradictions in capitalism they do not have a unified purpose. The extent to which objectivity is achievable depends on class interests in objectivity **and** class barriers to it.

For capitalists it varies greatly, depending on the field of study and its bearing on capitalist accumulation and relations of production. Their material interest in objective science is much more limited than that of the working class, and in the realm of social science it is crippled by their overriding interest in maintaining the capitalist system.

As Dave indicates, 'science' and 'ideology' interpenetrate in widely differing ways, which can only be established by concrete

historical analysis of the different fields of study. However we can outline how such analysis should proceed by noting the main weaknesses in Dave's and Alex's approaches and by contrasting the different social purposes of natural and social science, bourgeois social science and marxism. This should provide a more adequate *class* based conception of 'objectivity'.

Where Dave rejects 'the internal logic of science' as 'mystical', Alex correctly insists that science is not the simple response to ruling class needs which Dave suggests. Theoretical developments are by their very nature unpredictable; research can have unintended theoretical spin-offs; capitalists cannot specify precisely in advance just what research will best serve their class interests; and natural scientists need some freedom if they are to do creative work which may (or may not) be of immediate use to capital in developing the forces of production.



'Relative autonomy' in this sense is in the capitalists' interests. Given the Althusserian distortion of the concept into what often amounts to 'a unilateral declaration of complete independence', Alex is justifiably keen to stress he means **relative** autonomy and is not being idealist. He is idealist, however, in seeing 'relative autonomy' as the basis of objectivity. He argues that Dave confuses 'two quite different things': the bogus **neutrality** of science as separate from class interests, and the genuine **objectivity** of science which Alex defines not as absolute truth but 'approximations to reality'.

But Alex fails to relate these 'different things', despite the fact that it is precisely

because of the absence of neutrality that objectivity is questioned. He sees the sciences as **both** theoretical **and** social practices, and any approach which seeks to reduce them to one or the other of these two aspects is going to get . . . into a mess".

Dave stands accused of reducing science simply to a 'social practice', but Alex himself gets into the 'opposite' mess of reducing the question of objectivity simply to the realm of 'theoretical practice'. He sees the relationship between these 'two aspects' as 'contradictory', but does not say how and why.

Indeed, using the fact of relative autonomy as **the** explanation of 'objectivity' side-steps and precludes a proper investigation of its dialectical relationship with class interests and purposes in their historical context.

In making 'relative autonomy' the sole basis for objectivity its **relative** or limited aspect is lost and objective science becomes **autonomous**, elevated above society, a position suspiciously similar to the Althusserian. One is tempted to add that religions also have a **relative** autonomy from capitalist interests and what could be less objective?

By implying that science is 'protected' from capitalist influence by its relative autonomy, Alex appears to accept Dave's assumption that capitalist interests are necessarily opposed to objectivity. But are they? It seems to me capitalists have a strong interest in the natural sciences being as objective as possible, for increasingly their profits depend on it.

Furthermore, in marked contrast to the class-ridden social reality which the social sciences purport to explain, there is nothing inherent in the parts of reality studied by the purely natural sciences which constitutes a specifically **class** barrier to objectivity. This is the main reason for their generally greater

SCIENCE & IDEOLOGY

A contribution by James Anderson
to our science debate which began in issue 8

SCIENCE & IDEOLOGY *continued*

objectivity than bourgeois social science.

This does not, however, mean the natural sciences completely escape the negative influence of capitalist ideology and production relations. The varying extent of this influence can only be established by concrete analysis of the inter-relationships between the 'internal logic' of science and capitalist needs and ideas. In general, these do tend to distort and impede scientific development.

Capitalist science is elitist, excluding the vast majority of workers from the opportunity to do creative research, excluding too the majority of 'scientists' who are reduced to little more than pragmatic technicians; and research in particular areas (eg. the health dangers of particular chemicals) may be starved of funds or completely by-passed in the rush for profits.

But with these provisos, it is better not to assume a general fundamental contradiction between capitalist interests and objectivity in the natural science that **does** actually get produced under capitalism. Hence we should not assume any fundamental contradiction between the natural sciences and workers' interests, not because natural science is somehow above or 'protected' from capitalist interests but because here the capitalists have a strong vested interest in objectivity. That is why the idea of a 'proletarian' relativity theory is 'silly'.

The natural sciences are an important part of the **forces** of production. Capital in its drive to accumulate continually seeks greater control over physical processes and this requires objective knowledge about them. More ideological mystifications do not enable people to get to the moon and back.

Natural science has proved itself in practice which is a necessary, though not sufficient, test of objectivity. Knowledge of

the natural world has been **revolutionised** to an amazing extent even with the lifetime of someone reading this article.

However, the bourgeoisie has a material interest in 'revolutions' only with respect to the physical **forces** of production; capitalist **relations** of production they are determined to keep capitalist. This **clash between forces and relations** of production generates the class conflict in the application of natural science through capitalist technology.



Accepting the objectivity in natural science does not mean we have to accept as 'scientific' or 'objective' the ways its knowledge is used in capitalism—the redundancies, speed-ups, deskilling, dangers to health, etc. Dave rejects any distinction between natural science and technology because "There are many examples of science influencing technology and technology influencing science" and clearly they do interpenetrate.

But there are good reasons for not collapsing the distinction. It led Dave to the implication that natural science is not progressive, and cannot be objective in capitalism. It implies that the only type of technology that can result from existing science is the existing technology, a form of idealism where scientific knowledge, not material class interest, is the determining factor. This would make socialism impossible as it denies the possibility of using the same scientific knowledge produced for capital to construct acceptable technology in socialism.

The idea that capital **misuses** scientific knowledge is sometimes unpopular because it was used to support the bogus theory that

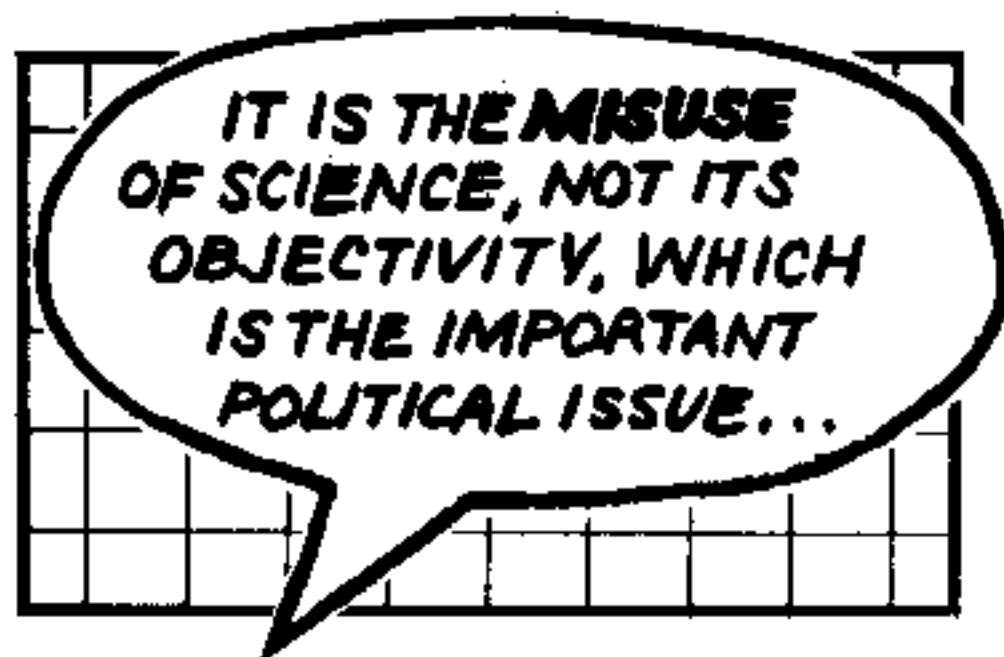
science was neutral. But we should not throw out the baby of 'misuse' with the bathwater of 'neutrality'. It is the misuse of science, not its objectivity, which is the important political issue in the 'new-technology' or nuclear power.

Sometimes the misuse is physically built-into the technology; sometimes it arises purely from the social context of its use and under socialism would require little **technical** change; and whether nuclear power could be safely used in socialism is interesting as idle speculation but the important point is it's potentially lethal for humanity until socialism is firmly established. Whatever the type of misuse, none is an inevitable result of science. It is only inevitable under capitalism. That, as Alex reminds us, is what we are fighting.

In social science, however, 'objectivity' is a major political issue—bourgeois ideology paraded as 'objective' science is a political weapon against workers' interests. Although there cannot be an absolute distinction between natural and social science there are significant differences in the possibilities and implications of objectivity and the penetration by bourgeois ideology.

In Marx's conception, Man is part of Nature but consciously transforms it through production, and in the process transforms his own nature and the class structures arising from the mode of production. 'Men make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing'. The unity of Man and Nature is thus mediated in capitalism not only by human consciousness but by class relations and workers' alienation from Nature (which is transformed for profit rather than use).

Therefore, in contrast to the purely natural sciences, there are specifically **class** barriers to objectivity **inherent** in the contradiction-riddled reality which social sciences study.



Capitalists need objective knowledge to manage capitalism but bourgeois social theory is severely limited by their overriding concern to maintain and hence obscure the central contradiction between capital and labour, and their need to keep workers' understanding even more limited.

Thus, the *Financial Times*, written for a capitalist readership, is much more objective than, say, *The Sun*, and its 'mere journalism' is also superior to much of bourgeois social 'science'. But for capital the problems of national and world capitalism (including the threat of lethal world war) are **always** preferable to the solution of removing the contradictions in a class-less world order.

Whereas natural science helps revolutionise the physical forces of production, bourgeois social science is mainly involved with social relations of production where revolution is ruled out. The solution is thus ruled out (usually implicitly) before bourgeois social analysis even starts - not the way science is supposed to proceed! Ideology is the main result.

'Ideology' refers to **partial and superficial** accounts of reality which (intentionally or not) serve the interests of a particular class or group in society by claiming to be the 'whole truth' or universally true for everyone (eg., 'in the national interest' as if class contradictions didn't exist).

Social science has overtaken religion as the main source of bourgeois ideologies. Some of the most pervasive are based on the **misuse** of valid theories from natural science lifted out of context to 'explain' human society (eg. Social Darwinism's 'Survival of the fittest' - which has some plausibility in the 'jungle' of capitalism). Studies of Man as part of Nature (eg., in biology, psychology, medicine), which ignore people's social being are a fertile source.

Thus people are 'naturally' greedy,

animal-like, etc., and the **natural fact** of racial variation in appearance is used as basis for the **social fictions** of racist ideology. Witness the popular influence of racist 'intelligence' testing, Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape*, or the granddaddy of animal behaviour studies, kindly old Konrad Lorenz, who in 1942 produced the nazi theory that 'Aryans' could use 'racial biology' to weed out 'degenerate' characters on the basis of their physical appearance.

But much of the social sciences have a greater degree of objectivity and for that very reason can constitute more powerful - if not always more popular - ideologies. 'Positivist' social science claims it is 'objective' because it uses only the **method** of natural science (not its content), as portrayed by such 'philosophers of science' as the anti-marxist Karl Popper. Results show, however, that this 'method' is not fully adequate, is not copied properly, nor can social theory ever match the successful predictions made in the physical sciences.

Vicarious 'authority' is derived from allegedly copying natural scientists (whose authority is based on real predictive ability), despite the pathetic results of projecting past social trends into the future. Often disastrous in economic management, it is suitable as ideology for it at least 'predicts' that capitalism will continue!



Producing 'predictive laws' for society as natural science does for nature is only 'possible' by leaving out human consciousness, or at least that of subordinate classes - as in the positivistic and deformed 'marxism' of Kautsky and Stalin, with its

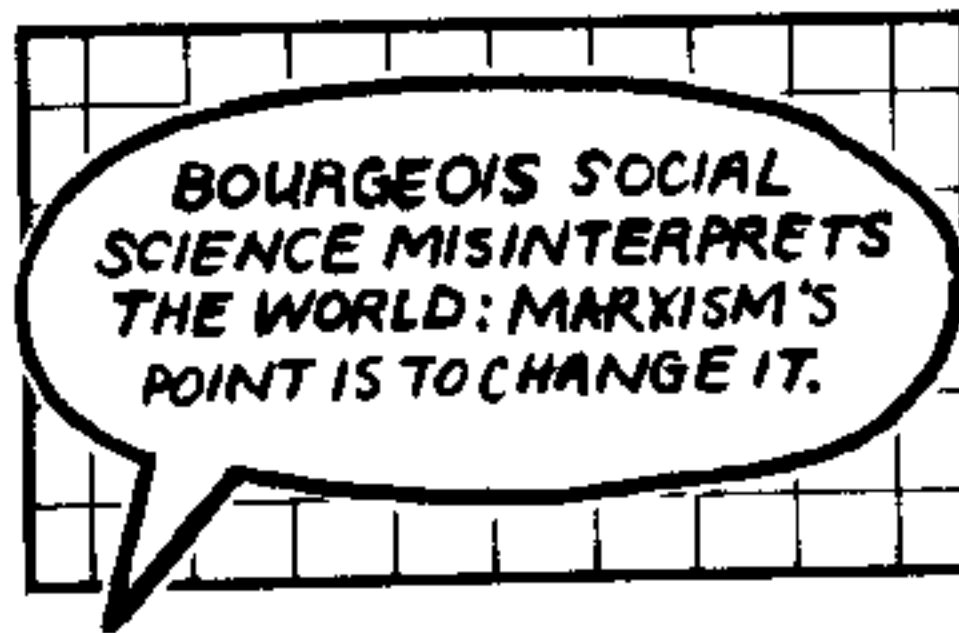
mechanistic historical 'stages' and the 'inevitability' of socialism. This mechanistic materialism is allied with reformism: if socialism were 'inevitable' why bother organising for the working class consciously to take state power?

Marxism is only 'predictive' in the sense of analysing the possibilities latent in present class contradictions as a guide to conscious workers' action to overcome the contradictions, eventual outcomes depending on what people and classes might or might not do in the future.

Confusing 'objectivity' with 'neutrality' and therefore wishing to appear 'neutral', bourgeois social analysis makes a virtue out of confining itself to surface **appearances** - in which it is quite unlike natural science. These appearances **are** part of reality (therefore bourgeois ideology has some plausibility), but in capitalism 'appearance' is necessarily different from 'essence' for the system to function.

For example, surplus labour is extracted not openly by force as in slavery but through the law of value in the apparently fair exchange of labour power for wages, so 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work' can **appear** possible. In 'positivist' or 'empiricist' social analysis immediate surface 'facts' supposedly 'speak for themselves' and there is no coherent theory to enable a full understanding of the underlying reality of capitalism in which particular social appearances and problems are embedded.

In fact the underlying reality is obscured even further by the fragmentation of bourgeois social science. Economists typically leave out 'politics', political theorists leave out 'economics', and sociologists often leave out just about everything of importance in their 'sociology' of this, that, and the other. Bourgeois social scientists are 'cobweb spinning eclectic flea-crackers', to borrow Engels' phrase.



Fragmentation and the limited relative autonomy from direct capitalist control—results in a confusing multiplicity of competing ideologies, one-sided 'economic', 'sociological' etc., 'explanations' which are more protective of capitalist interest than a single 'party-line' ideology. They help provide piecemeal pragmatic 'solutions' to capital's problems: problems are pushed off to the future, often to strike again with greater severity or, as Engels said of housing problems, 'they are merely **shifted elsewhere!**'

Lenin concluded that bourgeois economists and natural scientists 'may be capable of very valuable contributions in ... factual and specialised investigations' but they cannot '**be trusted one iota**' in their general theories of political economy or philosophy of science. But bourgeois social science (or the *Financial Times*) cannot be dismissed out of hand: 'ideology' and 'science' interpenetrate in widely differing ways, to be disentangled by concrete analysis, not a **priori** definitions. Thus immediately after saying that in general 'the professors of economics are nothing but scientific salesmen of the capitalist class ... the professors of philosophy ... salesmen of the theologians.'

Lenin goes on to say: 'The task of Marxists in both cases is to be able to master and adapt the achievements of these 'salesmen' (for instance, you will not make the slightest progress in the investigation of new economic phenomena unless you have recourse to the works of these salesmen), and to be able to lop off their reactionary tendency, to pursue one's own line and to combat the **whole alignment** of forces and classes hostile to us.'

Bourgeois social science misinterprets the world: marxism's point is to change it. This is the basis of its objectivity. Like the best of natural science, it has a revolutionary

approach to what it studies. As Engels wrote, 'socialism became a science' with Marx's 'two great discoveries, the materialist conception of history and the revelation of the secret of capitalist production through surplus value.'

The bourgeois argument that marxism is just 'ideology' reflecting the interest of a particular class, 'forgets' that workers are 'the universal class' with an material interest in achieving a classless society in which everyone (including former capitalists and other parasites) could do socially useful work. In contrast to capitalists, the working class has an unfettered material interest in objectivity in all fields of human understanding, natural and social.

But what is 'objectivity'? The concept is meaningless unless related to class interests and purposes. However, it cannot be established simply by the pragmatic 'test' of how well a theory 'works' in practice' if workers accept its **misunderstanding** of capitalism; and the success of marxist theory depends not simply on its objectivity, but on how, and how many, workers put it into practice.

Its past political defeats do not disprove the theory—just as well, for they outnumber the practical successes. Equally, theoretical objectivity cannot **guarantee** future practical success, but it is essential: a pragmatic 'suck it and see' approach has limited uses, but you may simply 'poison' yourself in which case the 'test' is fatally late!

The conception of 'objectivity' as 'approximation to reality' which Alex Callinicos uses is also inadequate for it leaves unanswerable the question 'how close' an approximation? It is an empiricist formulation which postulates an ahistorical **subject** (or observer) separate from the **object** being observed, thereby dogmatically breaking the dialectic, or two-way interrelationships, between subject and ob-

ject, thought and action, theory and practice. We are part of the reality we observe, shaping and shaped by it.

Marxism's objectivity derives from recognising the full theoretical and practical implications of this. It dialectically relates its object of study, capitalism, with the revolutionary **subject** in capitalism, the working class. It represents the material interests of the class and strives for it to become the conscious agent in revolutionising capitalism, as the **practical** solution to the material and theoretical problems of capitalism.

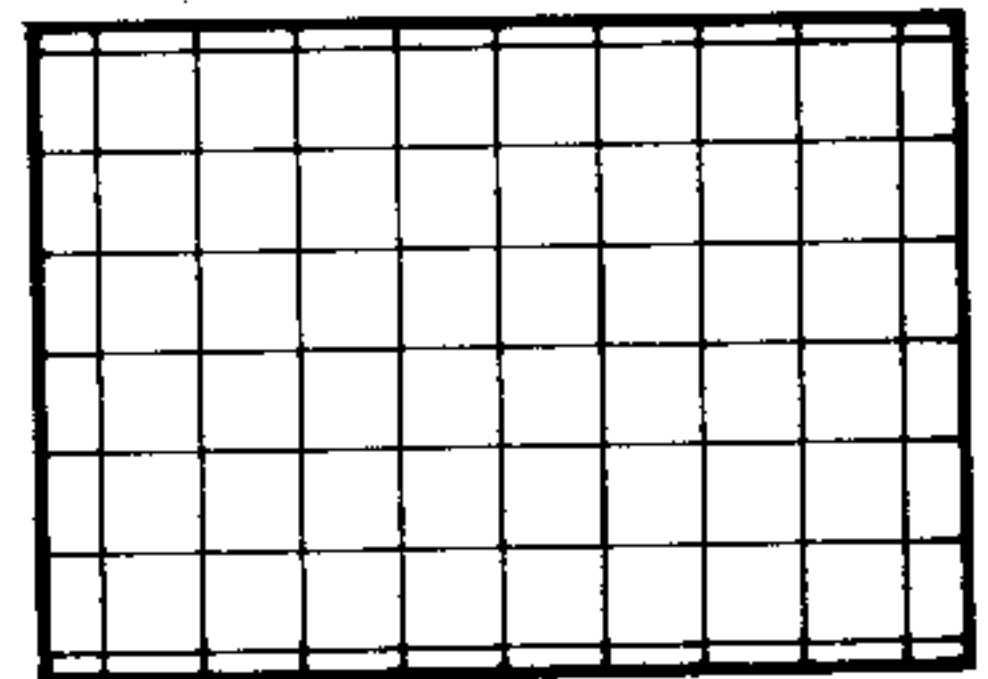
Science **becomes** objective by moving from the abstract to the concrete, from a one-sidedly dogmatic account to a many-sided understanding of reality which sees it as an **historical process**. Marxism's superiority to its bourgeois competitors, past and present, can therefore be **theoretically demonstrated**: it can make coherent and concrete their abstract fragmentary findings while consistently explaining their deficiencies and its own objectivity in relation to practice.

It recognises that the 'movement from the abstract to the concrete' is only completed when its theory is 'proved in practice' and becomes **objectified** in the material reality of a class-less society.

The defence of marxist objectivity from the corrosive influence of bourgeois ideology depends on consistently interrelating the theory and practice of workers' struggles against capital. Theory loses objectivity if separate from this practice, and vice-versa, as evidenced by the inconsistencies of reformism and by some of current academic productions which pass for marxist theory (and here the Althusserian concept of 'theoretical practice' is merely verbal gymnastics, little defence against the ideological contamination to which academics are occupationally at risk).

Reformism is seeking a compromise with capital on the central issue on which capital will not compromise its own overthrow—is compromised and inconsistent in its theory and practice.

Marxism is objective to the extent it is revolutionary and revolutionary to the extent it is objective.



Recent books on Marx & Marxism



Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol II: The Politics of Social Classes

Hal Draper
Monthly Review Press £11.80

I had the privilege of reviewing the first volume of this work (*State and Bureaucracy*), which is now happily available in paperback (£5.60). At that time, I was more dismissive of the project than I now care to recall. In particular, I suggested that Draper's work was one of 'marxology', a term which for myself as for Draper is a term of subtle marxist abuse.

Having recently had the occasion to re-read the first volume, and now also the pleasure of reading the second, I should like publicly to alter my previous ever-so-slightly 'superior' judgement. Hal Draper is not producing marxology, but scholarly marxism of the highest order.

The scholarship is simply amazing. Draper has read everything there is to read, and has organised his resulting mass of material into a wonderfully clear and systematic presentation of the political ideas of Marx and his comrade Fred Engels. I noted the indispensability of the first volume as a reference work, and can only reiterate that point again.

But something more must be said, about the **politics** of the work. Hal Draper is well-known and some publisher should make him still better known by a re-issue for a marvellous short pamphlet of the 1950s: *The Two Souls of*

Socialism. The burden of that pamphlet was the sharp distinction within the socialist tradition between all the manifold varieties of 'socialism from above' (including reformism, stalinism, maoism, etc) and the revolutionary tradition of 'socialism from below'.

We hear a good deal these days from the reformist communist parties of Western Europe about 'democratic socialism', by which they mean a lukewarm struggle to expand popular control, and a mild dose of national-state planning. They urge the retention of the semi-sham democracy of parliamentary government, of 'representative democracy' where the electorate have no real control over their parliamentary misrepresentatives.

Faced with real popular movements towards workers' control and workers' power, they are at best uneasy and more commonly positively hostile (consider the shameful history of the Italian and French parties in every significant crisis for more than forty years).

Hal Draper is a marxist, and will have no truck with such perversions. His Marx and his Engels defiantly quoted over hundreds of pages are consistent, red revolutionaries, ever concerned with the expansion of popular freedoms, and with an expansion of freedom and control won by the working classes themselves, by their own efforts and their own power.

The Marx and Engels who

shine through every carefully annotated page of this monumental work are revolutionary socialists whose central principle was collective self-emancipation, workers' power. True, they were intellectuals, but intellectuals whose whole lives were organised around the principle of **struggle**, of political engagement, whose intellectual work aimed always at the central point: making it easier for freedom to conquer.

They were acid in their condemnation of idiots, not out of love of their own cleverness (as we find in so many latter-day academic marxoids) but because the truth mattered to the working class, because ignorance and muddle were impediments to their struggle. For them, reason and freedom went hand in hand.

Hal Draper aims to recover Marx and Engels as revolutionary activists and thinkers. In this volume, he discusses the anatomy of classes, the role of the modern proletariat as the key agent in the overthrow of capitalism, and the relation - defined in struggle - of the working class to other classes and strata.

Initially, one further volume was planned, but the author now announces that the remaining materials will occupy two further substantial tomes. No question: if the next volumes are up to the standard of the first two, we should be pleased at his excesses.

The term 'work of reference' may turn prospective readers away, so do not imagine this work is as dull as an index. Despite the massive scope of the

work, and its integrated conception, the various separate parts are themselves a whole series of smaller pleasures. This is a book to dip into, as well as to read right through.

If you want to know why marxists emphasise the working class before all others, the materials are all here. Students can shiver at Marx and Engels' remarks on their forebears' roles in the revolutions of 1848-9, and their reported enthusiasm for knowing the plans of the revolution while not liking sore feet. Academics should ponder what Marx and Engels thought of them.

Anyone having to argue with the disordered residues of maoism should rejoice in the most definitive collection of Marx and Engels' very clear-headed views on the peasant question available anywhere: these three long chapters, in themselves, are political dynamite. The Marxist attitude to trade unionism is clearly spelled out, together with the issues of reformism, the need for an independent revolutionary party of the working class, and so on.

Perhaps most important of all for revolutionary strategy, Hal Draper presents an extremely clear and unambiguous account of Marx and Engels' development, through their experience of the 1848 revolutions, of the theory of 'permanent revolution': Leon Trotsky's claim that he did not invent the theory, but developed it from its foundations in Marx, is amply supported by this fully



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documented analysis.

Over and over again, Draper shows the theoretical founders of our movement insisting on the central and revolutionary role of the modern working class, as the class which alone bears within its forms of life the

seeds of the future society.

I cannot do this book justice. The publishers should be urged to rush out a paperback edition of the second volume. This work should be welcomed, read, studied, used. It is indispensable. *Colin Barker*

Jargon-free guide through marxist theory

A Short History of Socialist Economic Thought

Gerd Hardach, Dieter Karras,
Ben Fine.

Edward Arnold. £2.25

Nowadays one has to go a long way to find an intelligible and reasonably cheap introduction to socialist economic theory. Most modern marxist economic theory is bespattered with abstruse jargon and requires not just a glossary of terms but a devotion to academic study bordering on masochism. At the same time, most books on marxist economics are intolerably expensive.

This book, the work largely of two German marxists Hardach and Karras, is part of a very welcome move in the opposite direction—that of taking a critical look at traditional marxist economic theory in a language which ordinary mortals can understand.

The authors guide the reader through the ideas of the early bourgeois economists such as Malthus, Ricardo, Say, McCulloch and provide a convenient backcloth against which they develop Marx's criticisms.

With each economist, trouble is taken to illustrate their specific contribution to bourgeois economic theory and this is later developed when consideration is given to Marx. Here, in my opinion, the authors are a little weak, emphasising the 'method' of Marx's analysis to the detriment of the object, namely capitalism.

This leads them to spend rather less time on Marx's economic theory than would do justice to it; for example use-value, exchange-value, labour-power, surplus-value, specific and general labour, the dual aspect of circulation, 'valorisation' (horrible word!), accumulation, value and prices

of production, and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, are all covered in less than ten pages. That makes meaty, if well-written, reading!

Having given the essentials of Marx's theory, the authors then discuss various attempts to develop or 'revise' Marx's theories in two excellent chapters on theories of capitalism before and after the October revolution.

Stating clearly the essentials of the 'revisionism' debate in German Social Democracy led by Bernstein, essentially, whether or not capitalism would of its own accord result inevitably in socialism, the authors then pass onto what they consider to be the more important debate inside Russia. This concerned the process of development of capitalism and was of crucial tactical importance to the marxists in Russia at the time.

In opposition to the German revisionists Rosa Luxemburg had written a controversial criticism of Marx's theory of the reproduction of capitalism, i.e. how it can reproduce itself on an increasingly larger scale so develop. At the same time, in Russia the debate was between the 'narodniks' and the marxists, the narodniks believing that capitalism could not develop in Russia and that it would be possible to pass directly to socialism based on an agrarian economy.

It was in this context that the theories of imperialism formulated by Luxemburg, Bukharin and Lenin and the famous *Finance Capital* by Hilferding were written. The authors have produced excellent expositions of these theories and these alone would make the book worth reading.

When they come to the second chapter dealing with theories of capitalism, a number of relatively unknown names are introduced such as Varga (an early theorist of state capitalism), Sternberg and

Grossman (two economists who indulged in a certain amount of acrobatics with Marx's analysis of the reproduction of capitalism) and some of the Russian economists who have discussed the theory of state monopoly capitalism.

The book ends with a clear account of the modern controversies in marxist economics: value, price and neo-Ricardianism; the falling profit rate and alternative explanations; the current recession; and last but not least, imperialism.

If this seems a lot to cover in just 80 pages of text you will be relieved to know that it is free of jargon so it is an easy read. It is also pleasingly free of printing errors, and even if it does work out at nearly 3p per page, it's worth it. The authors are to be congratulated on producing a valuable book. *Bob Lloyd*

Chit-chat from the common rooms

Main Currents of Marxism (3 vols)

Leszek Kolakowski
OUP £26.95

(That's right, twenty seven quid - or what the average Asian worker earns in a month).

How they must love this second-level philosophical Solzhenitsyn in the Oxford common room that he now inhabits! The brave Polish intellectual who defied stalinist repression in the fifties in the name of socialism and freedom, and who became the focus of so much opposition - east and west of the Iron Curtain - when Russian troops destroyed the Hungarian workers' revolution in 1956, has at last found his utopia: western 'liberal' society.

It must be very comforting to be told, after a decade in which intellectuals influenced by Marx have been on the offensive, and by someone who, after all, speaks from the horse's mouth, that all the cold war myths are in fact true.

Just in case you were worried that Trotsky might have had something to do with proletarian internationalism

Recent books on Marx & Marxism



and opposition to the stalinist bureaucracy, it's nice to know that he really believed in creating a state where "compulsion is universal . . . a huge concentration camp in which the government exercises absolute power over every aspect of citizens' lives".

Out of context? Not at all: apart from a page and a half on the permanent revolution this is the only part of him that Kolakowski looks at in any detail.

Nor is his cavalier treatment of Trotsky an isolated example. Lenin and other Bolsheviks suffer in the same way. Only Stalin emerges, if not in an acceptable form, then at least in a form in which his crimes are distinctly mitigated by being shared by the revolutionary socialist tradition from which they are supposed to have sprung.

And poor old Karl himself emerges as a clever, but hopelessly confused thinker, permanently split between the 'scientific' Marx who studied in the British Museum wrongly predicting the imminent collapse of capitalism, and the committed reformer, who, because he tried to get people to do things, didn't believe in any such thing.

The intellectual world that Kolakowski inhabits is an extraordinarily simple one. There is not history, only lists of the good guys (all of them are imbecilic ineffective social democrats) and the bad guys (revolutionary socialists). Marxism has been proved false because capitalism has not collapsed and because 'socialism' in its Russian variety has given rise to tyranny not freedom.

Marxism is therefore not a science but a religion, and a dangerous one in its revolutionary form. So although Kolakowski says he would like a more equitable society, he has now given up all hope of getting it.

And so he sides with the status quo against those who want to change it, whether they

are the students of the 1960s protesting against the Vietnam war, spoilt middle-class children . . . the extremists amongst them indistinguishable from 'Fascist thugs', or black civil-rights activists 'who advocated violence and black racialism'.

In short Kolakowski has clearly been recruited to the tradition of the reactionary academic 'liberalism' of other European emigre anglophiles like Popper and von Hayek. Apart from the flagrant violence he does to Marx and other revolutionaries' ideas (at times sinking to the level of Popper's wretched *Poverty of Historicism*), he also makes the same equation between collective activity and totalitarian dictatorship, and worships at the same shrines of 'individualism' and piecemeal social reform.

The result is not only catastrophic for his politics, but for his intellect and scholarship too. In these 1,500 pages of rambling fuddled myopia there is hardly a single acute insight to be found. The sharp essayist who at one time expressed (however inadequately) the humanity of socialism is gone.

Bizarre perspective

Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory—Bolshevism and its Critique

Philip Corrigan, Harvie Ramsay, Derek Sayer
Macmillan £8.95

This is an interesting but contradictory book. It is interesting because it contains one or two valid and important insights. It is contradictory because these insights are hitched to a political position that is completely untenable and, far from flowing from these insights, directly negates them.

The authors' basic argument is as follows. Bolshevism inherited from the Second International a restricted view of the 'forces of production' conceiving of them in purely technical terms quite separate from the relations of production and from politics.

Thus after the revolution the transition to socialism came to be seen as merely a matter of adding economic development to the workers' state regardless of the social relations generated in this process. Hence Lenin's

Only the ghost (but not the spirit) of his former self remains to haunt the cloisters of All Souls - the immensely wealthy self-perpetuating intellectual club of which he is now a member.

To some people (Edward Thompson for instance - see his critique of Kolakowski in *Socialist Register* 1973) he is a renegade and must be opposed as such. But the malaise goes a bit deeper. Even in his most radical days he never went beyond a very superficial view of socialism, as involving collectivisation plus humanitarianism and democracy, and as something that could plausibly be thought of as introduced from above.

He never really saw socialism as the logical outcome of the collective self-activity of the working class against capitalism, as something that **had** to be imposed from below. If he had it would have made nonsense of the equation between totalitarianism and socialism - a conclusion that his erstwhile colleagues from the old New Left of the 1950s would do well to ponder on.

Peter Binns

slogan that 'socialism equals soviets plus electriciation' and his admiration for taylorism.

This, the authors maintain, led to the progressive adoption of capitalist methods and relations of production in industrialisation, and was the 'original sin' of Bolshevism.

On this question they say there was no disagreement between Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin, or the latter's successors and consequently they claim that "no caesura . . . separates Khrushchev or Brezhnev from the fundamentals of their Bolshevik heritage".

Finally they see the 'practice of the Chinese people' and Mao-Tse-Tung thought as providing an implicit critique of and alternative to the Bolshevik tradition.

Is there any truth in this rather bizarre perspective? Yes, there is a grain, but no more. It is true that Bolsheviks (including and, at times, especially Trotsky) did tend to conceive of socialism in terms of a purely quantitative expansion of industry and state ownership.

The root of the problem, though this is not brought out in

the book, was an almost complete unawareness of that aspect of Marx's thought which centres on the relationship of the worker to his or her work and which is most clearly displayed in the *1844 Manuscripts*. This unawareness clearly inhibited and distorted Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism in the 1920s and 1930s. But the rest of their argument is the purest nonsense.

Messrs Corrigan et al attempt to root their critique in a restatement of Marx's historical materialism. In this they insist that the 'material and social dimensions of production are related internally' and that relations of production are

themselves productive forces.

They criticise a crude base superstructure division, and the view of the state as merely an instrument of coercion separate from the economy. Finally they note Marx's denial that he had developed "a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical" and emphasise the empirical nature of the marxist project.

So far so good. But while it is certainly correct to combat the view of marxism as technological determinism and to criticise a 'technologically motivated account of social change' it is certainly not correct to exclude almost completely the level of technique and economic development as a major factor in human history.

And this is what our authors try to do. When Marx wrote that 'men make their own history, but not in circumstances of their own making' both terms of the equation had force and meaning. The Second International jettisoned the first term of the equation and produced a mechanical fatalism. Our authors here ignore the second term and arrive at a radical idealism.

Forgetting Marx's statement that "with generalised want all the old ways will revive", they want to deny that a high level of economic development is in any sense a prerequisite for socialism. This, of course, is necessary to sustain their semi-maoism but it involves abandoning marxism for naive utopianism.

In fact extreme idealism underlies everything they write about Russia and China. When they attack Lenin over one-man management and taylorism they do so as if these were simply wrong ideas reflecting an abstract struggle between capitalism and socialist ideas, without even mentioning the desperate material situation in Russia which gave rise to these positions. Similarly, when they argue for the essential continuity of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Brezhnev they do so simply on the basis of isolated quotations removed from their context, completely disregarding the manifest discontinuity in their general political positions and, even more important, in their objective social positions in

Soviet society.

When they tell us that 'for Stalin . . . socialism in one country is not to be counterposed to world revolution', this is again purely on the basis of quotations from Stalin. Stalin's practice (in China, in Germany, in Spain etc.) is completely ignored.

On China the book takes off into the fantasy world of quotes from Mao. Any actual history, any contact with the awkward reality of China (of the kind to be found in Nigel Harris's recent study) is avoided like the plague. The whole analysis is conducted in terms of the struggle between the 'two-lines'.

Class struggle continues in China, they say, but it is not a struggle between real social groups occupying definite positions in the process of production, instead it is a mythical struggle between capitalist and socialist roaders. From authors who have stressed the empirical nature of marxism it is a strange performance: even the quotations are vigorously selected to fit the theory.

This method has two particularly unfortunate consequences. The first is the analysis of China's foreign policy. Unable to swallow maoist antics in Chile, Angola, Iran etc they explain them by the failure to extend the critique of Bolshevism to embrace foreign policy and by 'the separation of discrete policy areas so typical of Bolshevism'. Material interests don't come into it, for that would pose the problem of whose material interests. Instead it is all just a survival of Bolshevism.

The second is the analysis of Russia. Everything that the authors have written at the beginning of the book about the relations and forces of production and about the state should, if it were developed, lead them to the view that Russia today is state capitalist. But no, they insist that Russia remains a socialist country.

In order to support this view

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books on
Marx &
Marxism



our authors at last, and in contrast to the rest of the book have to resort to some facts. "It is necessary", they say, "to be brutally and insistently empirical". This empirical analysis consists of precisely one paragraph 'proving' that Russia is socialist by virtue of the fact that there is no inflation and living standards have risen.

Here idealism is replaced by rampant empiricism. The facts selected are termed 'great facts of working-class experience' to inflate their importance and the other facts of working-class experience such as low wages, shortages, the absence of workers' control, and workers' rights in general are passed over in silence.

After all this is this book worth reading? At £8.95 it is hardly worth buying. But it is worth glancing at the first three chapters (in a library) for certain ideas which, in other hands, could be integrated into a serious Marxist analysis. *John Molyneux*

Bringing it all back to life

Eleanor Marx
Volume 1 Family Life
1955-1883
Volume 2 The Crowded
Years
1884-1898

Yvonne Kapp
Virago Vol 1 £3.95 Vol 2 £4.95

Inspired biographical writing, created with devotion to and empathy with its subject, can bring alive the meaning and practice of socialism much more than dozens of dusty tomes on political theory.

This is particularly true of Yvonne Kapp's two volume biography of Eleanor Marx, now published in paperback by Virago (it was originally published in hardback by

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Lawrence and Wishart). It will now stand alongside such works as Deutscher's *Trotsky*, F.P. Thompson's *William Morris* and Cliff's *Lenin*, the fourth and final volume of which is to be published this month.

The first volume covers Eleanor Marx's formative years in the material poverty but exhilarating spirit of the exiled Marx family in London, ending in the year of her father's death in 1883.

We gain fascinating insights into the Marx family's life in London, the friendship with Engels and the attempts to build international links across Europe. Passing through their house, frequently overstaying their welcome, were the bright young sparks of the defeated Paris Commune in the years immediately after 1871.

The second volume covers her life as an active revolutionary. Here we see her as a committed socialist in first the Social-Democratic Federation and then the Socialist League. As working-class struggle rose at the end of the 1880s we see her as one of those who transcended the limitations of the small socialist sects throwing herself into the East London agitation.

Unlike many of her contemporaries in the middle-class socialist milieu of London she was at the centre of the new unionism of the semi-skilled and un-skilled workers. Her efforts were acknowledged when she came first in the poll for the executive of the Gasworkers Union.

On Christmas Day 1889 she wrote to her sister Laura Lafargue:

"... For my own poor part, look you, life seems to be becoming one long strike. First there was the dock strike. No sooner was that over than I was summoned to Silvertown, and for ten mortal weeks I travelled daily to that out-of-the-world place: speaking every day, often twice a day, in all weathers in the open air. I began to hope for peace... when lo! the Gas Strike begins... I am a member of the Gas Workers and General Workers Union, and Secretary of a Women's Branch which I started in Silvertown, and that takes up no end of time.

"How this strike will go it is difficult to say... The blacklegs in the works are getting very unmanageable. 132 were seriously burnt (through lack of skill) in one week... Things are moving here at last, and though

the methods differ from those on the continent, the movement is none the less certain."

Her optimism had been forged in a long apprenticeship: through the inspiration of her father, and her research for *Capital* in her long association with Engels; among the exiles of revolutionary Europe; but most of all by the potential demonstrated by working-class struggle in the 1880s.

Her creative but ultimately destructive relationship with Edward Aveling is described with clarity and sympathy by Yvonne Kapp. Eleanor Marx's suicide in 1898 reflected more than a lover's betrayal. Kapp shows how Eleanor's despair was moulded by the crushing of her optimism.

The working-class advance was stemmed by the employers' offensive of the 1890s. Engels died in 1896 severing her connection with her father's generation. That tragedy for her was reinforced by her antipathy for the increasingly crude

interpretations of Marx's writing in Britain and throughout Europe.

Above all these volumes are much more than biography. They bring to life the politics, aspirations and set-backs of two generations of socialists, the old guard (post-1848) of the 1860s and 1870s and the new socialists of the 1880s and 1890s.

With the skill of a playwright Yvonne Kapp weaves into the narrative the huge numbers of characters that filled Eleanor's life, from the communards of Paris to the young leaders who organised the unskilled into new unionism. She discussed Shakespeare with Bernard Shaw, sexual politics with Olive Schremer and Havelock Ellis, unemployment with William Morris and internationalism with Clara Zetkin.

Within her life, cut short though it was, she knew and discussed with socialists who took part in the revolutions of 1848 and were to take part in the revolutions of 1917 and 1919.

In her own right Eleanor was a talented activist, speaking up and down the country on all manner of socialist topics, working as a journalist especially on international issues, as an organiser in the working class, and as a pamphleteer. One pamphlet that she wrote with Aveling, *Shelley's Socialism* is currently in print (from The Journeyman Press).

But what this biography also, and unwittingly, brings home, as it reveals the connections and the continuity of revolutionaries through the nineteenth century to the end of the 1st World War, is that revolutionary socialists today are the children of a missing generation.

The international defeat of working class in the 1930s and 1940s broke the continuity. These books can, however, help us find our roots. Yvonne Kapp deserves all the praise she has received with their publication. *Alastair Hatchett*

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C is for compete, cheat

CAPITALISM

Nigel Harris

Capitalism is a world system governed by competition. Of course, people 'competed' before capitalism was invented. Feudal lords competed to build the largest castles, to capture the largest number of serfs or kill the largest number of soldiers in other lords' armies. But that was just a small local affair, and, for much of the time, it left the serfs much as before, poorer but essentially the same.

Capitalism is the first society organised exclusively on the principle of competition between people, between firms, between States and between groups of States. It drives everyone. For the capitalist, the drive is not so that he or she can eat more. Most capitalists receive so much, they cannot possibly spend their income on consumption—a fifth car or a fifth house is hardly worth the effort. The drive is to survive. Unless the capitalist continually reinvests, he is liable to be bankrupted.

The capitalist is not interested in what happens to what he produces, only in whether he can sell it at a profit. For the profit determines whether he can then invest and whether he can survive against his rivals. The drive for profit, not the drive to produce goods which people need, is the central principle. It is that which perpetually transforms our lives.

One day, the revolutionary breakthrough is the invention of the steam locomotive. Steel railway lines spread out across the country like a web, smashing their way through cities, ploughing across the fields, tunnelling through mountains. Thousands of people are pulled into making trains, building lines and stations.

But scarcely a lifetime later, it is the petrol engine, the car, which suddenly explodes. The miles of railways, platforms, tunnels, become ghost towns. And then men and women who manned them become redundant. Now motorways gouge out the fields, oil refineries flare in the night, giant tankers nose their way into ports. Thousands more, sons and daughters of those who built the railways, are sucked into a new industry. Only to find—as in British Leyland—that capitalism has moved on in the feverish search for profit.

It does not matter what sort of a person

the capitalist is. Perhaps he thinks he is human. He reads poetry at the weekend and falls in love. He worries about the hungry, and is kindly to the old and sick. But in his office, he has few choices. He mans a machine that consumes people, and if he does not consume people as ruthlessly as his rivals, he also will end up redundant. The machine must constantly be rebuilt, wages constantly reduced as a share of the costs. And if people starve, there is not time to think of it.

The capitalist is not just one man or woman. It is also the state. Indeed, today only the state makes it possible for the individual capitalist to survive. The employer cannot lower wages on his own—he needs the state to introduce an incomes policy or a wage freeze. And the state needs to do so to cut the prices of its exports—to defeat its rivals, other states.

In the past companies hired private armies to beat up their rivals and to frighten workers into accepting the dictates of competition. States have always meant armies and policemen to do the same thing. War is the 'most advanced' form of competition. Neither the capitalists nor their state are willing to wait to see if the market will favour them. All of them are into cheating to make sure they win—and if they look like losing, then pure physical force will be used.

In the 1820s, Lancashire millowners did not wait to see if Indian weavers would be bankrupted by British competition: they hired thugs to 'cut off the hands' of the weavers. General Motors did not wait to see whether the car would defeat tramways in Los Angeles: they brought up the tramways and tore up the lines. Rich farmers don't wait for prices to fall in a bumper harvest—they burn the wheat or plough in the cabbages to make an artificial scarcity.

If people starve, that is just a regrettable necessity. Full granaries and empty stomachs always go together in capitalism. For the starving have only their need—they don't have the money to buy, the money to ensure the profit. Without profit, the capitalist always finds it cheaper to destroy what his workers have made. Wheat is not grown to be eaten by the hungry: it is grown solely to be sold.

But capitalism is not simply the sacrifice of needs to profits, of workers to capitalists. It breeds a culture that soaks into every pore of society. It drills into every head the perception that the survival of each one of us depends on defeating every one else. If you can't overtake them, at least push them down till they drown.

The competition inevitably generates nationalism let us all rejoice when foreigners starve: it breeds racialism: the only good Indian is a dead Indian. Competition divides us all into separate competitive units so that profits remain king. Each individual is driven every day to calculate his or her saleable potential. For how much can I sell myself, how much as I worth in cold pounds or dollars or yen?

And then the market says: "Nothing! You are worthless—too old or too young or too stupid or too clever or too ugly or too beautiful". In the logic of competition, the unemployed face despair and suicide, removing themselves from a market for which, in any case, they do not exist.

The logic of the market, however, cannot conquer all. Capitalism can survive only insofar as competition continues to expand the whole system. Then it can buy people's tolerance if not their love. But a system of production for exchange, for profit, not use, can in no way guarantee infinite expansion. On the contrary, it guarantees slump.

Just as the cabbages are ploughed in, so now people are thrown in the scrap heap. The ethics of capitalism—you can win if you fight hard—now return to fight capitalism. Survival for the majority means they must unite. All the competitive squabbles on the shop floor have to be overcome for the shop to fight. Unity is forced on the squabbles by the logic of capitalism itself—unite or die separately.

But it is not now simply unity of the shop, nor between shops, nor between workplaces. Unity between the peoples of different States, all gripped in a single world capitalist system, is the necessity.

Capitalism can be destroyed but not in one factory or one country. A change in one factory or country does not conquer competition. It is a small temporary step—a vital step forward, but only one step.