

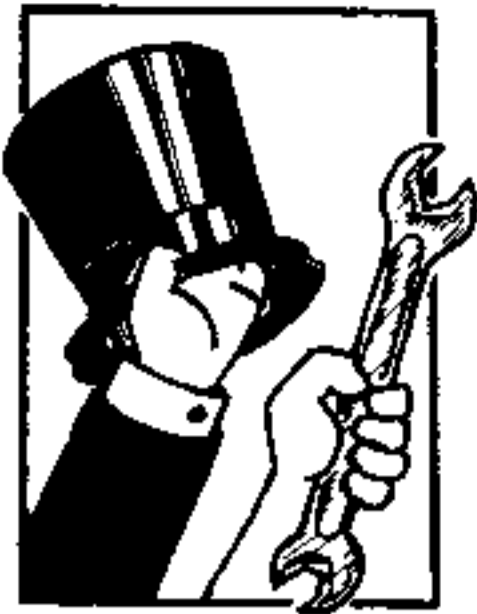
socialist
REVIEW

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18 January - 18 February 1981: 1 - 50p

Labour, Poland,
Women in
Sci-Fi



**Ireland
after the
hunger strike**



Class struggle

Strike statistics 1980: Not quite, Sir Geoffrey

When Sir Geoffrey Howe is able to start the new year with a message glorying in the fact that 'industrial disputes are fewer than at any time in the last 30 years' it is easy to become despondent about the class struggle in 1980 and its future course in 1981. It would be even easier to look at the evidence on strikes last year and conclude simply that the downturn in organisation and militancy we described towards the end of 1979 has now been translated into the virtual disappearance of resistance to the employer.

But the future does not look as rosy for the Tories or the employers as they have been making out; 1980 was a year of very serious reverses for workers' organisation, alleviated by a few striking successes for militancy, notably in the print and on the docks, and most recently at Gardners. And despite a fantastic decline in the apparent level of struggle in engineering and car factories, we need to emphasise that there was a continued undercurrent of strike activity and resistance, symbolised by a series of stoppages at Longbridge, and that the 'high' level of struggle which the statistics show in 1979 was almost entirely caused by the employers' taking on workers and not the other way round.

The point is that even though 1980 was exceptionally grim, and 1981 looks little different, there is the continued existence and activity of militant minorities despite more than two million adults on the dole, half a million on short-time, and the worst depression since the mid-1930s.

On occasion the minority has been very large, as in the coalfields when, despite the virtual absence of an active left campaign against the pay offer, and a lot of confusion about the offer itself, there were some 91,000 miners who voted 'no' (as compared to 107,000, in a higher poll, the year before). At Leyland, again despite heavy recommendations to accept 6.3 per cent, there were thousands prepared to defy Edwardes and the government and go out on strike - even at Cowley, where militancy was supposed to have vanished.

The figures on strikes - which halved in the months following June and the onset of rapidly increasing unemployment and short-time working - do not fully reflect reality. The reality was a continuing employers' offensive, not of a fundamentally different character to 1978 and 1979 when there were succession of victimisations, lock outs and employer-provoked disputes. The reality was of a number of small, long, bitter disputes, almost all defensive and almost

all lost, a very few large stoppages, or near-stoppages, and continuing shop floor unofficial resistance to management - for example the 254 stoppages in 198 working days that Mr Paul Roots, Ford employee relations director, described in a letter to all Ford workers announcing new penalty clauses on November 5.

A typical example of what happened is in September/October last year, the period surrounding the TUC congress and the moment when Tories and employers alike were insisting on the collapse of militancy. The most important development was the national dock strike declaration, organised entirely at rank and file level, which forced the employers back and made the Tories make more money available as a subsidy.

'If our side appears weak, our opponents are in an equally demoralised state ...'

The most impressive element in this was the way in which the victory was followed up in the docks. Liverpool shipwrights followed up with action over redeployment of dockworkers; there was a boilermakers' strike over three redundancies in the port of London. Most important was a strike in Grimsby over the sacking of seven fish handlers, with the support of dockers in Immingham. This was then followed by the Hull dockers voting unanimously to come out - and the employers' capitulation.

In the same period there was the strike - and mass picket - at Ayrshire Marine Containers over victimisation; the London journalists' dispute over London weighting; the Birmetals and King Henry's Bakery disputes; mass pickets by ladders at Milford Haven; three disputes at Longbridge over work allocation; a strike at Ford Swansea over work allocation; the end of a three-month strike by boilermakers at Vickers in Barrow over productivity payments; and the national stoppage by contract crane drivers against a 15 per cent pay offer.

Of course most of these disputes were defensive, and most ended in defeat or very partial victory. But the features of past militancy and experience were present on a wide scale: mass pickets, solidarity action, quite a high respect for picket lines, proper strike committees etc... just as later on there were several occupations, most notably Gardners.

So although the dominant impression

from the past 12 months has been gloom, a decline in strike activity and so on, there has been quite a lot against the stream, a number of substantial signs that given favourable circumstances and good organisation, important victories can still be won. But they are still isolated victories.

The central problem remains an overwhelming lack of confidence in people's ability to fight back, relieved only when workers see signs of an upturn: 'No Money, No Metro.' Mass unemployment and short-time are intimidating people, but the effect soon seems to wear off at the moment.

Again, though wage increases have come down with a bump, most employers have tended to pay out the maximum they can afford - they do not yet on the whole have the confidence to push their luck. And some of the wage increases need to be looked at in context. For example, all the lorry drivers' settlements have been at very low levels - 3-6 per cent - but the fact that nearly all drivers have a guaranteed 40 or 45-hour week means they can still be taking home quite good money even if there's no work - as for example in South Wales. Another feature is that employers are on the whole still having to pay for productivity and for changes in work practices, and there has been a fair amount of resistance - mostly pretty passive - to demands for wholesale changes. Employers' attempts to copy Edwardes-style management (though Edwardes didn't invent it) have generally not worked - for example at Gardners and at Hopkinsons.

The remarkable thing about the recession - as the CBI continues to point out to the Government - is that profits are still suffering more than wages. Manufacturers are having to forego price increases but still put up wages, even if only by 7-10 per cent. It is only very exceptional companies, like GEC with massive amounts of cash in the bank, which have been able to increase profits in the last six months. If our side appears weak, our opponents are in an equally demoralised state about the long-term prospects.

The new year has started with a series of moves by major employers - BSC, British Airways, Michelin - to get workers to give up wage rises for three to six months, effectively a 'voluntary' pay freeze. If they get away with it, this could become very popular. There are effectively similar moves going on in companies offering longer-term pay deals - 18 months or two years with links to the cost of living or staged rises. The interesting thing about this is that employers are attempting to ride out the recession and use the threat of the big stick to con workers - the Gardner approach. If workers are prepared to dig in their heels over this there is a chance that further small but significant victories could come in the next six months, and the isolation of successful struggles might begin to break down.

Dave Beecham

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Edited by Chris Harman

Assisted by Colin Sparks, Simon Turner, Pete Goodwin, Norah Carlin, Sue Cockerill, Stuart Axe, Jane Ure Smith, Dave Beecham, Gareth Jenkins, Jill Poole, Jon Bearman, Christine Kenny, Jim Scott, Andy Durgan Peter Court.

Theatre: Susan Pearce

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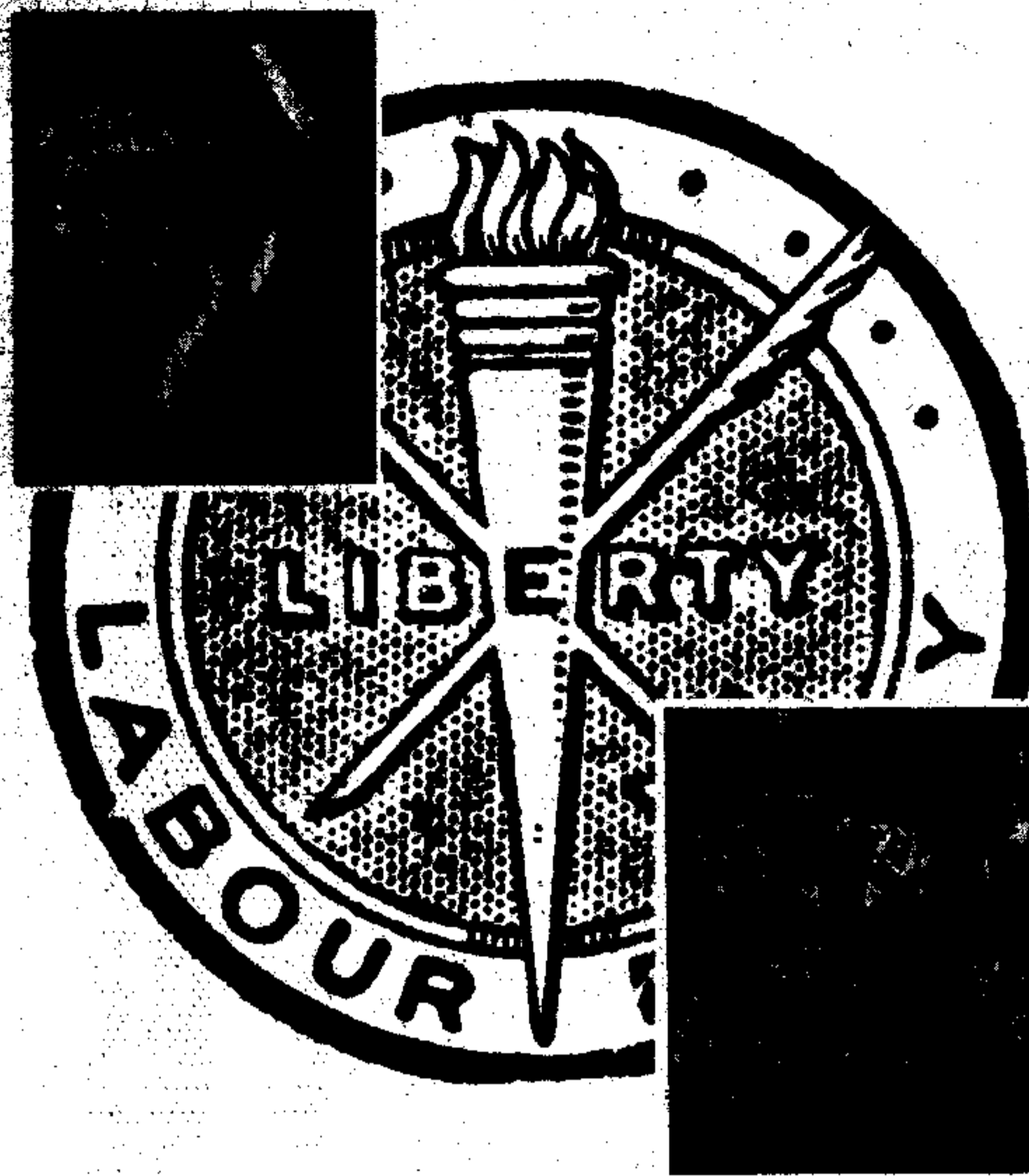
Produced by Peter Court, Neil Martinson, Christine Kenny

Business Pete Goodwin, Jane Ure Smith

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A focus for anger?

The special Labour Party conference takes place as this issue of *Socialist Review* is published. We don't know what the outcome is going to be, and speculation at this late stage is idle. But what is clear is that the attitude of many people on the left is changing compared to a couple of years ago. The huge demonstration against unemployment in Liverpool is to be followed by another in Glasgow on 21 February.

Duncan Hallas answers some questions on the significance of such events. He begins by commenting on the changing attitude of workers towards the Labour Party.

The Party certainly provides a focus for anti-Tory feeling and this is in itself a change compared to 1970-74. Then the Heath government was unpopular enough among very large numbers of workers but the Labour Party failed to grow. Taking its own official figures, for what they are worth, it had 681,000 individual card holders in 1969 and 665,000 in 1973. The party actually declined slightly, on its own data, during this period of tremendous working class struggles—the biggest since the 1920s.

Even in voting terms the same is true. In February 1974 the Labour Party actually lost over half a million votes (540,148) compared to 1970 (and in 1970 it lost nearly 900,000 compared to 1966). These losses

have not yet been recovered. In May 1979, at 11,457,079, it was 107,000 down on February 1974. And the electorate was growing in this period.

Now I think we can expect a reversal of the trend, certainly in voting terms and quite probably in membership. Admittedly, there is not a great deal of hard evidence yet apart from the Merseyside demonstration, but what there is points that way.

It is not simply the impact of Thatcher, mass unemployment, cuts and so on. After all, unemployment more than doubled to reach 1,500,000 under Callaghan. It is the combination of Thatcher and the downturn in the level of direct industrial action.

At the risk of oversimplification we can say that in the 1970-74 period workers (or many groups of workers at any rate) had confidence in their own ability to beat off Heath's attacks—hence the tremendous strike wave, the Tory Industrial Relations Act and all the rest.

Now, in the face of deepening slump and with the whole heritage of the social contract and its effects on working class solidarity, that confidence is lacking.

We have the paradox that a lowering of working class confidence and self-activity is producing a certain politicisation from which the Labour Party benefits. People have to have some hope and the very lack of

self-confidence tends to overcome some of the profound cynicism towards the Labour Party produced by the Wilson-Callaghan government between 1974 and 1979.

Bob Wright made the point in the last issue of *Socialist Review* that his campaign against Duffy was as well organised as any of those that had led to left victories in the AUEW in the past. Nevertheless, Duffy won hands down. That is a measure of the forces that are pushing workers towards the Labour Party, in spite of all recent experience of Labour governments. But whether these will result in any really powerful left current *inside* the Labour Party is another matter. It depends on other factors.

Foot and especially Benn received rapturous applause in Liverpool. Has the party really moved to the left?

Undoubtedly. And the most important thing about it, from our point of view, is the breakdown of the Labour-Tory political consensus (with the Tories always edging rightwards) of the 1974-79 period.

For years and years the Labour Party—the Labour government—argued the capitalist case; more productivity, wage control, against 'unofficial' strikes and even official ones, unemployment is inevitable in present circumstances, inflation is the main enemy and inflation is due mainly to wage rises, NATO and the American alliance are the safeguard of peace and so on and so forth.

In opposition, and under the impact of the slump, much of this reactionary claptrap is being cast aside. Denis Healey too, made an aggressive anti-Tory speech at Liverpool.

Good, never mind that for the moment, the question of their sincerity or otherwise. The important thing is that they now argue that mass unemployment is *not* inevitable, that there is an alternative to Thatcher's reactionary policies. This makes it very much easier for us to argue the socialist case to much larger numbers of workers.

We are no longer a small minority but part of a much bigger anti-Tory movement.

Of course, it would be very foolish to believe that the Labour Party has undergone any great political transformation. It has not. What we are seeing is a revulsion against the conservative policies of the last Labour government. Last time round (1970-

74) a similar revulsion against the experience of the 1964-70 Labour government led to the adoption of *Labour's Programme 1973* which the Bennite theoretician Stuart Holland says he wrote—and there is no reason to disbelieve him. The Labour Party then officially accepted the Bennite programme. The next year it was in office and we all know what happened.

True, there are significant differences this time. The economic crisis is much more severe. The Labour lefts have gained a serious organisational success—re-selection of MPs (even if it is watered down a bit) and some of the extreme right wing of the PLP look like peeling off soon (or being peeled off).

In spite of Foot's efforts to unite the party around a leftish rhetoric with little specific content it is entirely possible that the Labour left can push the party further leftwards. But we should be clear what this means. It would be a leftism in the strictly reformist tradition.

Moreover the serious right-wing is not going to split. Denis Healey and his friends are staying on and preparing for the future. Above all, remember Terry Duffy and all he stands for. He is more important than all the gang of three and their friends put together. The Labour Party is not going to change very much while the right wing is dominant in the union bureaucracies, even if the rhetoric is more radical.

It is said that the change in the mood of the Labour Party offers golden opportunities to revolutionary socialists who join it. What do you think?

Of course the change of mood offers us opportunities, but *only* if we preserve a clear political identity *outside* the Labour Party. But since there has been a marked drift of ex-revolutionaries (and some who believe they are still revolutionaries) into the Labour Party it is as well to re-examine some of the entrism arguments.

Lenin's advice to the British CP in 1920 is often pressed into service to justify entrism. He urged the CP to *affiliate* to the Labour Party (or to, fight for affiliation), *not* to dissolve its own organisation. He did not entertain *for one moment* the view that the Labour Party could be won to a revolution-

nary position. In the very speech so often quoted to support entrism he says:

'... The Labour Party is a thoroughly 'bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie which exists systematically to dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns (The murderers of the German revolution, DH)'

His case was that the Labour Party—then growing fast in the aftermath of the first world war—was an *arena* in which to fight the reformists for the political souls of the *larger numbers of newly politicised workers then forming it.*

He stressed the point, true at that time, that:

'It is not at all a party in the ordinary sense of the word. It is made up of members of all trade unions ... and allows sufficient freedom to all affiliated political parties ... The Labour Party has let the British Socialist Party into its ranks, permitting it to have its own press organs in which the members of the self-same Labour Party can freely and openly declare that leaders of the party are social-traitors.'

And of course, he expected the CP to be expelled. 'Let the Thomases and other social-traitors, whom you have called by that name, expel you. That will have an excellent effect on the masses of the British workers.'

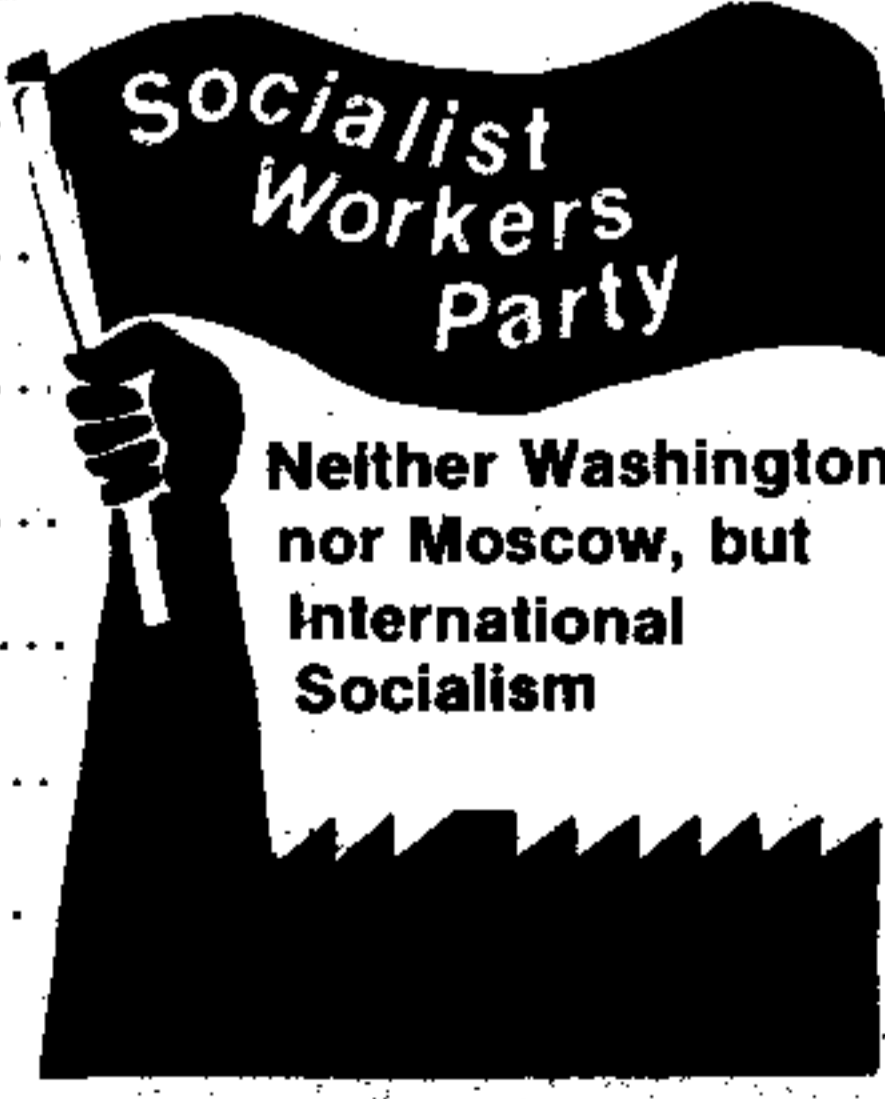
In short, he gave his advice in particular circumstances which no longer exist. In the successful struggle to keep out the CP in the twenties (for the CP followed Lenin's advice) the Labour Party *became* a party 'in the ordinary sense of the word': the independent affiliated parties (ie the BSP and the ILP) no longer exist, the LP organisation on the ground have replaced them and the experience of Labour in office has profoundly altered working class consciousness.

Naturally, formal organisational considerations would not be decisive if there really were tens of thousands of newly awakened workers struggling towards socialist ideas *inside the Labour Party wards.*

But there are not. The Bennite left, plus its Trotskyoid entrism periphery, has just held its annual meeting. According to *Socialist Worker* the officially reported membership of this Labour Coordinating Committee has *dropped* from 800 early in 1980 to 640 now! This does not mean that there is no substantial Bennite left. It does mean that it is not to be found (or is not active) in real strength in the Labour Party membership organisations. It has to be sought elsewhere.

So what should be the response of revolutionaries?

Look at the contrast between the massive turn-out at the Merseyside demonstration

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and the extremely feeble turn-out for the LCC conference (well under 200). The workers influenced by left reformist ideas came in force to the first and ignored the second.

Our central political task now is to relate to the sort of people who came to Liverpool, first of all in *activity*, second by political argument.

We have to seek out every possible opportunity for united action with them, whether it be at a local or national level, within a specific union or across the board.

Whenever they take an initiative—the Glasgow demonstration on 21st February for example—we must back it to the hilt, working loyally to make it as big and successful as possible *but* maintaining a clear and firm SWP political presence.

We cannot leave it at that though. We have to draw Labour people into the support of specific disputes—and they continue through the downturn. We could probably have done this more than we did around Gardners. We must do more in future struggles. And the pick-up (at long last) of 'official' movements against unemployment (e.g. the Liverpool to London march) does not mean that the Right to Work Campaign's less necessary. On the contrary, it must be broadened as much as possible in order to keep up the momentum of the agitation.

Any chance of bringing Thatcher down in the next year or two depends on the direct action of important groups of workers. That is how Heath was brought down. That is where we have to try to direct the efforts of anti-Tory activists.

This united front approach is not a trick or a clever manoeuvre. We genuinely and wholeheartedly believe in the aim of creating a great anti-Tory movement—that is what Foot says he wants. At the same time we are convinced that for the working class struggle to lead to worker's power, a revolutionary party with massive roots in the working class is indispensable. We say this openly and straightforwardly. We have the great advantage over the entrists of being able to tell the truth openly at all times.

At the same time we do not make ultimatums, we don't *contrast* building the party with the day to day struggle or building an anti-Tory movement. We aim to build the SWP *through* these things, left reformist workers believe that there is an easier road, that the Labour Party can be made to do the job. Very well, the test is always in practice. Joint activity, joint work to revive the working class movement is essential. We can all agree on that. And we must combine it with fraternal discussion and, to repeat, for that the independent SWP presence is essential.

the myths that the Ripper has perpetuated is crimes are attacks on women by men. One of that violence on women takes place on the streets, after dark, by a complete stranger; hence the police advice to stay at home or go only with the protection of a man. Over three quarters of reported rapes happen indoors, and the majority of rapists are known to the women they attack.

Large numbers of women attended the demonstrations in Leeds, Manchester and SE London, but the marches were not without arguments over slogans and tactics. The media characteristically emphasised the most controversial slogan—Curfew On Men—in the reports.

The demand for a curfew on men is understandable but wrong. It arose as a response to police advice to *women* to stay at home after dark—even though the Ripper is a *man*. And a curfew on women going out alone has effectively existed in Yorkshire, while elsewhere many women will stay in unless they are sure of a lift home or own a car.

But to argue seriously for a curfew on men is absurd. One of the dangers of the Ripper hunt has been of the police using it as an excuse to harass people and to gain information which can be stored on computer. Stopping people in the street and demanding to know who they are, where they are going, with whom they associate, etc, is clearly an infringement on basic liberties. Imagine what it would mean for black people, for example.

But apart from the practical implications of demanding a curfew on men, the ideas behind the slogan are dangerous. The slogan assumes that all men are the enemy, or else all men should be punished for the actions of a few. Shouting 'Curfew on Men' isn't so far removed from shouting 'Off with their rocks', and it certainly leads directly from the argument that all men are potential rapists. Now this is only true, in the sense that almost all men have the ability to subdue and rape women. By arguing along those lines women are playing into the hands of the protagonists of 'divide and rule', and are making no serious attempt to

Violence against women:

However we dress, wherever we go ...

Several weeks before Christmas a survey of cinemas found that 80 per cent of all films showing in central London had a similar theme. They all showed women as helpless victims, whose sole reason for existing was to be terrified and humiliated. They were films like *Dressed to Kill*, *When a Stranger Calls*, *He Knows You're Alone*.

The survey was made soon after Jacqueline Hill was murdered by the Yorkshire Ripper in Leeds last November. The media reacted to the Ripper's 13th killing with outrage. They stressed that she was 'decent', 'a nice girl,' out at a 'respectable hour'. They assured the public that the police were doing everything possible to catch the Ripper, and they implied that when he was caught, the problem of violent attacks on women would go away.

The women's movement reacted to the death of Jacqueline Hill with *real* anger, *real* outrage. Demonstrations were organised at short notice in Leeds and Manchester. Spray painted slogans began to appear on the walls up and down the country: Women Say No to Male Violence; However We Dress, Wherever We Go, Yes Means Yes And No Means No; and (the contentious) Curfew on Men. Red paint was thrown at a cinema screen showing *Dressed To Kill*. The media responded by accusing these angry women of 'countering violence with violence' and branded them 'hysterical'.

The women's movement has always campaigned against sexual violence, sometimes armed with radical and divisive slogans. But

since Jacqueline Hill's death the issue hasn't only been confined to feminists; women everywhere have been making the connection between the Ripper and their fear of walking home after dark or being hit by their husbands/boyfriend/lover.

The Ripper case is not the be-all and end-all of violence against women, as the police and the media would have us believe. Hundreds of women are attacked every day. Twenty-five per cent of all reported violent

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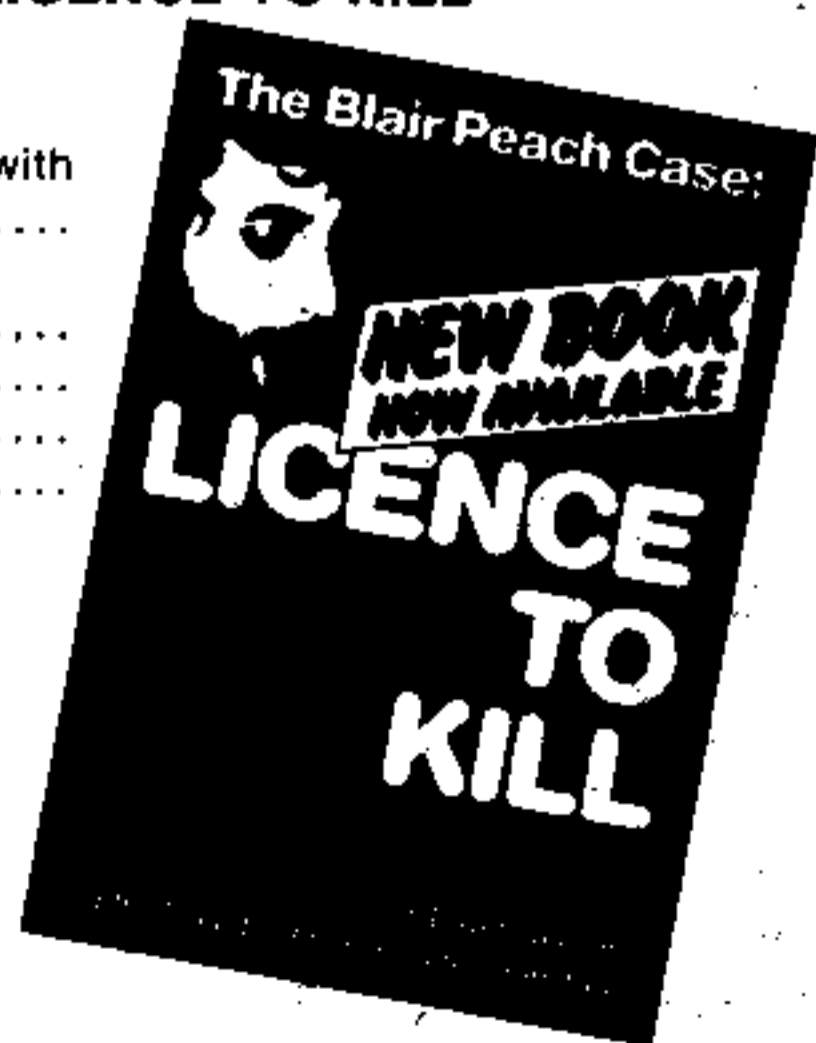
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build for a future where women can walk the streets without fear.

But until we get to that future women will have to rely on self-defence measures to protect themselves. The arguments most commonly used against self-defence are ones such as 'It's not much good being a black-belt in karate if you're hit on the head from behind' or 'A knife may be used against you.' The effectiveness of any particular form of self-defence depends on the situation; but the overriding effect of carrying aerosol cans or knives or of being nifty at blows to the back of the neck is greater confidence.

The biggest shortcoming of the response

of the women's movement is the failure to relate violence against women to the economic recession as well as to the ideological image of women. The temptation is to put it all down to misogyny.

As more and more people join the dole queues, it's known that there is a marked increase in domestic violence—anger and frustration that is most easily expressed by hitting someone near to you. At the same time public spending cuts are making street attacks on women easier. Suburban public transport services are disappearing fast, late night buses are becoming rare sights. Street lighting in London is now dimmed late at night, and Manchester council are consider-

ing turning street lights off after 11pm as an economy. The recession means more women are working twilight shifts—going to and coming back from work in hours of darkness. These factors don't cause violent attacks, but they increase vulnerability.

By placing the issue of violence against women within a broader context of economic recession, as well as discussing women's images and women's oppression, it should be possible to redirect the anger away from men as oppressors and towards this society as the oppressor, and to turn the anger into the action needed for an alternative.

Harriet Sherwood



The economy

British capitalism on the rocks

British industry is not standing up well to the rigours of monetarism and a deepening world slump. Manufacturing output is already down to the level of 1968, and is still dropping. By comparison with most of the postwar period, when just a slowdown in the rate of growth was called a recession, that is astonishing.

The ITEM group have predicted (*Guardian* October 13) a fall in total output of 9 per cent, and of manufacturing alone of 16¼ per cent for 1979-82. (Comparable figures in 1929-32, worst years of the 'Great Depression' were only 7 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.) With a fall in manufacturing of 10 per cent in 1980 alone that could be optimistic. The latest OECD report expects another fall of 10 per cent in 1981, with unemployment reaching 3 million by 1982.

It is a mistake to blame all this on just the Tories. All crises work unevenly, hitting the least efficient bits of the system most sever-

ely. With its poor investment record, and productivity levels on average half that of its major competitors, British Capitalism has long been especially vulnerable to any world slump. At the end of 1979 manufacturing firms were in a very precarious state, suffering a record financial deficit (largely money owed to the banks). A slight push from rising interest rates was sufficient to send the economy spiralling downwards.

Here, therefore, as in the US, the monetarist squeeze simply helped to precipitate a slide which started earlier and will go deeper than elsewhere. North Sea Oil makes the figures look better but is adding to the problems. With prices set at world levels, the immediate benefits have gone to the oil companies whose profits are now running at about 40 per cent of the total. At the same time the attractions of an oil currency and high interest rates have drawn in large sums of hot money from the world financial mar-

kets. The consequent rise in sterling has made exports more expensive and imports cheaper.

One estimate (*Financial Times* 7/11/80) is that the competitiveness of British goods has worsened by at least 22 per cent this year. The lag in export orders means that is only now beginning to hit British industry very hard indeed.

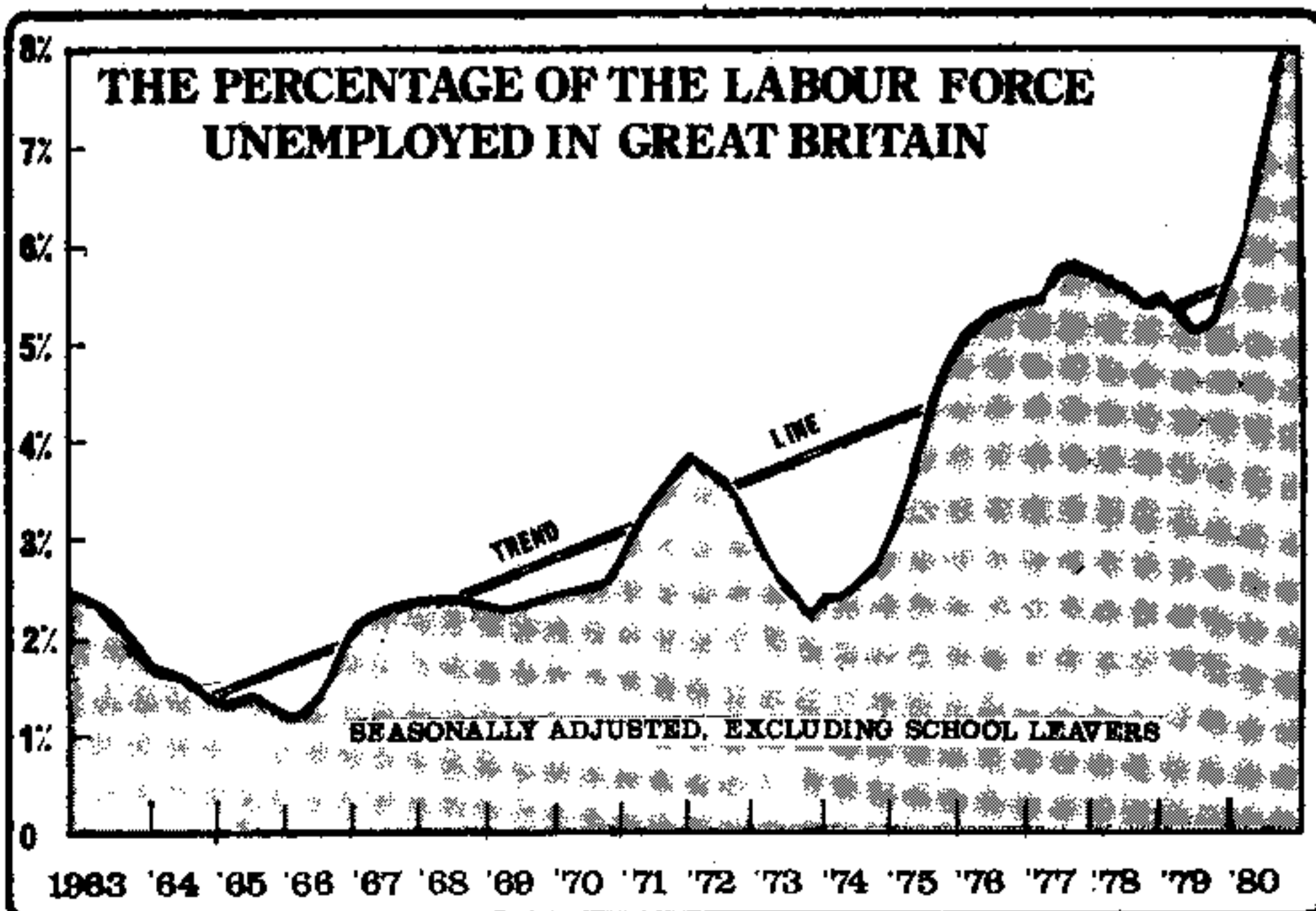
Industries in trouble

Textiles, shipbuilding, steel, Leyland and Talbot—those parts of British capitalism with chronic structural weaknesses have accelerated their decline. Textiles is a good example of where a decade of rationalisation and a loss of 220,000 jobs have not sufficed. The threat is no longer from the sweatshops of South East Asia, whose exports have been kept under firm European-wide control by the Multi-Fibre Agreement. Instead it is coming from the US which has rationalised even more successfully, and from the sweatshops of Italy inside the EEC itself. Courtaulds, for example, has seen its profits for the first half of the financial year drop from £30.2 million to £2.8 million, and has sacked 25,000 workers (25 per cent of the total).

As for the state-owned British Steel and Leyland, they're just going to go on losing money, whatever the likes of Edwardes and MacGregor do. British Steel's output is down to less than half that of a year ago. To be profitable even the much-vaunted Metro has to meet impossible sales targets, in Europe as well as Britain, at a time of falling overall demand. Keeping them alive is just worsening the problems of world overcapacity in both industries. Letting them go will have an horrendous impact on the rest of British industry as well.

What is notable about this slump, however, is the way it has hit the supposedly strong and healthy sectors of British industry. In chemicals ICI declared its first ever loss in the third quarter of this year. In computers, ICI, supposedly thriving after years of government support, has just announced a 47 per cent drop in profits. The motor components industry has long had a large export surplus, but has been hit by the steady decline of the British-based motor industry as a whole (down from 1.9 million cars a year in 1972 to an estimated 800,000 in 1980).

Firms in the components sector such as GKN, Lucas and Dunlop are now making



almost all their profits on the basis of their overseas operations. Having steadily shifted the bulk of their new investment abroad they are in no danger of collapse, although Dunlop was in severe trouble last year. The effect on the West Midlands, however, has been devastating with unemployment rising more rapidly there than anywhere else in Britain.

There are a few exceptions to this sorry tale. Firms in defence and aeronautics-related industries such as Plessey and Hawker-Siddeley have been doing well. GEC has also seen its profits rise, but this is largely because it put its massive £600m cash surplus into the financial markets rather than risk expanding productive capacity. The one place it is investing is in the US where the falling dollar has made assets cheap.

The GEC example suggests a general pattern. While stock market prices have remained high, manufacturing firms have found it very difficult to issue new shares. The banks have done well but at the expense of the firms they have been lending to. Insurance companies and pension funds have plenty of money but will do anything rather than put it into most of British industry and risk losing it. Since the lifting of exchange controls in 1979 they've sent £1½ billion out of the country. It begins to seem as though most of the British ruling-class are taking their money and abandoning a sinking ship.

As the discontent at the last CBI conference, and the growing restiveness among the Tory 'wets' should indicate, matters are not so simple. Capitalists don't write off existing assets just like that. They want to see their profits restored, and that's what monetarism is supposed to provide.

The dilemmas of monetarism

In one respect the Tories are clearly succeeding. It is the working-class that is bearing the brunt of the crisis. Wage settlements of 8 per cent or less with inflation staying well into double figures will certainly help ease the squeeze on profits. Unemployment is also sapping shopfloor resistance to speed-ups, the erosion of trade-union organisation, the introduction of new technology and further job loss. The loudest cries at the CBI conference were for matching cuts in public-sector wages and welfare spending. The government soon responded to this appeal with the six per cent limit. But it is a common mistake on the left to conclude from this that monetarism could work—that British capitalism could recover at the expense of British workers.

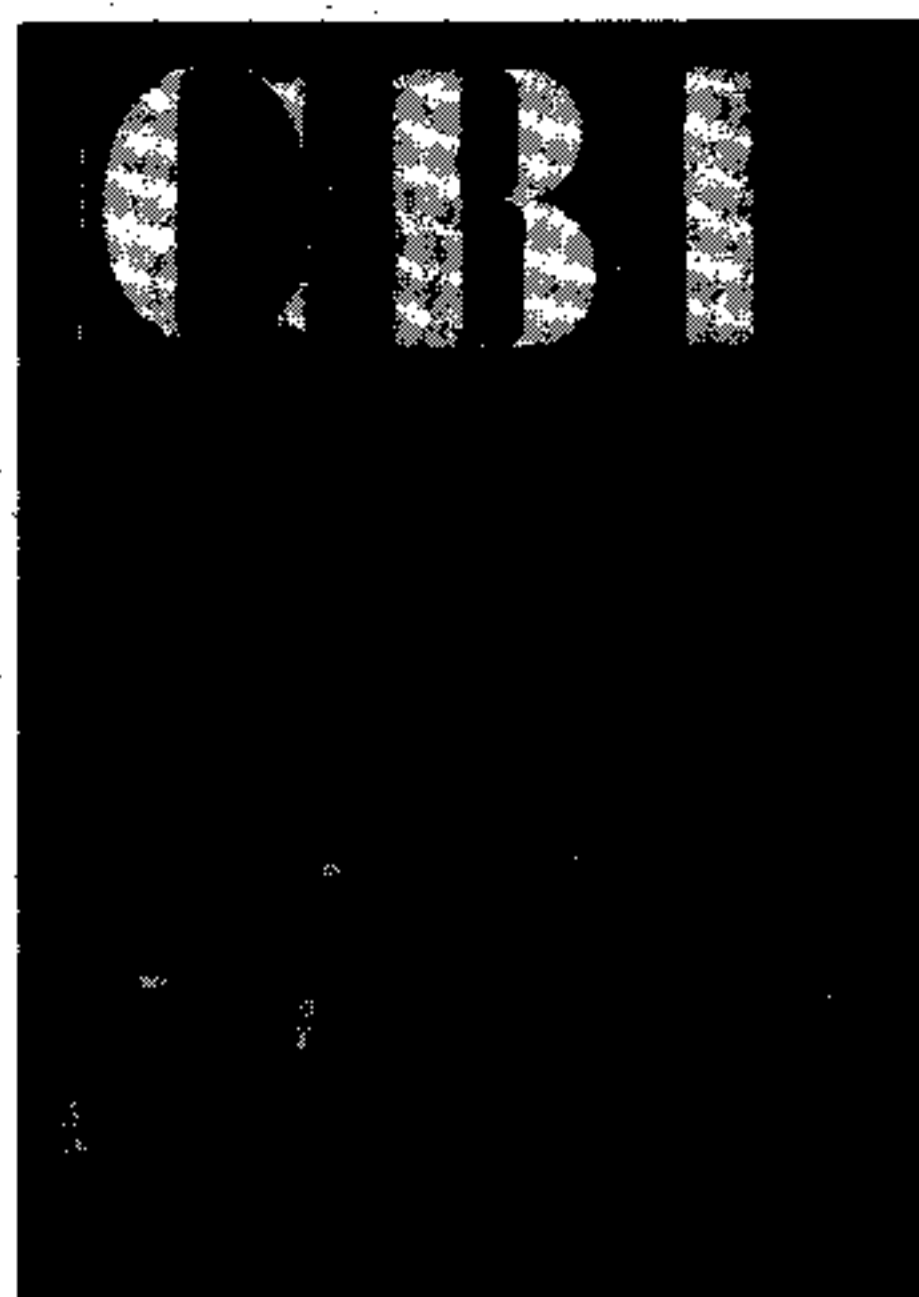
In fact 'monetarism' is caught in an insoluble dilemma. Cutting through the rhetoric and the technicalities, monetarism is the crude idea that left to its own devices (except when the unions get uppity) the market can work. That means allowing, even encouraging, the slump to develop. The aim is not just to hit wages but also, and crucially, to eliminate the weak and inefficient sectors and firms, leaving space and resources for those that remain.

The problem, especially in an economy like Britain's which by world standards is overwhelmingly weak and inefficient, is that

the scale of the slump required to clean out the system can be enormous. It can also get out of hand. As wages fall and unemployment rises so consumer demand gets squeezed further. Even if wage cuts help profits firms are not going to expand production. Investment will be concentrated, as it is now, on simply replacing workers by new equipment, pushing unemployment up even further.

In practice the Tories have gone on propping up the lame ducks for fear of the consequences. For all the closures and redundancies, money is still being pumped into Leyland and British Steel. Nor has the monetary squeeze been that severe by Milton Friedman standards. The proclaimed monetary targets have been vastly exceeded. Bank lendings to firms in trouble went on rising in 1980 regardless of interest rates. The public sector deficit (which the government has to borrow from the banks to cover, thereby also expanding the money supply) has also risen with falling tax-revenues and increased spending on defence and social security. Yet a further tightening could only have meant an even more catastrophic slump.

Attacked by the City for being too soft, by the CBI for being too harsh, and by all and sundry for being incompetent, the Tories are now desperately looking for cuts which will not hit the private sector directly. That can only mean a further assault on education and services, public sector jobs and social security benefits. With North Sea oil revenues beginning to flow they'll be able to cut taxes on companies and the rich even more. But that won't get to the roots of the prob-

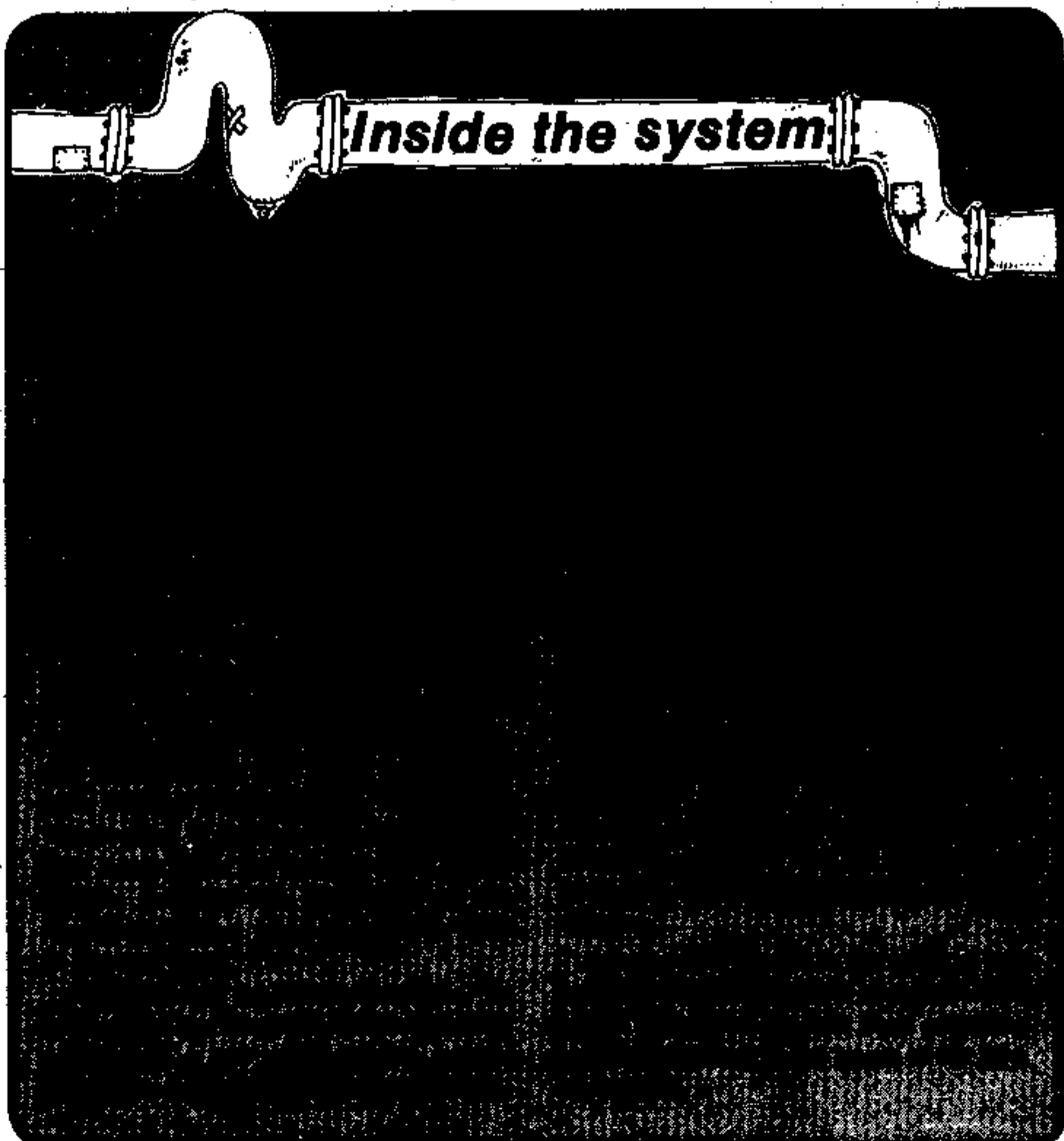


CBI conference 1980

lem of British industry at all.

The prospects for the world economy over the next few years are of continued stagflation, with short booms and lengthy slumps. For the British economy, as one of the weak bits of the system, prospects are dire. Recent commentaries have suggested that the slump might be bottoming out. Yet the impact of the sterling rise on exports is only just beginning to be felt, capital investment is still falling, and much of the world economy including West Germany and Japan is only now entering into recession. There are grim but exciting times ahead.

Pete Green





Uganda

Obote Mark II

As political comebacks go, Milton Obote's was a smart one—messy but smart. The first election in 18 years, marred by thuggery and cheating (to say the least) produced a thumping majority for Obote's Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) with the right wing Democratic Party (DP) and the smaller nationalist, Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) left standing by the wayside. Obote became the first African leader to be toppled in a coup and then restored to power in an election.

But it was an election not about issues but about personalities and that was a legacy of colonialism. The British left a small but growing African middle class, in an externally oriented economy, committed to the extension of its commercial activities for which it needs the support of political parties, civil servants and the army.

Political alliances are formed within it (in many cases on ethnic bases) to control the levers of the state machinery and to share political/economic patronage. In the period from independence in 1962 to the coup by Amin in 1971 personalities dominated Ugandan politics. In the recent election both the main parties promised similar things—a pro-Western, mixed-economy administration—and preached the same theme about reconciliation and national reconstruction.

In such a political atmosphere politicians become ruthless and determined to win. Principles go out of the window. The UPC won because it was more efficient in its organisation than the DP and had the government media, the army, the militia and the civil servants on its side.

The British media make a great play of Obote's past 'radicalism'. But his record shows anything but that. Milton Obote became prime minister when the country gained independence from Britain in 1962. He soon became embroiled in a dispute with the head of state, the Kabaka (King) of Buganda. In 1966 Obote suspended the con-

stitution, abolished the Buganda state and the other monarchies and took all power with the help of his army chief General Idi Amin. He proclaimed himself head of state the following April, banned political parties and ordered arbitrary arrests. In the process he got rid of the left in his own party.

In 1969 in a move to regain popularity he announced a 'move to the left' and the 'Common Man's Charter'. The substance of the plan was to nationalise all the import-export trade and take a 60 per cent ownership in manufacturing industries. In spite of the rhetoric used these nationalisations were really an attempt by the state to enter into partnership with multinationals. In fact, some companies (including the Madhvani Group, the biggest Indian commercial group in East Africa) had offered partnership on a 50-50 basis. For them 'nationalisations' meant an injection of state funds in the form of compensation, and state support for their enterprises. Their only 'loss' was offering directorships to Africans.

In the same 'move to the left', 'Ugandani-sation', meant almost all of Tanzanian and Kenyan workers, about 10 per cent of the urban workforce, were expelled from Uganda. And the right to strike was withdrawn—the reason being that now Ugandans were in on the decision making they didn't need to strike. But his 'move to the left' and his vocal opposition to the British arms sales to South Africa led to the Heath government getting rid of Obote. A replacement was found in Idi Amin.

Picking up the pieces

Now, nearly ten years later, his party managers say Obote is a chastened man. There won't be any excesses and nothing resembling a 'common man's charter'. Anyway he hasn't got a choice any more. There is very little to nationalise after Amin's trail of destruction.

Another legacy of colonialism was the enforced creation of a peasant-based, cash-crop economy designed quite specifically to service British needs. Coffee, tea and cotton employ the most people and are a major foreign exchange earner. The country's agricultural production rose at a commendable rate soon after independence. However, after nine years of Amin, coffee production dropped from 251,000 tonnes in 1969 to 120,000 tonnes in 1978. Cotton suffered the same fate; with production falling from the 1970 output of 76,000 tonnes to 15,000 tonnes by 1978. Needless to say except during the coffee price boom of 1976-77, export revenue declined accordingly.

Twenty months after Kampala was liberated, such basic commodities as salt, sugar, rice, flour, cooking oil and soap are still not generally available. The black market flourishes and prices keep rising. A bunch of matoke—plantain bananas, enough to last a

family for about four days, cost 80 shillings in November 1979, 200 shillings last March and 250 shillings today. Most workers earn under 1000 shillings a month. Meanwhile a few businessmen involved in the black market and the exchange market have become rich overnight.

To revitalise abandoned cotton ginneries, wrecked sugar estates and overgrown tea plantations, Obote has gone looking for new capital. The Commonwealth Secretariat and World Bank, who would give the green light to 'aid' donors, have been making conditions of the orthodox kind: devaluation and the creation of a favourable climate for foreign investment. Investors are being sought, and participation packages are being offered to the former owners of enterprises seized by Amin. The two big Asian families, Mehtha and Madhavani, have promised to rebuild their empires as 49 per cent shareholders with the government. The British firm Mitchell Cotts which owned half the tea estates in Uganda has been given the right to start its operations again without bringing in new capital.

Until now the 'aid' donors have refused to move in until political stability has been achieved. This Obote is likely to provide. The opposition DP is already bickering and some of its members are likely to join the UPC as happened in the 60s.

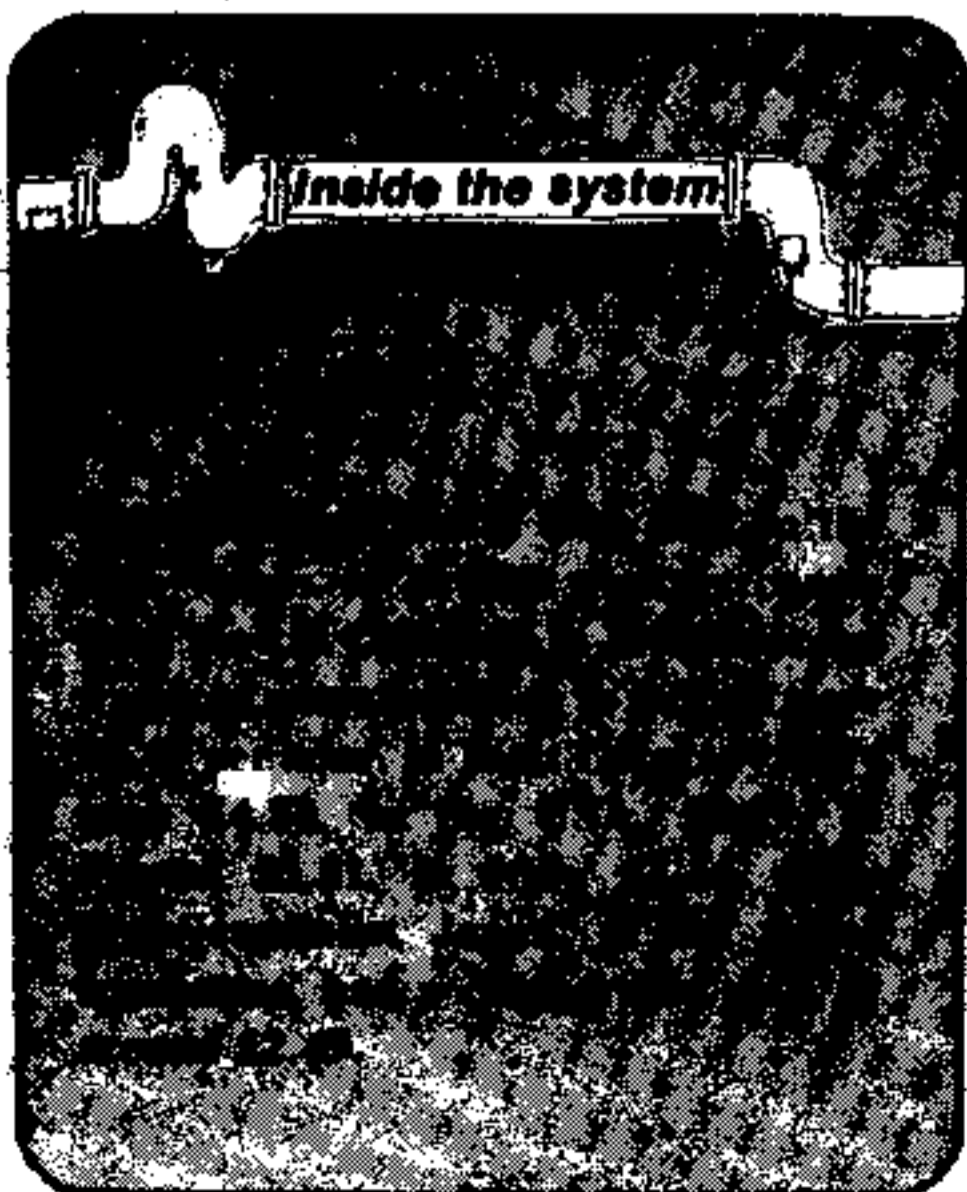
Perhaps the only good news in the political situation since Amin's come-uppance has been the formation of the Uganda Patriotic Movement—a loose front of left academics and trade unionists and former student leaders. It has campaigned extensively against the sterile politicking of the established parties, against corruption and against the type of politics based on religious or ethnic difference.

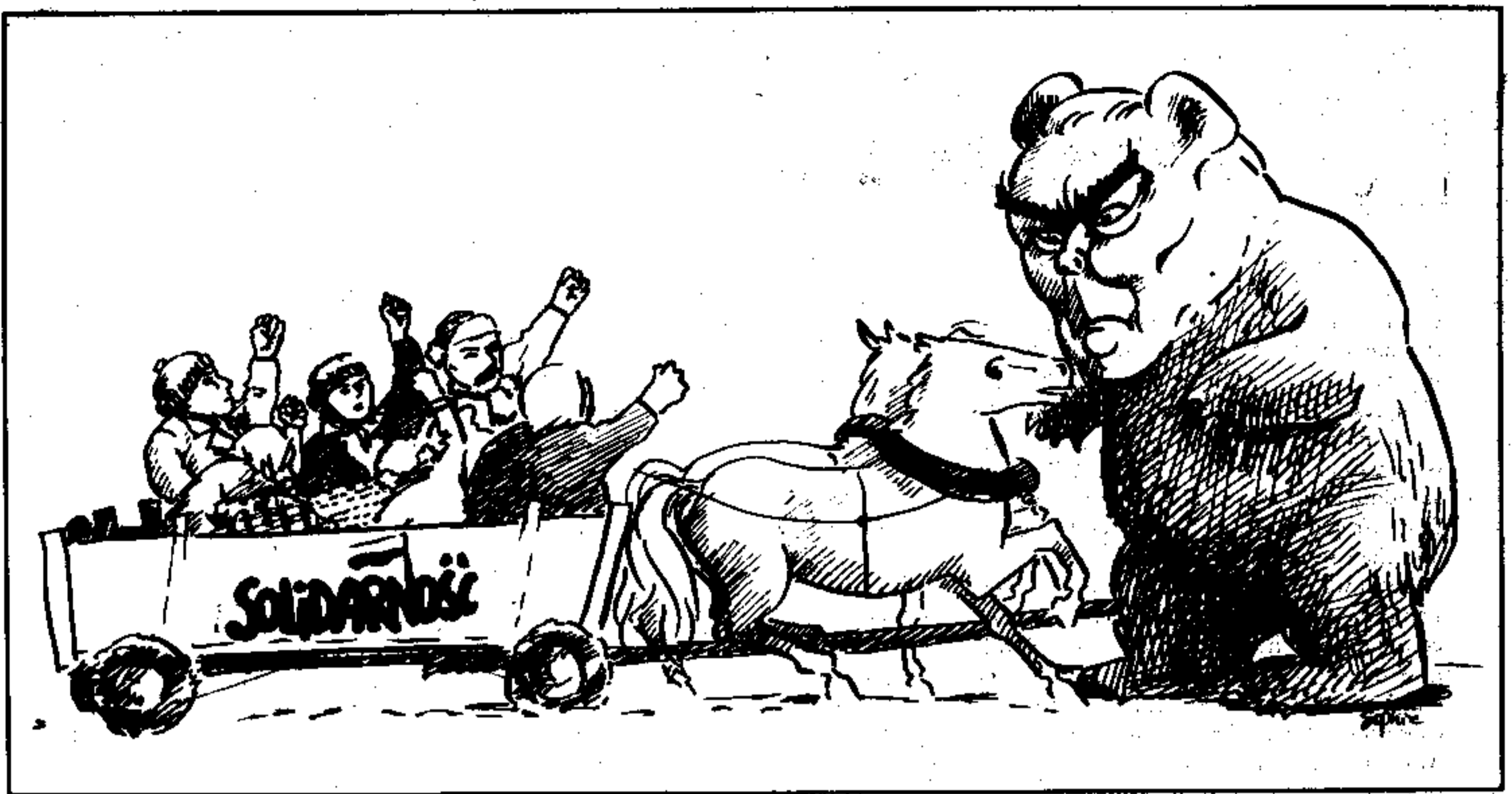
It is led by Yoweri Museveni, who trained with Frelimo when they were fighting the Portuguese in Mozambique. His group Front for National Salvation launched guerrilla attacks on Amin as early as 1972 from bases in Tanzania. Museveni's thinking can be summarised as follows: 'We shall have a mixed economy. We will encourage the African middle class, the nationalist elements, the national capitalist types, those who set up enterprises which are national-oriented and we shall discourage the comprador types, like the commission agents. The middle class can be supplemented by some state control in certain areas like the financial institutions, insurance, certain big industries'.

Hardly original. Various forms of the above has been tried in Tanzania and elsewhere with little success.

Museveni has been lately under criticism from socialists within the UPM. As vice-president of the Military Commission, the administration in power before Obote's victory, he has not found that life in the corridors of power has brought him any influence on important national decisions. His party's election failure is likely to increase critics of his leadership, who argue in a pamphlet for the UPM to return to the grassroots and to build from the factories and the estates. A breath of fresh air at last.

Bipin Patel





Brezhnev's headache

An absolutely solid response to the call to refuse to work Saturdays. The first use of police—fully equipped, with gas masks—to break workers' occupations of public buildings. Threats of protest strikes in the South East of the country. Press attacks on the peasant branch of Solidarity. The 'Christmas truce' in Poland didn't last long. What are the rulers of Poland—and Russia—going to do now?

Hardly was the Christmas break over than there were reports of new strikes in South-East Poland. Six months after the movement began last July, the power of the workers' new organisations is still the biggest headache the rulers of Poland—or of Russia—can remember having.

The scale of the problem facing the Russians can be seen if you ask a simple question: Why have they not intervened militarily yet?

They went into Czechoslovakia in 1968 when faced with political and social unrest far less deep seated than that in Poland today. In Prague, it is true, the intellectuals and the students were questioning the one-party state and were beginning to influence many workers. But the 'reform movement' was still very much under the influence of Communist Party leaders who deplored 'anarchy' and pledged loyalty to Moscow. The official unions remained intact, even if some bureaucrats were being replaced. The intellectuals' document *2000 Words* that so infuriated the Kremlin did not actually organise strikes, it only suggested token work stoppages *might* be necessary.

The Polish movement is completely independent of all sections of the regime. The official unions have been displaced by new structures based, usually, upon regular

meetings of delegates from the workplaces. Strikes take place all the time. The last attempt by the regime to limit the freedom of the Solidarity union—the attempt by the court to deny its legal registration until it changed its rules—ended with the regime having to use a higher court in order to cover a humiliating climb down.

Indeed, Kania is finding that the only way to avoid defeat when Solidarity pushes its demands is to pretend that his goals are the same as the union's.

The result has been consternation in Moscow. The Russian, Czech and East German press again and again bemoan the 'anti-socialist' forces at work in Poland and especially in Solidarity—the same tone as before the entry into Prague in 1968. Indeed, only once before have the Russians faced a movement comparable to the Polish one today. That was in Hungary in October 1956.

The Kremlin's fears

Events are unfolding more slowly now than they did then. But the direction is the same. Seasoned bureaucrats are having to make so many concessions to give the appearance of being in control of things as to threaten all the structures by which they've got their way in the past. As the structures are weakened, so other groups like writers and journalists are beginning to assert their independence from the regime, thus making any eventual reassertion of bureaucratic power more difficult.

If the Russians have not invaded, it is not because they believe any claims from Kania that things are well under control. It is because they are frightened of intervening as yet.

They are frightened, in the first place, of the resistance the Polish workers may put

up. Poland is a much larger country than Hungary or Czechoslovakia, and its people have a tradition of armed resistance to foreign domination. What is more, the country is strategically well placed to mount such resistance. The Russians do not want a repeat of Budapest 56 in a country with five times the population and a much larger and more sophisticated working class, straddled right across Moscow's communication lines with its forces in East Germany and the supply lines for its high technology imports from West Germany. They remember that the Warsaw uprising of 1944 held out against Hitler's empire for 63 days and they don't want to face similar resistance.

Pressure from below

They are aware, too, that the crisis throughout their bloc is much more serious than in 1968 and even than in 1956. Last year all the Eastern European countries experienced their lowest growth rates since the war, and in a few cases there were negative growth rates, real recessions. The various regimes have announced 'plans' for the next five years that involve at best stagnating real living standards, at worst cuts in real wages. People are grumbling not only in Warsaw, but in Budapest and Prague, Sofia and Moscow. The Russians recall only too well the strikes in their own huge auto factories at Togliattigrad, Gorki and Karma River last summer. There have been strikes and demonstrations since in Estonia and reports of discontent among tens of thousands of Czech miners close to the Polish border.

The Russians are in a dilemma. As news filters through to workers in the rest of the bloc of what Solidarity has won in Poland, the pressure is going to grow for similar organisations. But if the Russians move into Poland and do face massive resistance, the cost to themselves can be such as to provoke even more explosive disturbances behind their lines.

That is why at the time of writing they have not moved. Instead, they have allowed Kania a free hand to try a different strategy. It is one that relies on the *threat* of Russian invasion on the one hand, and on the other on co-opting the Catholic church and a section of the Solidarity leadership at the same time as scraping around in order to get enough resources together to alleviate the worst food shortages.

The strategy is not a new one. It was, for instance, the one used by the former fascists who ran Spain to avoid a Portuguese-style explosion after Franco's death. They offered a place in the political limelight to the leaders of the main organisations of the anti-fascist underground—the Communist Party, the Workers Commissions, the Socialist Party, the Basque and Catalan nationalist parties—in return for keeping the workers calm. And they ensured that rank-and-file workers were in a mood to accept the deal by pointing to the (exaggerated) danger of intervention by the extreme-right controlled army.

Preaching conciliation

In Poland the Catholic church especially has shown itself willing to deal with the regime. In return for increased recognition for itself, it has begun preaching conciliation between the authorities and the mass movement. Early in December, as Moscow stepped up its pressure, the Polish bishops issued a statement condemning 'actions which might expose the homeland to the danger of losing independence'. A church spokesman spelt out that the statement was aimed specifically at the leading dissident group, KOR, and the anti-Russian Confederation for an Independent Poland (*Guardian*, 13 December). Cardinal Wyszynski 'appealed for restraint and social peace'. Prayers along these lines were said in every church in the country (*Guardian* 15 December).

Shortly afterwards, a section of the Solidarity leadership repeated the same message. The best known leader, Lech Walesa told reporters, 'Society wants order right now. We have to learn to negotiate rather than strike.'

So when the government arrested some Catholic nationalist oppositionists, Solidarity took no real action, although it formed a sub-committee in support of the prisoners. And when the courts deferred recognition of the Solidarity peasants' union, the industrial leadership took no immediate national action—although workers in the South-East took token strike action.

Such calls for 'social peace' are very dangerous. Solidarity has gained its present strength because it has channelled behind it all the frustrations that have grown up under state capitalist rule—the resentments of millions of people at economic hardship, bureaucratic bullying, continual speed-up, petty corruption. If it tells those bearing such resentments to keep quiet, it is weakening its own base and preparing the ground for Kania or the Russians to move in to destroy the movement at a later stage. It is making the same mistake that the Dubceki-

tes made in Prague immediately after the Russian invasion, of agreeing to oversee themselves the bureaucratic 'normalisation' that Brezhnev wanted.

Yet the chances of Kania's strategy succeeding are not very great. In the case of Spain the transition to 'democratic' rule took place while the economy was still prospering, and the 'sacrifices' demanded of the workers was not very great. Perhaps more importantly, the social peace was enforced by a bureaucratised party, the Spanish Communist Party, with tens of thousands of dedicated, disciplined, followers and immense prestige after nearly 40 years of underground struggle. Solidarity is not (yet at least) that sort of bureaucratised, disciplined body. Its leaders were unknown workers six months ago and cannot cut themselves off from the rank and file that quickly, even if they want to. Although they bend one way under the pressure of the Russians, Kania and the church, they bend the other under the pressure of anger from below.

At the same time, the organisation of economic aid is not going as well as Kania would wish. The West Europeans want to help him out—both because they are afraid an upheaval in Poland would damage their growing trade with the Eastern bloc and because their bankers want to get back the money they've already lent. But the Russians are distrustful of any greater dependence of Poland on the West. They fear that this will begin to translate itself into political independence from themselves. They have been trying to exploit the crisis so as to push up Poland's trade with the rest of Comecon (currently only two thirds of its trade with the West).

El Salvador

Reagan's long-range war

The revolutionary forces in El Salvador have staged as national, insurrectionary offensive as we go to press. We do not know what the outcome will be. What we do know, however, is that it confronts Reagan with one of his biggest headaches as he takes over. The revolutionary forces in El Salvador are inspired by the Sandinistas in nearby Nicaragua, but according to most accounts, are more openly left wing and more closely linked to the country's workers. Jill Poole and Dave Becham look at the background to the insurrection and Reagan's options.

At the beginning of November last year an extraordinary document was circulated in Washington. Entitled *Dissent paper of El Salvador and Central America*, the document claimed to be written by officials within the United States State Department, CIA and Department of Defence. It opposed the majority view that the Reagan regime once in office should escalate American involvement in supporting the right-

In such circumstances, it is by no means certain even that Kania will get the food he needs to stop the queues in the streets of Warsaw turning nasty, with more strikes and, perhaps, riots.

The odds are that his overall strategy will fail. There will be more upheavals and confrontations. The regime will be faced again with the choice between diluting its own power and organising for repression. The Russians will get more and more jittery.

When this point is reached, the likelihood of Russian military intervention will be very great indeed. The costs will be high to the Russians, perhaps disastrously high. But that does not mean they will not intervene. It only indicates that the crisis in the Eastern bloc has reached a point where *any* option could open the door to revolutionary upheaval.

One final point. If the Russians do go in, the Americans are going to respond very differently to 1956 and 1968. They want an excuse to escalate the Cold War still further and to disrupt what they see as the potential danger of West Germany becoming too dependent upon Russia for its supplies of energy. And so, although they will not move militarily, they will mount a huge ideological barrage, portraying Russia as the greatest danger in the world.

It will be up to socialists to resist this barrage by joining opposition to Russian imperialism in Poland to opposition to US imperialism in Central America and elsewhere. We will need to polish up the old slogans: 'Imperialism Out, East and West', 'Neither Washington Nor Moscow, But International Socialism'.

Chris Harman

wing government in El Salvador, should move further to isolate the Sandinistas in Nicaragua; and in general should step up its opposition, both political and military, to any change in Central America.

Whether the document is genuinely what it pretends to be is still in question: what it contains, however, is a sophisticated analysis of an alternative policy. It argues that the Americans must strengthen their ties with Mexico—as Reagan has now done with Mexican president Lopez Portillo—and back reformist groups, as for example the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) in El Salvador (which retains considerable Christian Democrat and Social Democrat influence despite the presence of several revolutionary groups as well). This would put US policy in Latin America in line with its major NATO partner, West Germany, which has been diplomatically active in supporting the opposition to the ruling thug regimes. And more important, it would avoid conflict with Mexico, which continues

to support the Sandinistas, is helping the FDR (even though it subsidises the Salvadorean regime with oil) and has concluded a major economic pact with Cuba.

In place of escalating conflict and military involvement, the 'dissent' paper argues for what it calls the 'Zimbabwe solution', support for the FDR and a negotiated end to the civil war in El Salvador—as a clear indication to the other regimes in the area, notably Guatemala, that the US will not go along with the mass repression, murder and torture which have become endemic.

But it is what the dissenters reveal about current US policy and plans that is most important. It shows the considerable US involvement in supporting dictatorships which are carrying out a vicious policy of repression virtually daily; it shows how the Carter government—let alone the Reagan one—has believed in conniving with death squads in order to protect American capital's economic interests and US political interests. It shows in fact how Washington, just as much as Moscow, is playing the imperial game for much the same reasons and with very similar policy options.

Boosting the right in El Salvador

The document describes how the US has intervened on a number of fronts to bolster the right in El Salvador, illustrating how closely the situation there is monitored and how the country is treated as a virtual colony by Washington. On the political and economic front for example, the document details US activities such as:

'Expanding resource flow and tightening administration of agrarian reform programme to reduce its impact on traditional elite and to increase short term benefits to target population ... Expanding short-term resource flow to private sector to discourage current capital exodus and strengthen sector confidence ... Monitoring closely and moderating latent and open differences among members of governing Junta and the officers corps.'

Other initiatives have come on the diplomatic front. The dissent paper refers particularly to the Carter administration 'closely monitoring and feeding US and world media coverage of the region and publicising widely US confidence in current process in El Salvador'—a process which last year saw something like 10,000 killed, almost all at the hands of the 'security forces'.

More important, say the dissenters, is the way in which the US has moved to strengthen the armed forces:

'Setting up supply lines and stockpiling material in cooperation with regional and extra-hemispheric allies, providing strategic and tactical command advisory assistance, seeking to bring under unified command the paramilitary units operating in the country, establishing and/or improving communications and cooperation among armed forces and paramili-

tary organisations in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and making available US surveillance data pertinent to military developments in El Salvador to the armed forces.'

The document also describes how Washington has controlled press coverage, prepared contingency plans for military intervention in El Salvador and Guatemala and blockades of Cuba and Nicaragua. It notes specifically that the American government must have connived at the activities of fascist and right-wing terror groups throughout the Central American area:

'It should be noted that US intelligence has kept informed of the plans and capabilities of the paramilitary strike force in Guatemala. US intelligence has been in contact with Nicaraguan exile groups in Guatemala and in Miami and it is aware of their relationship with Cuban exile terrorist groups operating in the US. Charges that CIA has been promoting and encouraging these organizations have not been substantiated. However, no attempt has been made to restrict their mobility in and out of the US or to interfere with their activities. Their mobility and their links with the US—it seems reasonable to assume—could not be maintained without the tacit consent (or practical incompetence) of at least four agencies: INS, CIA, FBI and US Customs.'

Toughening The Allies

El Salvador has now clearly become the flashpoint for American strategy in Central America. The past few weeks have seen the first really coordinated 1500 strong guerrilla advance across the Honduras border. The conflict between Mexico and the US over attitudes to the Salvadorean opposition has become the most pressing public issue between the two governments.

Washington has moved to strengthen its position in other ways. El Salvador and Honduras patched up an 11-year-old dispute on October 30th, which dated from the 1969 'football' war (touched off by a match between the two countries). The agreement was designed to strengthen the Central American Common Market and the military coordination between the various states, chiefly Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras.

The Restraints on Reagan

From all this it might seem as though it must only be a matter of minutes before the Americans start pouring arms and men into Central America: as those familiar figures, 'US advisers', have already been spotted aiding the counter-insurgency forces. But there are some rather important limits on Reagan's freedom of manoeuvre even in countries in Washington's backyard which are virtual colonies. His team has been blowing hot and cold. At the end of November a delegation of Salvadorean businessmen went to see Reagan's advisers in

Washington and was told that the new administration would provide combat equipment if necessary. But in mid-December a Reagan Latin America specialist, Jeane Kirkpatrick, remarked that the Revolutionary Democratic Front would probably win. The problem is that every time the Americans try to shore up the regime by injecting a 'moderate' Christian Democrat, the junta lurches to the right, pushed by the actions of the military and a strong semi-fascist organisation.

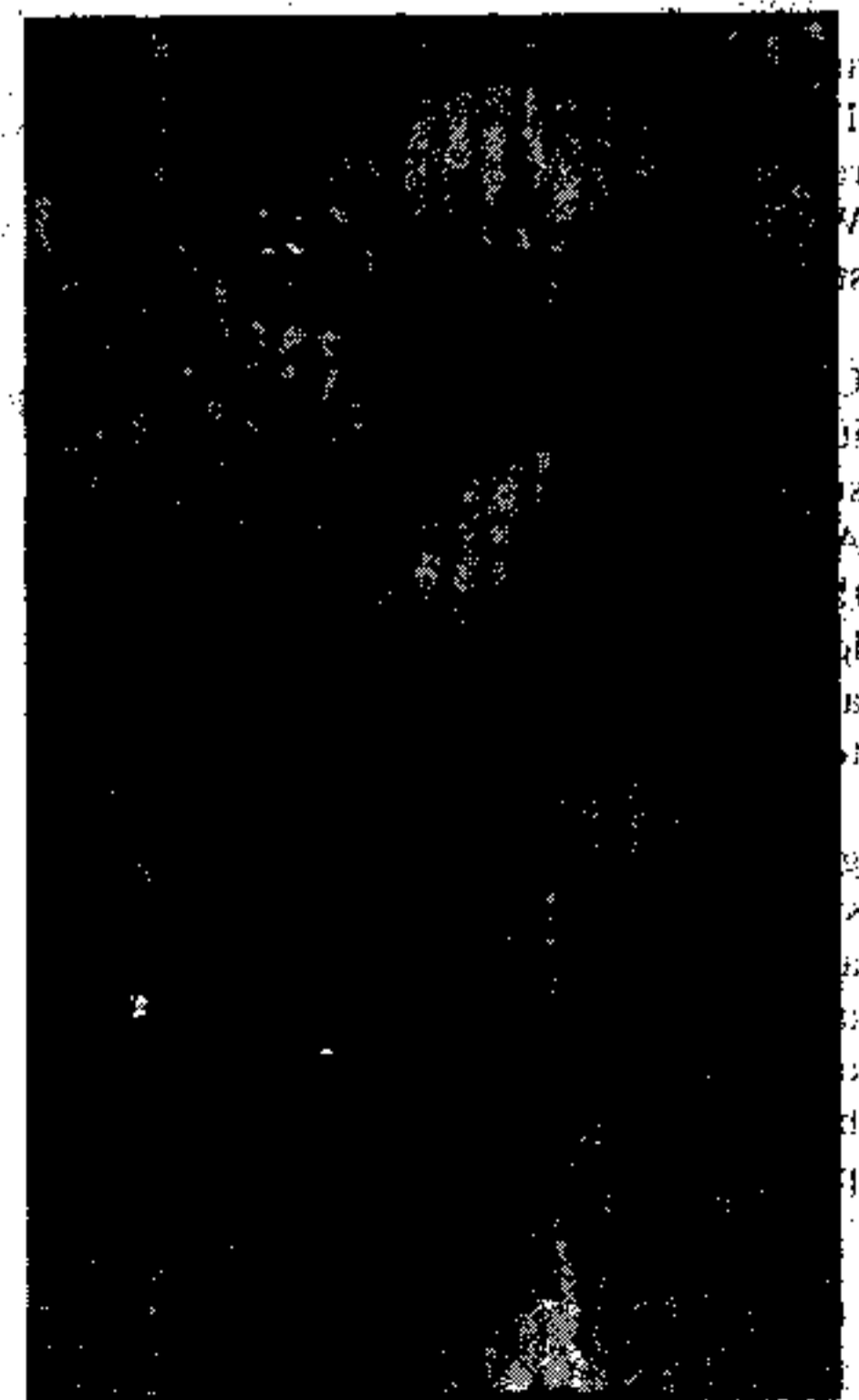
There is some similarity with what the Russians were trying to do in Afghanistan in the 18 months leading up to the invasion: trying to broaden the appeal of a regime with an ever-contracting political base.

A much more fundamental constraint on Reagan's overall strategy is the position adopted by Mexico. The Mexican ruling party recognises the Salvadorean political and guerrilla opposition, a lot of the arms going to the El Salvador guerrillas come through Mexico, and Mexico has a generous aid programme to Nicaragua. But Mexico is crucial to the whole US strategy in Central America (and indeed, to overall US strategy) because of massive Mexican oil resources now coming on stream.

So it looks as if Reagan will continue the Carter strategy for the time being, but with a much greater investment of resources in support of the existing regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The last word should perhaps go to General Pinochet in Chile, who commented on Reagan's election:

'In moments when humanity faces a great crisis, it is a hopeful sign for all nations, like ours, that hope to see the United States strengthen its leadership in world affairs.'



One of 500 women teachers who demonstrated in San Salvador last year to demand the release of comrades arrested by National Guardsmen



Poplarism 1919-1925:

Guilty and proud of it

The increasing crisis in local government has led to renewed discussion of fighting the cuts by means of Labour councils directly confronting the government by breaking or refusing to implement the law, and defying the ruling class to do its worst.

The example most frequently quoted of such successful defiance of law and state, alongside Clay Cross council in the early 1970's, is that of the old Poplar borough council in 1919-1925. They did break the law, they marched gladly to prison, and they won at least a few very important victories. Up until recently, 'Poplarism', like the Taff Vale Judgement, was part of the mythology of the labour movement: much referred to but little studied. An excellent book by Noreen Branson (*Poplarism 1919-1925*, Lawrence and Wishart £2.95) has changed that. Colin Sparks discusses what it can teach us.

The Labour Party, together with some people who were to join the Communist Party on its foundation a year later, won control of Poplar borough council in November 1919. They also won control of the local 'Board of Guardians', who administered the running of the 'Poor Law', as the equivalent of social security was then called. It was the first time they had controlled the council, and their victory was greeted with substantial popular enthusiasm by local militants. At the end of the first council meeting, the councillors and five hundred supporters, behind the local Irish band, marched around the borough in triumph.

The area certainly needed changing. It was a sink of bad housing, bad health, intermittent employment, grasping employers and general capitalist misery. Although the people who made up the new majority were divided on lots of issues, they were almost all convinced that socialism was a real possibility. They were largely manual workers. They had been active as socialists and trade unionists in the area for a long time. They had led many of the biggest local campaigns: strikes, opposition to the war, support for Irish independence, the emancipation of women. While they might not all have been British Bolsheviks, many thought themselves to be just that, and the ruling class certainly agreed with them.

None of them believed that it was possible to build socialism in one borough, but they acted to use whatever powers they had to improve the conditions of the workers.

They started a major scheme of local improvements, for example to the sewage system, both to improve living conditions and to give useful work to the growing army of unemployed. They instituted a £4 a week minimum wage for adult local employees, women as well as men. This was a very substantial improvement: by 1925, when the

House of Lords ruled it illegal, the £4 a week that a council charwoman got was roughly 78 per cent above that of other female workers.

They opened new public baths. This might not sound great today but, at a time when the vast majority of houses had no bathroom, it meant a great improvement in living standards.

They raised the level of poor relief well above the national level. Thus, a family of ten (not uncommon at the time) got 54 shillings a week everywhere else but 74 shillings and six pence in Poplar. In addition, they made many alterations in the hated 'means test': for example, they refused to take into account the whole of a child's income when assessing family income.

They used their control of the local government machine to help workers win local disputes. Thus, when in 1923 the dockers struck against a wage reduction, the headquarters of the unofficial strike committee was in the town hall. And the local Board of Guardians broke the law by paying out relief to strikers.

They started building council housing and kept the rents below the national average. They improved the electricity service and the library service. They appointed health visitors and distributed free milk to young children.

Naturally, there were different responses to all of this depending upon which side of the class lines you happened to be. On the one hand, local workers gave the council whole hearted support with votes and massive demonstrations. On the other hand, the local capitalists, the legal system, the government, and Labour right-wingers like Herbert Morrison, did everything in their power to smash them. There were a series of confrontations, the most famous of which led to the jailing of 30 councillors in 1921. The issue which they went to jail on was a very complicated one to do with the equalisation of rate revenue between London boroughs. But at its root was the fact that Poplar was spending large sums of money finding useful work for the unemployed. When denied grants to help pay for it, they simply refused to pay over money to London bodies like the LCC, the Metropolitan Police and the health authorities. In the end, their determined stand, their organisation in jail - they forced the authorities to allow them to hold council meetings in Brixton prison - and, above all, the mass support which was built up outside, forced the government to release them and to negotiate a compromise which gave them the money they had wanted in the first place.

Of these, support outside was by far the most important. An example was the actual arrest of the councillors. They made a politi-

cal decision that they would go to jail rather than resist arrest, since they believed that their presence in prison would be a more powerful mobilising focus than their hiding out. In fact, in order to ensure that the arrests could take place at all, the Sherriff had to negotiate with the councillors, since their houses were guarded round the clock by spontaneously-formed groups of workers.

The most spectacular arrests were the women councillors, who announced in the papers that they had informed the Sherriff that they would permit themselves to be arrested at 3pm on Monday 5 September at the Town Hall. There was a large crowd there that day, and the women had to work hard to allow their own arrest. Minnie Lansbury, for example, had been guarded round the clock by patrols of ex-servicemen who were of the view that she should not go to jail. The crushing argument came from Susan Lawrence, who retorted to a heckler who asked why they should let the women be arrested that:

'We are here representing a principle which we have a right to defend as well as the men. If you prevent us going you do us the worst turn you can'.

They pacified the crowd and made their farewell speeches. They then surrendered and were escorted down the East India Dock Road by a crowd of 10,000.

But the support spread far beyond Poplar. Delegations from all parts of the labour movement visited them in prison. The pressure was such that even Labour moderates like Clement Attlee were being forced into voting for the same sort of action as Poplar in other boroughs.

The stand of the Poplar councillors did not change the world, and eventually it petered out into the sands of parliamentary Labourism. George Lansbury, for example, was to end up as the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party after Macdonald's split away in 1931. Many others were to become dignitaries and ministers in various ineffectual bodies and governments. But, nevertheless, they did make some real gains and were undoubtedly looked to by many workers as one possible answer to their problems. They certainly provided a better alternative than the miserable gradualism of Morrison and the right wing of the party.

But to what extent does the experience of Poplar provide any guide in the fight against the cuts today?

There have been important changes in the powers of local government since then which make a simple re-run very much more difficult. Local councils no longer have any direct responsibility for the maintenance of the unemployed, so the most dramatic weapon available to the Poplar councillors in terms of making a real and concrete difference to the lives of workers, and thus providing a solid basis for support, has been removed. Again, councils today are much more directly dependent upon central government finance via the rate support grant. Thus the government has a very strong weapon which it is not loath to use. In

general, the centralisation of the state machine means that any local council today has very much less room to manoeuvre.

Other factors have to be taken into account as well. Poplar came under Labour control not as an isolated freak but as part of a general upsurge of working-class militancy after the end of the First World War. Its heroic period was concentrated in those years which saw massive class confrontations. As the class was smashed elsewhere, most importantly the unions with the defeat of the General Strike in 1926, the possibility of Poplar being able to fight as it did steadily receded.

This was the first time that Labour had won control of the local council. So the mass of workers had a much greater faith in the possibility of it doing something than they have today. Consequently, it was under continual pressure from the rank-and-file, among, for example, the unemployed, to actually deliver the goods. The councillors themselves were not practised in the bureaucracy of councils and prey to the wiles of professional employees versed in deflecting and stopping schemes of which they disapprove. Nor were any of the councillors sunk in the web of petty corruption that is so characteristic of all local government, irrespective of party, at the present time.

They were, in fact, people who had fought the class struggle for years without thought

of personal advancement or the belief that they were anything other than a menace to society. This showed in their methods of working. Not only did they accept jail as a normal part of the class struggle, they positively relished breaking the bosses' law. When they were accused of malpractice (ie paying high unemployment benefits) by the District Auditor, they published a pamphlet called *Guilty and Proud of It*. And they kept in much closer touch with the local labour movement than is usual today. The decision to go to jail was taken in conjunction with a conference of all local trade unions, and the eventual decision to back down from paying high wages was approved by a mass meeting of council employees.

Nor were they afraid to fight the right in the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucrats. For example, the dockers strike mentioned earlier was opposed by the TGWU leadership and Bevin, the general secretary, used all of his considerable powers to crush it. Despite that, the councillors, including a local official of the TGWU, backed the strike to the full.

In addition, one of the leaders of council, George Lansbury, was a nationally known figure in the labour movement and editor of the *Daily Herald*. It was thus relatively easy to mobilise support outside of the borough when the council was attacked. These factors together make the prospect of today's

Labour lefts repeating Poplar's stand remote. A much more likely outcome is that reported in a recent issue of *Socialist Review*, when Sheffield city council, after loud and militant noises and the mobilisation of some sort of mass support, backed down and sent its supporters off home to wait for the next election.

That, however, will not stop the idea floating around. To the extent that Labour leftists are keen on the idea and are serious about working towards such a confrontation, revolutionary socialists must work alongside them. And we will need to have concrete ideas about what to do.

Given the current state of the Labour Party, and the fact that the political experience of many of even the best members will be in the round of petty bureaucracy and committee meetings, the Labour left's initial response is likely to be internal to the Labour Party. They will argue that the first task is to pack the wards and manoeuvre on the committees in order to get the right balance of councillors with their hearts in the right place.

Against that, we will have to argue that the major task lies outside of the council chamber and the ward meetings. Without mass support from outside, the Poplar councillors would probably never have taken their stand and, if they had, could still have been rotting in jail to this day.

In order to have any hope at all of 'doing a Poplar', it is necessary to start where the Poplar councillors did. They began very modestly. Of the 30 councillors who went to jail, nearly half were, or had been, lay local officials in their unions. All five of the women had been leaders of the suffragette movement in the area. The trade unionists had built branches in a period when union organisation was a much more dangerous business than it is now. Some had been victimised for their activities. Many had led strikes. Most of them had fought for years a hard, isolated, uphill battle.

When they finally defied the state, they did so with the reputation both of people who had led real struggles and as people who had helped to improve conditions for working people.

Local Labour Parties today do not, in general, have that reputation. They are more often seen as part of the establishment, those responsible for the cuts, remote and distant from the struggles of workers. While people might vote for them at election times, they have very little of that organic relationship with the working class that Poplar Council had.

Labour councillors often use this as an excuse for not defying the government. 'Where,' they ask, 'would the support be if we went to gaol?'

From them it is a hypocritical argument, because it is precisely by their do-nothing approach that they perpetuate the weakness of which they complain. For there can be no doubt that systematic defiance by even one Labour council would be of immense importance in building a mass movement against the cuts.

But to make Poplarism a reality in 1981, rather than merely a rhetorical camouflage for bureaucratic inactivity, means doing the work in the unions and on the estates that made it a reality in 1921.



On the way to the High Court, 1921

Dirty mac sex for twelve-and-a-half grand

Catching a socialist with a copy of *The Sun* is like spotting Mary Whitehouse in the front row at *The Romans in Britain*. Just academic interest you understand... important to know what the enemy are up to.

But there is truth in that. *The Sun* does after all have the biggest sale of any British daily, reaching perhaps eight or nine million readers, most of them working class, all of them capable of more pleasant forms of self-abuse. If you're not one of them, allow me to remind you of its mind-bending banality. A couple of years ago, in the course of researching these matters, I spent some time studying the *Sun* and found this memorable week of centre-pages:

- Monday—Love and let die
- Tuesday—How to be a cool lover
- Wednesday—Super Chick
- Thursday—Your love stories
- Friday—Join the Knit Wits

These, a few million folk were being told, were major issues of the day. And in a sense, they were. For the *Sun* exists as a diversion for people numbed by the assembly line or the kitchen sink—and there is no bigger diversion than sex.

Of course, it is a version of sex that no socialists would want to accept, where women are women and men are on top, where sexuality is 'naughty but nice', where every man's dream and every woman's ambition is a big pair of tits and where such sexual 'liberation' sometimes seems worse than sexual repression. Not that there's really any difference.

And so the *Sun* makes sex its starting point for everything—and I mean everything. Have you ever seen any other paper that could produce two pages of a man walking a dog, two dancers and a couple holding hands, and head them 'China's Sex Revolution?' or turn the resignation of Miss World into the occasion of a cartoon attacking Tony Benn and Michael Foot, the latter—I kid you not—dressed in a bikini? Or headline the death of a young actress

'The Queen of Cleavage?'

This is dirty-mac sex, in which women are the targets, the objects, the victims, the non-human things placed in the shop window for the consumption of male oglers, the lusted-after Page Threes to be neatly positioned and then mentally 'knocked off', like sexual coconuts in a shy.

This is the link between the picture of the nude on page three, and the report of the rapist on page six. Never mind the ritual judgements on the 'beast' or the 'fiend' or the 'monster', observe how the *Sun* licks its lips over his deeds: '*The Bedsit Beast, Aged 15—Boy rapist on prowl with meat cleaver*'

The *Sun* both creates fantasies and feeds them, and they are fantasies whose central characters are always violent men and submissive women, fantasies which men like the Yorkshire Ripper turn into facts for the *Sun* to then reveal in all their salacious detail: thus does the vicious circle send circulation spinning.

The *Sun* is also rather keen on submissive trade unionists, on workers who lie down and think of England. And here it treads awkwardly, for it is written, typeset, corrected, printed, bundled and delivered by trade unionists, many of them the very fire-eating militants denounced daily on page two.

But it walks this tightrope with only the occasional twang to disturb it. Why?

Why are so many of the *Sun*'s workers so quick off the mark about their wages and so slow about how they're earning them?

OK—I know the standard socialist answer, so let me tell you a little story by way of illustrating a controversial point.

Last 14 May, the TUC and Len Murray in particular were savaged by the British press over the Day of Action. Quite rightly, a leading official of the National Union of Journalists issued a statement deploring the activities of his members who had hounded Murray all the way to Madeira; he singled out the *Sun*'s reporter for possible disciplinary proceedings.



The response of the *Sun* chapel to this somewhat miscued strategy was interesting: they went on record to defend their lumpen-brother and threatened the official with disciplinary action of their own.

But what was more interesting was the response of one of the most active and most political members of that chapel: he knew, he later told me, that the going would be rough—so he stayed away from the chapel meeting.

And he told this without the suggestion of guilt in his face or in his voice. He knew, and others like him know, that life on the *Sun* might have its repugnant side, but at £12,500 a year it also pays more bills than any other job he is likely to get. His spinelessness, and the apparent cynicism and indifference of the *Sun*'s journalists to that sewer they are daily asked to swell, has a connection with his bank balance.

Which brings me to my little point of controversy. Another journalist of my acquaintance—also highly political, but of altogether finer calibre and fibre—suggests that Fleet Street journalists are, quite simply, over-paid.

Their radicalism, their investigative instincts, their willingness to rock boats—if they ever had any—has been eaten away by the good life. It is no accident that all of the major investigative journalism of our day, the *Sunday Times* apart, owes its existence to small and impoverished sheets of the ilk of *Private Eye*, *New Statesman*, *The Leveller* and, of course, *Socialist Worker*.

Instead Fleet Street journalists, offer us, at the behest of the appalling Rupert Murdoch, a caricature of working-class Toryism—authoritarian towards the weak, grovelling towards the powerful, thankful towards the rich.

But they also (and this, I promise, is my final heresy) are very, very good at it: never has bullshit been so brilliantly presented.

As for Mr Murdoch, I look forward to the day when the *Sun* shines out of his hearse. Geoff Ellen

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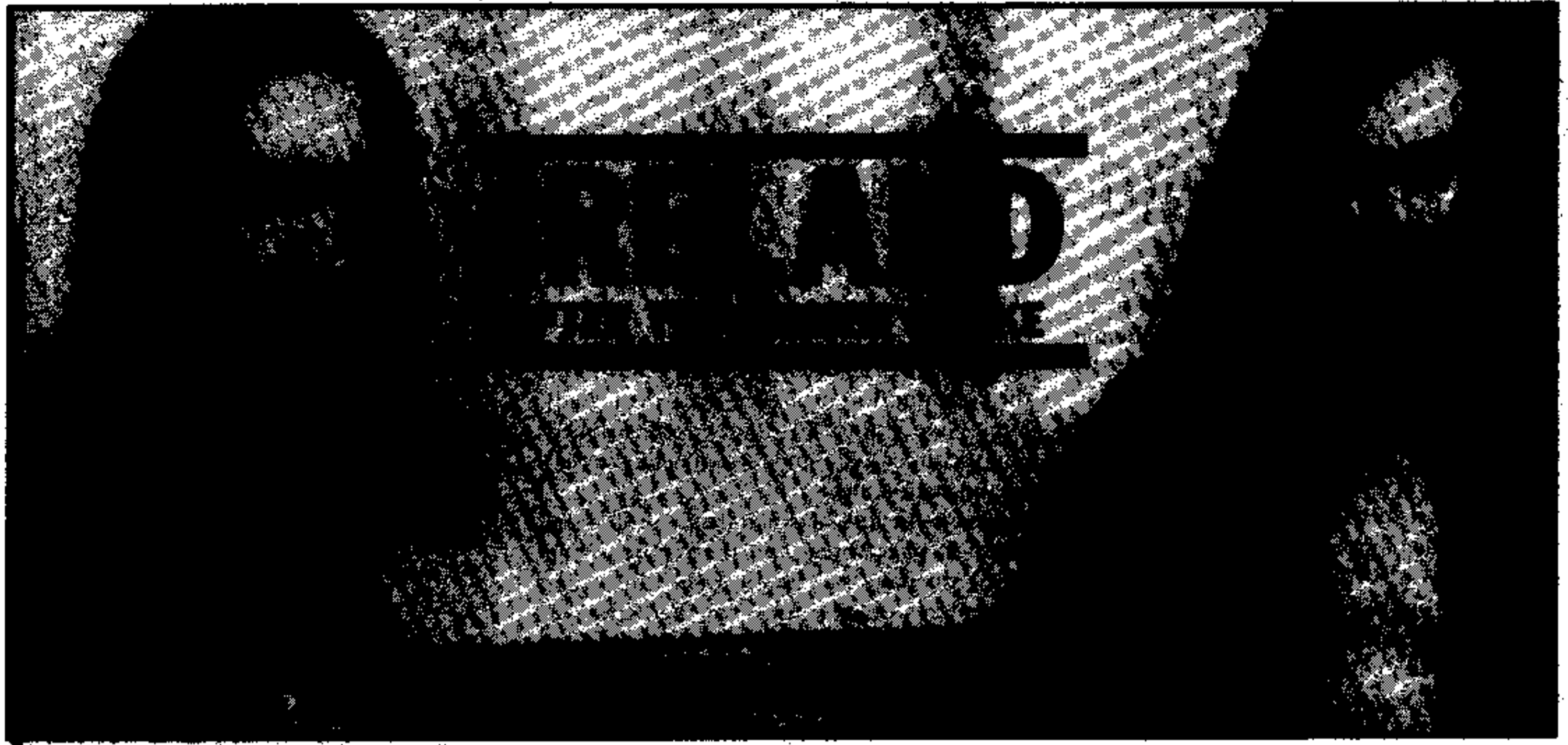
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The hunger strike of republican prisoners in Northern Ireland ended a month ago. But the issues that provoked it have not gone away. There are the beginnings of a new bombing campaign in Britain. And in Northern Ireland the 'dirty protest' is continuing until the prisoners are certain they have won real concessions from the British government. Chris Harman analyses the background to the Northern Irish war, and Kieren Allen of the Irish organisation, the Socialist Workers Movement, follows up with a breakdown on the left in Ireland.

November and December saw the biggest mass protests in Northern Ireland since the fall of Stormont back in 1972. As the four year old 'dirty protest' of the republican prisoners culminated in the hunger strike, there were demonstrations of the Catholic population throughout the towns of the North, complete with strikes in towns like Derry and Newry and among certain Catholic workers in Belfast. The scale of the protests forced the Tories to try to compromise over the prisoners' demands.

Yet the ending of the hunger strike produced considerable confusion. Most republicans and many socialists outside the prisons regarded it as a considerable victory at first. Yet a fortnight later the 'dirty protest' was still continuing, and there were reports of threats of a further hunger strike.

The confusion arises partly from an ambiguity throughout the H-block campaign. It was built around five demands that were posed in humanitarian terms, as if they were something different from political status. Yet the basic aim of the 'dirty protest' was to stop 'criminalisation' of the republican struggle and to force recognition that the prisoners were *political*. Of course, once the campaign was underway on this basis, every serious supporter of political status had to back it. But as the Irish socialist group, the Socialist Workers Movement, has correctly pointed out, "Humanitarianism' has been cleverly used by the Brits

to cover their tactical retreat while strengthening their political rule." The Tories could easily promise more humane conditions, without budging an inch on criminalisation.

The confusion has deeper roots, however, than this ambiguity alone. To see what these are, it is necessary to reiterate some of the basic facts about the Northern Ireland situation – including some which were all-too-easily forgotten in the urgent struggle for solidarity with the hunger strikers. These concern the conditions under which the struggle is taking place, and the obstacles these place before more than partial success, unless the whole strategy of the struggle is recast.

The northern state

Any account of the struggle has to begin with an analysis of the Northern Irish state. It is not possible to wish away the sectarian, artificial character of this state – as do the TUC's 'Better Life for All' campaign, the CP's demand for a 'Bill of Rights', or the proponents of a 'two-nations' theory.

The Northern state and sectarianism are inextricably interlinked. The partition of Ireland could not have occurred 60 years ago but for the ability of the Northern Ireland industrialists and landowners to mobilise behind them the key sections of workers in the Belfast area. And that mobilisation depended on traditions and institutions that had provided Protestant workers with advantages over Catholic workers since the time of the industrial revolution.

There already existed a sectarian pattern to employment. Jobs in the core sections of industry, especially skilled jobs, were the almost exclusive preserve of Protestants (even today there are virtually no Catholic workers in the shipyards or main engineering factories of Belfast); Catholics were forced into 'marginal' areas of employment – bartending, transport, general labouring.

Unemployment among Catholics was always, in boom or slump, about twice the Protestant level.

The new state was formed on the basis of this fundamental divide within the working class and set out further to deepen it. Significantly, partition was preceded by the driving from the shipyards of thousands of Catholics and of Protestant opponents of sectarianism. Employment in the police, the special constabulary, the civil service, the judiciary, local government, even, in some areas, refuse collection, became dependent upon 'Loyalism' – ie, upon being a Protestant who backed the sectarian divide, the British connection and the Tory-Unionist government.

The allocation of jobs in industry, the state and local government was very much determined by the interlocking structures of the Unionist Party and the Orange Order – a mass party, tying the individual futures of a wide stratum of Protestant workers to the state and their employers. A network of cadres existed within the working class itself, opposed not just to revolution, but even to the most minimal reform, capable of drawing on to the streets in annual displays of Protestant supremacy one worker in four or five, only challenging the authorities if they seemed likely to tamper with Protestant ascendancy.

The other side of Orange privilege within the Protestant population was discrimination and repression against anyone who happened to have been born into a Catholic family. They were discriminated against in terms of employment and housing, deprived of equal electoral rights (via gerrymandering and plural voting), subject to repression, including physical attack and imprisonment without trial, by the overwhelmingly Loyalist police and the 100 per cent Loyalist special constabulary, every time they tried to protest.

The state was initially established to protect British interests. That is not to

say that Orangeism was *simply* a conspiracy of the British ruling class — there was often a certain tension between the two. But in the turbulent years after World War One Orangeism provided Britain's rulers with a means for protecting many of their interests while making concessions to the Irish national movement.

Some of these interests were economic — the textile, shipbuilding and engineering of Belfast were significant parts in the overall structure of British capital. Others were to do with the military-strategic needs of British imperialism — a presence in the North East of Ireland was seen as crucial in protecting these as late as 1947 in a British cabinet paper:

'It is a matter of first class strategic importance that the North should continue to be part of His Majesty's dominion... It will never be to Great Britain's advantage that Northern Ireland should become part of a territory outside His Majesty's jurisdiction. Indeed, it seems unlikely that Great Britain would ever be able to agree with this even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it.' (Quoted *Guardian*, 6 December 1980)

State structures are rarely a simple reflection of the immediate economic or strategic needs of ruling classes. They lean on institutions that persuade sections of other classes to participate in capitalist rule. And these structures take on a life of their own, tending to persist even when the economic or strategic needs that created them have passed away.

In the case of Northern Ireland, it is probably the case that with the final dismantling of the old structures of the British empire in the 1960s (colonial independence, the abandonment of the 'East of Suez' claim to a share in global hegemony, the collapse of the sterling area), that the need for a direct presence in Ireland disappeared.

Economically, the South was becoming more important than the North, and contained an established capitalist class which saw the need for stability throughout the island. The economies of both North and South were increasing interlocked with the operations of British and multinational firms who wanted to plan their operations on an integrated, 32 county basis. Economic and strategic interests seemed to be pressurising the rulers of the North and the South towards one another and away from the map drawn in 1921. An unprecedented meeting actually took place between an Orange Unionist premier and his Southern counterpart.



But the state created by the British presence would not simply go away.

When in 1968 and 1969 the Catholic section of the population campaigned for elementary civil rights within that state (hardly anyone raised the question of the border at that time), the state apparatuses responded as they always had previously by resorting to the crudest repression, culminating in August 1969 with all-out armed attacks on the Catholic ghettos by mobs of Orange bigots backed up by the special constabulary (the 'B-specials') and the police.

Faced with state structures that no longer suited their immediate needs, British governments sought to reform them. But they shied away from anything which would have led to dissolution of those state structures, fearing that the result would be a threat to the remaining British interests in Northern Ireland and to the credibility of the British state as a whole.

So in 1969-70 the British Labour government sent in troops to supervise reform — but also to prop up the sectarian state against those who wanted the sort of serious reform which would have undermined that state. By 1971-72 the main function of the troops was to aid the Unionist state against its opponents — above all with internment in the summer of 1971 and the cold blooded shooting down of anti-internment demonstrators in Derry early in 1972.

It was the failure of reform that gave birth to the Provisional IRA. The sequence of events is important. The IRA was an insignificant force until the assaults on the ghettos in August 1969. It was only as it became clear that reform could not do more than scratch the surface of oppression that young people began to turn to the IRA, and to give new life to those in the IRA (the later Provos) who wanted a serious military struggle.

Critics of the Provos (including some socialist critics) tend to view republicanism and the demand for an end to partition as an antiquated romantic nationalism imposed on the civil rights struggle (such, for instance, is the tone of many of the contributions in the recent volume of essays attempting Marxist analyses of the Irish situation, *Divided Nation, Divided Class*, edited by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdy).

This is to forget that it was the failure of an alternative perspective to republicanism, that of the early civil rights campaign, which drove so many activists towards the Provos. A central element in the republican tradition — its view of the partitionist state as a source of their oppression — tied in with their own all-too-practical experiences.

The mass of the Catholic population never went that far. They hedged their bets, often identifying with particular actions of the IRA in defence of the Catholic enclaves against British troops and Orange sectarianism, but electorally

Bloody Sunday 1972—no more ambiguity in the role of British troops



backing the main party committed to the reformist road, the SDLP. Republican abstentionist candidates never got more than about five per cent of the votes in elections in urban nationalist areas.

After the battering the case for reform had received in 1970-72, it seemed to receive a great boost in 1972-4. First, within weeks of Bloody Sunday, in the wake of a huge wave of protest North and South of the border, Stormont, the 'Protestant Parliament', was replaced by direct rule from London: Orange sectarianism no longer handed out the orders at the top of the state machine, even if it continued to man most of its subordinate structures.

The British government went so far as to negotiate directly a (shortlived) ceasefire with the Provos and to grant political status to republican prisoners. And then in 1973-4 a joint Unionist-SDLP 'executive' was imposed on the province. It seemed to many that reform had won.

But the elimination of certain elements of the old state structure (single party control of national and local government) was not the same thing as dismantling the sectarian structures built into the very existence of the state. The sectarian division in terms of jobs remained; the police continued to identify (and be identified) with the traditions of Loyalism; the courts continued to treat Loyalists rather less harshly than republicans; and the British army showed (especially in the argument over housing allocation that brought the Provo truce to an end less than three weeks after it was agreed that it regarded placating Loyalism as more important than placating the Catholics.

The more reform was endorsed officially, the more the cadres of Loyalism within the lower middle and working classes resorted to sectarianism in an effort to halt reform. The period of reform was also the period of systematic assassination, of the rallying of the UDA and the UVF, of two Catholic deaths to each Protestant one.

It culminated in the last ditch stand of Loyalism against reform in the summer of 1974: the Loyalist strike which closed down most Northern Ireland industry while the British army sat back and did nothing. The British government and state were not prepared to smash the Loyalism which had tied the majority of the Northern Irish working class to their rule for so long. They preferred to witness the collapse of the laboriously constructed Unionist-SDLP coalition.

The best testimony to the failure of reform is what has happened to the Catholic party most associated with it. The SDLP remains as respectable, as 'moderate' and as middle class as ever. But it has been forced to split with those like Gerry Fitt who put collaboration with the Unionists - even when the Unionists would not collaborate - above reform, and to campaign now for an end to the 'constitutional guarantee' of Britain to the six county statelet.

The impasse

The need to destroy a state structure is one thing. The ability to do so is another. The experience of the last 12 years is that the Catholic population in Northern Ireland has little choice but to confront the whole six-county set-up if it is ever to end institutionalised discrimination and repression. But the experience is also that the struggle cannot go beyond a certain point without running into a seemingly insuperable obstacle: the oppressed population are a minority within the state, and their very success has prompted the majority to harden its opposition to them. This above all, was the lesson of the success of the Loyalist strike in 1974. Nothing which has happened since has indicated that this obstacle is weakening.

Of course, if the British troops were to withdraw, the Protestants would be forced to face the reality of being on their own alongside a majority in Ireland as a whole who resent their privileges, and would eventually change their tune. But that is to beg the question. While the British troops remain, the attitude of the Protestant workers remains a factor confining opposition to the state to a minority within it - and to a minority which discrimination keeps away from the real centres of political or economic power.

Hence the impasse into which every method of fighting the sectarian state has run - whether that of constitutional reform, of armed action, or, for that matter, of mass agitation.

The impasse is not a new thing; we noted in the old IS journal back in 1969:

'There were always limits within which the Civil Rights movement had to operate. These were the limits of what could be achieved by mass mobilisation within the boundaries of the six counties...against an opposition made up in the main of the Protestant working class.' (IS (old series) 40)

The impasse could only be broken either by breaking the hold of Loyalism over the Protestant working class, or by drawing the nationalist majority in Ireland as a whole into the struggle by spreading it to the South.

Protestant workers

There is a view that the first option can be achieved merely by preaching Catholic-Protestant unity in trade unions, tenants and community struggles. This underlies the (differing) perspectives of the Communist Party, the *Militant* group and Sinn Fein the Workers Party. We argued against such a perspective back in 1969:

'While the long term goal may be Catholic-Protestant working class unity, this will not be achieved by a mechanical coming together around

economic demands. At the moment the Catholic worker regards his total oppression...as more important than economic issues, the Protestant worker his ideology and marginal privileges. Long term unity can only come through a political movement, based in the main upon Catholic workers, that fights the social and political structure of Orangeism, and by its success poses the Protestant worker with real achievements, not just abstract propaganda. But these will not be achieved without forcing back the Orange repressive apparatus - against the desires of sections of the Protestant workers.' (ibid)

The argument was and is correct. In 12 years of turmoil, which have seen the fragmentation of the old Orange-Unionist political machine, no significant section of Protestant workers has moved away from Loyalism. The splits from Unionism have been to the right, not the left.

Indeed, so powerful has been the hold of Loyalism that many socialists have moved to a position of defining the Protestant workers as a monolithic bloc of 'labour aristocrats' who can never be drawn to non-sectarian, socialist ideas. It is pointed out (for instance in Mike Farrell's *The Orange State* or Geoff Bell's *The Protestants of Ulster*) that attempts to challenge sectarianism inside the Protestant working class with class-based politics have always, in the end, come to nought. The implication is that this will always continue to be the case.

But recognition of the immense obstacles to class politics among the Protestant workers should not lead to a complete writing off of them in this way.

Their privileges are *marginal* privileges and by no means evenly distributed within the Protestant population. There has always been a large *unskilled* Protestant working class and quite considerable numbers of Protestant unemployed.



The Protestant slums are *slums* — with, for instance, half the houses in the Shankhill area having no bath in 1971, half no indoor wc, a third no hot water. The wage rates for Protestant workers in Belfast may have been higher than in Dublin or in most British cities in 1901; today they are considerably lower.

The industries in which Protestants have been most privileged — shipbuilding, engineering, textiles — are in a deep state of crisis today after prolonged decline even in the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. The shipyards for instance, now employ a mere 6000 workers where once they employed 20,000. It is true that the decline of industry in the Belfast area, with its Protestant majority, is matched by the wretched state of the majority Catholic areas of the West, where very little industry developed in the first place and unemployment levels can be as high as 40 per cent (the official Strabane figure today). But within Belfast and East Antrim the toll of the last year has hit the traditionally Protestant industries.

Finally, to say that those arguing for class unity and struggle among the Protestant workers have always been defeated, in the end, by Loyalism, is to recognise that they have existed. On occasions they have been able to lead massive struggles — in the strikes of 1907, 1919, 1944, and in the unemployed protests of 1932 — even if they have not been able to stop the majority of these workers being rapidly drawn away again by Orangeism.

As well as these high points of class struggle there have been reformist organisations (the trade unions, the Northern Ireland Labour Party — now virtually defunct — and the CP) with a considerable base within the Protestant working class. Such organisations have often been dismissed on the grounds that they accepted the border and did not challenge the fundamentals of Loyalism. As an argument against those who see the way out through the 'Better Life for All' campaign the point is fair enough. As a complete evaluation of the political life of the Protestant working class it is not.

The reformist organisations have tried to co-exist with Orangeism, to avoid conflict with it, while gaining marginal improvements for workers through collective action. That is why, when the chips are down, the initiative has always remained with the Loyalist right. But that does not mean that the reformists are the same as the Loyalist right, any more than social democrats anywhere in the world who prepare the way for the far right are the same as the far right.

Of course, all the components of the Protestant working class act politically against a background of relative privilege, justified by ideology of Protestant supremacy. But they do not all respond in the same way to this background.

Since 1969 the Loyalist organisations have had things very much their own way, driving out of the community or forcing into silence those who would counter them. But that does not mean

that things will always be like this. Working class consciousness is never a fixed, static thing, with only one dimension. It varies with the relationships of workers to one another, to the world of production and to the ruling class. The rhythms of capitalism itself force workers into struggles that contradict many of their previous experiences. New ideas take hold of sections of the class, that can challenge the ideology they have previously professed. Whether these new ideas win out over the old depends on how effectively those who hold them intervene in the struggle.

The Loyalism that has hegemonised the Protestant working class has been a Loyalism in crisis, continually splintering and resplintering as British governments have responded to the Catholic struggle by refusing to allow Loyalism complete control over the six-county statelet. And now this fragmented Loyalism faces the most severe economic attack upon the conditions of Protestant workers since the slump which drove Protestants and Catholics to fight the police alongside one another in 1932.

Protestant workers will not respond to the crisis by automatically looking to forms of united class struggle. The immediate response to increased unemployment can be a further slide to the right, as they cling ever more tightly to their residual privileges. But it would be a foolhardy prophet who denied any possibility of a class response: there have been militant strikes involving Loyalist workers (the lorry drivers, the firemen); there have been contingents of Protestant workers on unemployment demonstrations in Britain. Out of such responses new elements of class consciousness can emerge, however feeble, to compete in the ideological battle with the various fragments of Loyalism.

Given the grip of the Loyalists on the Protestant communities, it is likely that

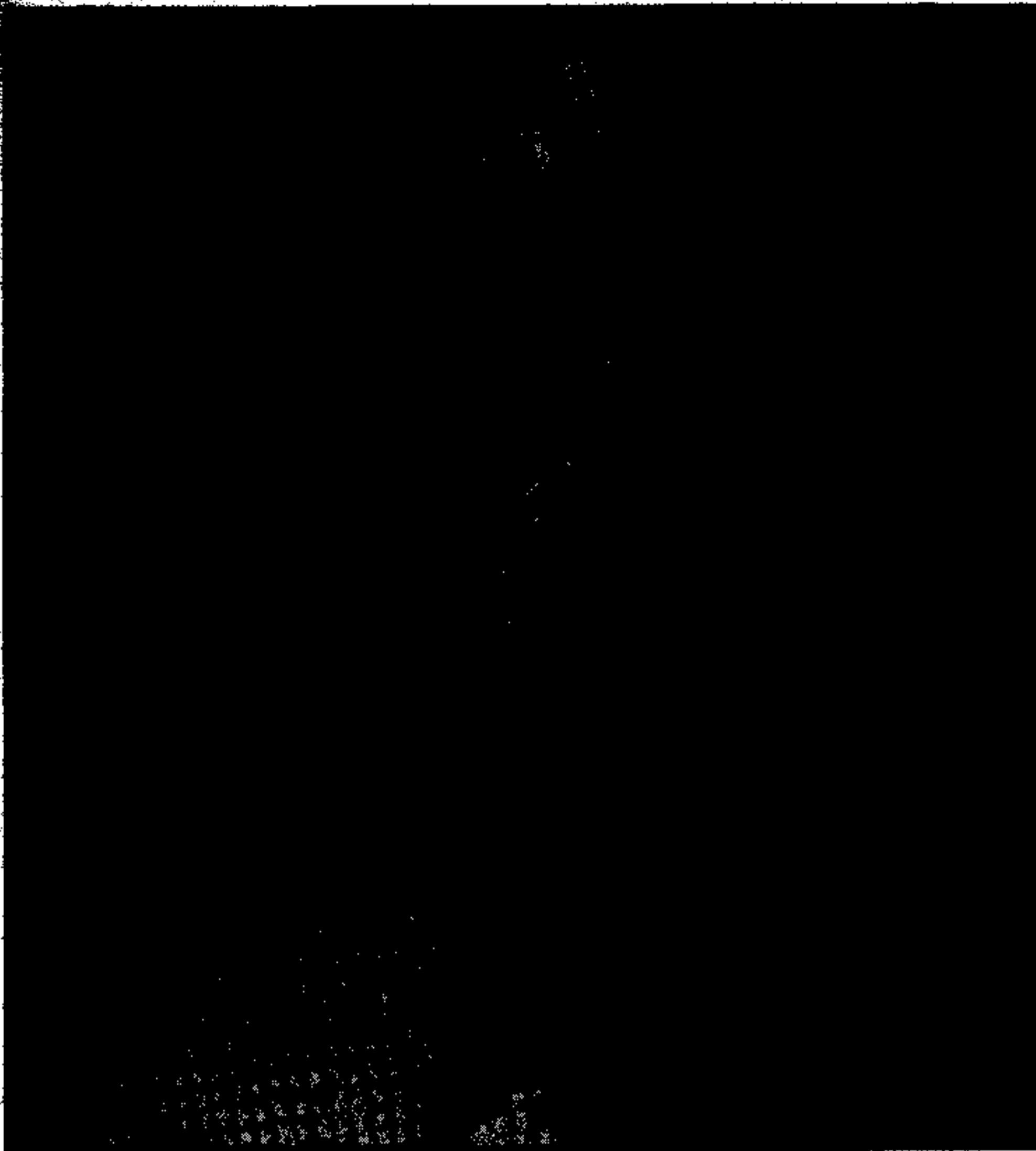
any real lead in promoting class-based struggle will have to come from outside. But this does not excuse socialists who may be forced themselves to operate from within the Catholic ghettos from explaining to Protestant workers what needs to be done, how to confront the problems which the crisis poses for them — and to do so in a language which the best Protestant workers can understand.

Unfortunately, this lead from outside has not been forthcoming in the last 11 years. Those on the republican side — including almost all the socialists on the republican side — have failed abysmally when it comes to addressing themselves to the problems of Protestant workers. Nothing has been said about the problems they face — how to fight over wages and conditions, the run-down of factories, the destruction of jobs, the role of the state in encouraging these things, the role of Loyalism in preventing real opposition to them.

In the struggle to split a section of Protestant workers from Loyalism, a particular onus lies on revolutionary socialists in Great Britain. Many Protestant workers have close connections with workers in the lowlands of Scotland, and much of the Protestant working class is organised into British trade unions. Historically, a rise in the tempo of class struggle in Britain has often found its reflection in militancy among the working class in Belfast. The problem is that British trade union leaders have been content to use this militancy simply to recruit members, without in any sense encouraging Protestant militants to fight sectarianism and the Loyalist organisations within their own workplaces and union branches.

It is up to socialist, rank and file trade unionists to develop a different approach — to draw Northern Ireland Protestant workers into combine com-





The Provos grew as a result of the failure of reform to improve appreciatively the situation in the Catholic ghettos

The immediate response of Protestant workers to increased unemployment could be a further slide to the right



mittees, anti-unemployment demonstrations, battles inside the unions — but at the same time to argue out with them the nature of Loyalism and the six county state.

The South

In 1969 our (quite correct) pessimism about the Protestant working class was accompanied by an optimistic view of the ability of forces in the South to come to the aid of the Catholic minority in the North.

'It is what happens in the rest of Ireland that alone can provide some long term solutions to the problems of the North,' we wrote. South, as well as North, we argued, continued 'to be subordinate to British capitalism' with the consequence that workers and small farmers faced 'the lowest levels of social welfare in Western Europe, the concentration of industrial development in the East, the failure to invest in house-building on an adequate scale, an emigration rate a quarter of the birth rate...' This was accompanied, we argued, 'by a tradition of radical republicanism and opposition to the division of Ireland, an anti-imperialist if not an anti-capitalist ideology, particularly strong among workers and small farmers.'

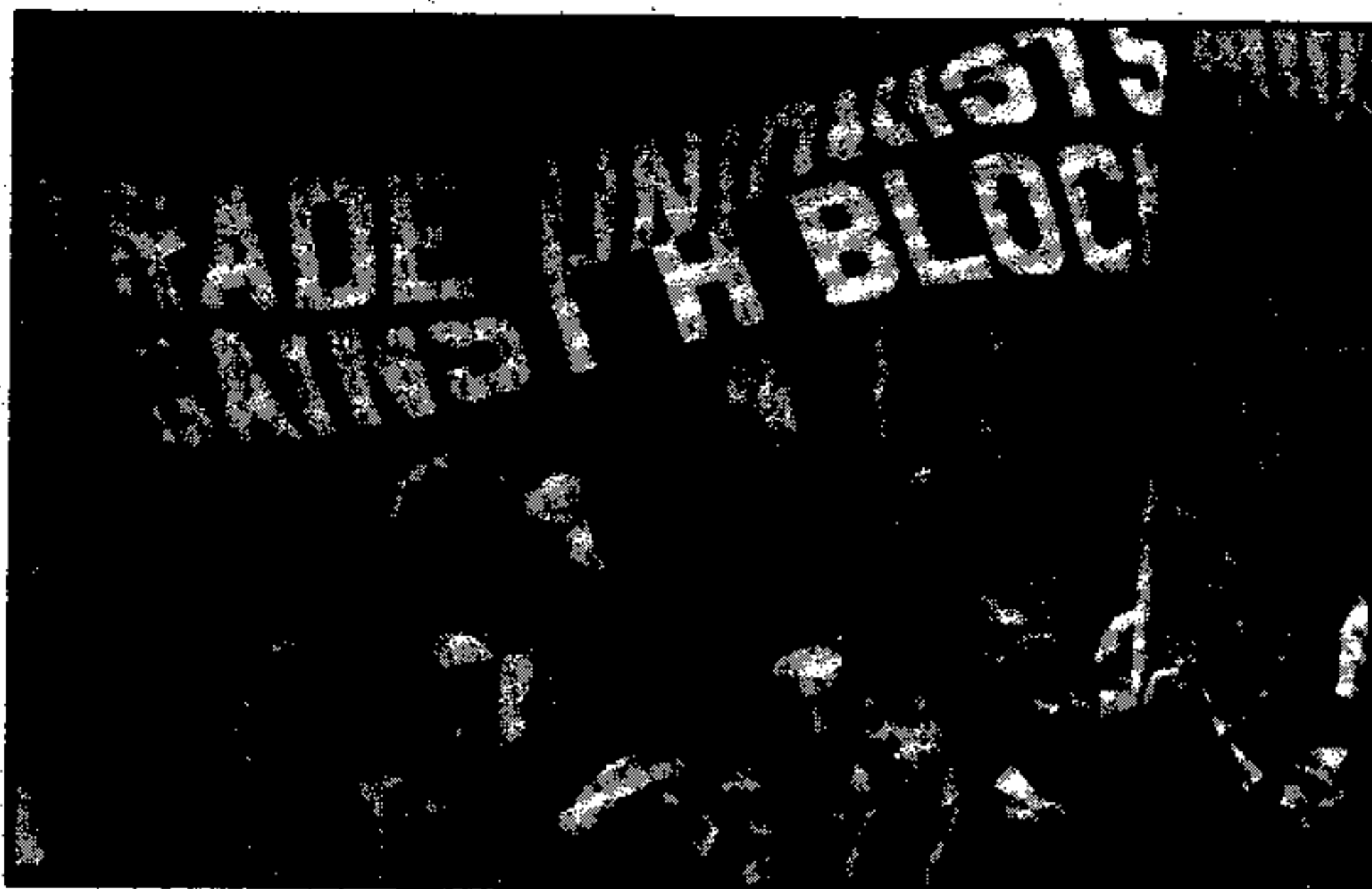
A sequence of causes and effects was hoped for, in which the rebellion of the Northern ghettos would produce a radicalisation of the Southern workers, leading them to clash with their own 'green Tory government' and to challenge the hold of British imperialism over the whole island.

The picture was not completely false. It was fear of turmoil in the South that forced the British government to impose limited reform in the North in 1969, and to dissolve Stormont within weeks of Bloody Sunday in 1972. Concern with the stability of the South still plays a part in preventing the launching by the Tories of an all-out Orange pogrom on the 1920-21 scale, which alone could smash resistance in the Catholic ghettos and destroy the IRA's ability to fight.

But, at the same time, it has to be admitted that spontaneous responses in the South to what has been happening in the North have not been the magic key for unlocking the Northern impasse.

In fact, there has been a shift in consciousness among *all* classes in the South away from active concern with the Northern question. Outside the border areas and the traditional republican regions of the West, there is almost a wish that Northern Ireland did not exist. Belfast can seem as remote from Dublin as it does from London.

That this applies to workers as well as to bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie was shown in the period of the hunger strike. The first demonstration in Dublin involved only a few thousand local people (as opposed to demonstrators bussed in from the North). Although this improved as things moved towards a climax, there was no automatic identification with the Northern protests.



In Dublin and Waterford, for instance, only a minority of workers in a handful of factories responded to the call for token strike action.

There has been an *objective* basis for this shift in attitudes over the last ten years. Irish capitalism has been able to thrive in the interstices between the more advanced capitalisms of Britain, the European powers, and the US, despite the world-wide prevalence of crisis. While British (and Northern Irish) industry has stagnated for a decade, Irish industry has boomed. The number of industrial jobs had already grown from 246,000 in 1963 to 283,000 in 1971. It grew in every year from 1971 to 1979, and even in the last year has fallen by proportionately much less (by 5000 jobs) than the corresponding figures for Britain or Northern Ireland.

A recent report on the Southern and Northern economies noted that both had grown at roughly the same per capita rate in the period 1971-8. But while in the North growth 'stemmed mainly from public spending,' with the industrial sector continuing to decline, in the South growth came from the 'Common Market and industrial sectors.' (Quoted *Irish Times*, 23 December 1980)

It is true that much of this growth has been in multinational firms; but Irish capital too has grown, gaining from its collaboration with the multinationals. And certainly, there has been a decisive shift from the old pattern of Irish capital's development being cramped by its entanglement with Britain. The links it makes today are as likely to be with Japanese or American capital as British. It no longer makes sense to speak of the South as simply a neo-colony of British imperialism.

The changed fortunes of the Irish ruling class have had important implications for the population at large. The old indices of backwardness have changed markedly. Ireland today is a predominantly *urban* society. The old bugbear of emigration is no longer the problem it was. In the 1970s immigration — chiefly the return of Irish

people who had had to seek work abroad in the 1950s — actually exceeded emigration. For the first time since the famine the population of Ireland started growing. Some of the most visible scars of the long years of imperialist domination began to fade.

The workers have experienced an expansion of job possibilities and their wages have risen so that they are probably as high as those in Britain in real terms, and higher than those in Northern Ireland. They no longer see the border as something that necessarily stunts their prospects. The basis has been laid for a reformism which accepts the border and British domination of the North, while fighting for improved conditions for workers (one expression of this is the new stance of Sinn Fein the Workers Party which has jettisoned its old republicanism to rejoice in the industrial development of the Southern state). Hence the lack of an active interest in the North among many groups of workers and the unwillingness to strike over the H-block issue.

The rural population too has experienced unprecedented prosperity, via the EEC Common Agricultural Policy. The traditional small farmer base of republicanism in the West has been considerably eroded.

This does not mean that the traditional slogans of Irish nationalism no longer have any resonance. They remain part of the dominant national ideology, propagated in the schools, through the Gaelic sporting events, embodied in the main political party, Fianna Fail. It is still the case that an opinion poll can show 20 per cent of the population as agreeing with 'the goal' of the IRA. But nationalism is no longer an *active* mobilising force in any class: only 2.8 per cent 'strongly support the Provos.' (Figures quoted in *Irish Times*, 23 December 1980)

The decline in the base of active republicanism was shown graphically in the H-block campaign. Those who dominated the H-block committees watered down the demand for political status in order to try and broaden the

base of support. In practice this did not gain many *active* allies but rather merely led to increased reliance upon the traditional bearers of the 'national' ideology — the church and sections of Fianna Fail. These in turn did not do more than the minimum needed to maintain their 'nationalist' credentials, while laying the basis for a deal to get the British government off the hook.

Southern socialists cannot ignore the border, just because opposition to it does not gain automatic support. The oppression of the Catholic workers in the North and the division in the Northern working class necessarily weakens the Southern working class. The more the forces of repression are successful in the North, the easier it is for the Southern ruling class to increase repression. The close interconnection between British and Irish capitalism makes it impossible to ignore one in the interests of a 'pure' struggle against the other.

But support for the Northern struggle will never be gained by mere nationalistic tub-thumping. It needs to be built for in the South as class support, as something which grows out of the self-activity of Southern workers. Significantly, apart from the traditional republican areas of the border and the West, it was where socialists had been active around economic issues inside the workplaces that there was some response to the call for strike action in solidarity with the prisoners.

The Provos

The Provos cannot be dismissed simply as a nationalist hangover from the past somehow imposed from outside on the Northern situation. The Provos grew as a result of the failure of reform to improve appreciably the situation of those in the Catholic ghettos.

But that does not mean they can lead that struggle to success and that the job of socialists is merely to cheer them on from the sidelines, giving them advice on how they could be a little more successful.

The Provos come from a certain political tradition — the 190 year old tradition of Irish bourgeois nationalism. And this leads them to policies that cannot overcome the impasse of the North.

First there is what might be called 'elitism'. The republican tradition is one of conspiracies, aimed at restoring the 'nation' by means of military action by the minority who make up 'the army of the nation'.

All other factors are regarded as subordinate to the operations of this military force. A mass movement may on occasion be useful — but only if it provides volunteers and funds for the 'army'. It can just as well be a hindrance, by diverting attention from the need for military action.

Hence the peculiar phenomenon of the Provos failing to build mass political organisation in the Catholic ghettos at the times when they have been popular

there: if you want your most able cadres to be planning armed operations, you don't expose them by giving them a public political role.

In the same way, the traditional republican judges political ideas by their ability to gain support for the military struggle. If adopting a left wing posture can gain support among a certain audience (for instance, if addressing a socialist audience outside Ireland) then a left wing terminology will be adopted. If, however, it is the support of a right wing audience that is being pursued (for instance among Irish Americans) then the stance will be a traditional Catholic nationalist one and 'Marxism' will be denounced.

Alongside the military elitism there is necessarily another characteristic of the movement — its cross-class basis. For traditional republicanism what matters is raising the widest possible base of support for the armed struggle, and it does not matter from what class this support comes. So while there is one small capitalist in the Ireland or the US who will support the national struggle, no programme will be put forward that might conceivably antagonise them.

So although the Provo's programme talks about the goal of a 'democratic socialist republic', this is posed in the vaguest way which would antagonise virtually no one who might possibly support them.

It is this cross-class nature of the republican organisation that makes it more or less incapable of talking coherently about the problems facing Protestant workers or workers in the South. For to do so, you have to offer something tangible — a class struggle for jobs, housing and decent working conditions. And that has to be waged not merely against the state, but also against some of the bourgeois nationalists to whom the Provos look for support. An obsessive concern with the daily struggles which do take place inside any workplace — including the Protestant dominated shipyards and engineering plants of Belfast — is beyond the comprehension of the Provo leadership (and some socialists outside the Provos, who dismiss such talk as 'economism').

After all, why be obsessed with the best ways of waging the class struggle if you believe salvation will ultimately come from a highly armed, highly disciplined, secret military organisation? So the Provos have little to say to the Protestant workers in the North, apart from inviting them to accept a nationalist rhetoric which they have been brought up to fear and hate. Although the Provos are not a sectarian organisation, they must seem it to any isolated Protestant worker who is having doubts about Loyalism, since all they offer is a destruction of the basis of Protestant privilege without any vision of a class struggle for socialism to replace it.

Things are scarcely better in relation to the Southern workers. Although there are many individual Provo supporters in the factories of the South, no

attempt is made to organise them into systematic intervention in everyday struggles over wages and conditions. So when it came to the day of action over H-block, the initiative had to be taken by other, socialist organisations or by individual trade unionists sympathetic to the Northern struggle.

What has been said so far applies most obviously to the traditional republican leadership within the Provos. These are mostly Southern based and are in direct line of descent from the petty bourgeois nationalists who fought the British before partition and who attempted to maintain the republican struggle after it. However, there is a certain contradiction within republicanism today. This tradition finds its main base of support today among overwhelmingly working class volunteers from the Northern ghettos. These see things much more in class terms than do the traditional leaders and do, from time to time at least, find themselves influenced by non-Provo socialists who succeed in initiating mass movements within the ghettos (for instance, in the H-block campaign).

This has found expression in what is sometimes called the 'left Provo' trend in the North. But this is not an organised current. Despite talk of the need to take up class issues and private grumbling about the Southern traditional republican leaders, it continues to coexist with people who see things quite differently. The 'left' still tolerate the subordination of everything to the military struggle, and the need for a cross-class alliance to gain support for it. Hence the spectacle 14 months ago of one of the leading left Provos in the North, Gerry Adams, telling the press: 'There is no Marxist influence within Sinn Fein. I know of no one within Sinn Fein who is a Marxist or who would be influenced by Marxism.' (*Irish Republican Information Service*, 3 November 1979)

The domination of militarism within the movement is not some 'accident' that can be overcome by debate. It is, in a sense, the principle of the movement. It is the armed struggle which attracts recruits and determines the whole structure of the movement. Being able to suggest a successful military tactic is more important within the movement than being able to argue for a tactic to mobilise masses. Indeed, the only real alternative to military struggle that has ever been conceived of by the movement is the other side of military struggle — negotiations by the leaders of the movement with its foes to arrive at a military truce.

Yet, without a class perspective, there is no way in which the impasse in the North can be broken. That is why it is so foolish for socialists to behave as if all that is possible is to be a sort of civilian support force for the Provos.

This does not mean dismissing the left within the republican movement out of hand. It does mean recognising that the left will be impotent while it remains entrapped in the traditions and organisations of republicanism.

Prospects

For 11 years the pattern has been this: the British government has been unable to follow a policy of consistent mass repression, Stormont style, against the Catholic ghettos and therefore has been unable to smash the cadres of the republican movement; but neither have the ghettos been able to marshal the forces needed to smash finally the hold of Orangeism and throw out the British security forces that sustain the six-county statelet. Each side has made limited, temporary advances, but neither has been able to sustain these positions against the reaction they have provoked among the mass base of its opponents.

The British could not keep up the swing to all-out repression typified by internment and Bloody Sunday. The republicans could not keep forcing the British government to the negotiating table — and with it the establishment of special status for prisoners — as in 1972. Each has more or less paralysed any initiative of the other. This is now reflected even at the military level, with the Provos tying down large numbers of the security forces, but in turn being held back by these forces from anything like the level of shootings and bombings of seven or eight years ago.

Such a war of attrition takes a considerable toll on both sides. On the republican side this is measured in terms of the hundreds of imprisoned volunteers. On the British government side things are slightly more complex.



The war has not had anything like the same impact on British society that the Vietnam War had on America: it has not meant a million British conscripts going to risk death, opening many up to radical ideas. It has not provoked massive anti-draft campaigns in Britain; it has not led to riots on the campuses and among black people in inner city areas; it has not forced the British military budget to rise by a third – as the US arms budget did at the height of Vietnam, fuelling inflation and driving the great financial interests into the peace camp.

After 11 years of the war, a hard-fought campaign by socialists inside the British working class movement could not get more than perhaps two or three thousand people out on the streets of London in support of the five demands of the hunger strikers. This is not a result of any failures to take Ireland seriously by the British left; it is because the war has not had the impact on British society that would create hostility to it, almost regardless of the actions of the left. What was so crucial in the American decision eventually to withdraw from Vietnam – the gaping division within American society – has not developed in Britain out of the war in Ireland. In such circumstances, Ireland is not a radicalising factor in Britain which



leads people to question other aspects of capitalist society; rather, it is only when people have questioned these other things, that they begin to understand the significance of what is happening in the six counties.

Marx is often quoted to the effect the British revolution depends on the Irish revolution. If this means that no revolution could achieve final success in Britain which did not witness the smashing of Loyalism and the six-county statelet, it is absolutely right. If it means that the Irish struggle is the detonator that will explode British society, it is probably wrong. At the time Marx wrote, the Irish immigrant population occupied roughly the role now played by Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigrants – it was a large, super-exploited nationally oppressed section of the British working class, to be found concentrated in the major industrial areas. The struggle against Irish national oppression was connected to the struggle to overcome racialist division within the British working class, with aroused Irish workers playing a vanguard role in the revolutionary struggle of the class as a whole.

Such are not the conditions today. We have to fight for solidarity with the struggle of the Catholic workers of the North against oppression – if only because the structures that oppress them can be expected to throw their weight well and truly on the side of reaction if any broader working class struggle develops in either Britain or Ireland. But we should not expect the fight to be an easy one or to develop any great momentum of its own.

There seems to be a certain weariness with the war in Ireland developing in governing circles in Britain. The cost of the war is still minimal, as compared, say, with the cost of the missile programme. That was why in the mid-seventies it did not seem to worry the ruling class at all: they had to station and train their army somewhere, and Ireland seemed a good enough place, especially as it enabled them to develop the most effective anti-subversion force in Western Europe. The cost of 'aid' to Northern Ireland was more resented – but there was the compensating knowledge that much of the aid flowed back into the coffers of British firms operating in the six counties.

Today the much greater depth of the economic crisis means that at least a section of the ruling class is thinking that it can no longer afford either the war or the aid. It is looking to cutting its costs anywhere it can, and would be as glad to rid itself of 'the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone' as the hospitals of South London. Hence the indications that the Tory government is looking once again at possible ways of disengaging itself. This could explain the visit of almost all the leading elements in Thatcher's cabinet to Dublin last month, and the mysterious 80 minute-long private discussion between Thatcher and the Irish Premier Haughey.

Yet attempts at limited disengagement are not going to produce the victory the Provos desire. The government wants to repeat its tactics in the hunger strike on a larger scale. The Tories would like a compromise which divides the opposition within the Catholic ghettos, which gives the Southern government greater responsibility for ensuring the stability of the North, and which reduces the ability of an Orangeism that no longer fits their interests to blackmail them. But they do not want anything that would seem like a republican victory and which would drive the Loyalists to all-out confrontation. That is why Thatcher has insisted the changes being discussed in Dublin were 'institutional' not 'constitutional'.

Past experience indicates that, whatever British governments want, any change imposed on Northern Ireland is likely to end in turmoil on the streets. Ian Paisley has already been trying to exploit the Dublin talks in order to assert himself as the spokesman for Loyalism and to put rival organisations in the shade. If Thatcher and Haughey move in *any* direction when they meet again in a few months time, the Irish issue is likely to be at the centre of British politics again.

Chris Harman

Who's who on the Irish left

The divisions and groupings on the Irish left follow the dominant international pattern. But the basic characteristics of most parties stem from their attitude to the national question and the struggles of workers in a country that is attempting to industrialise rapidly. As a result, the Irish left throws up some strange varieties of socialists.

The Irish Labour Party (ILP) was founded by James Connolly, but has long since left behind any connection with his politics. In the mid-seventies it participated in the most right wing coalition government that Ireland has ever seen. As a result, its left wing has either been expelled or has defected. Only the **Militant** tendency is left behind.

Its politics on the national question is still taken from the Tories' favourite Irishman – Conor Cruise O'Brien. That amounts to saying: direct rule and the British army must stay as the best solution. In the South, it stands for more repression and more efficient police operations against 'subversives'. It condemned the H-block campaign as 'IRA godfather propaganda'.

Its links with the trade unions are fairly tenuous – although the mass of Irish workers automatically 'affiliate' to it through union membership. The unions do not have anything like the same weight in its structure as in the British Labour Party. During the one day general stoppages against the level

of taxation on workers, it condemned political strikes as 'undermining parliament'.

Despite some recent electoral gains around the Euro elections – mainly because of its fielding of personality candidates – the Labour Party is set for a dramatic decline. It has isolated itself both from the militant sections of the Southern working class and from those with a concern for the national question.

Sinn Fein the Workers Party (SFWP) has undergone the most dramatic changes in the last decade. In the late sixties it was seen as the socialist republican force in opposition to the right wing motivation of the Provos. Today it has been increasingly drawn to a 'two nations' position. It supports a revival of a majority-rule Stormont regime in the North. It is resolutely opposed to political status for the prisoners.

It has adopted a conscious policy of infiltration as a political method. That applies not just to the unions, but also to the RTE, the Southern television station, and the IDA, the Southern Industrial Development Authority. In the union it has won a real foothold in the bureaucracy. Its political influence managed to direct the tax agitation away from an attack on the hand-outs to the multinationals and on to the farmers. It has no perspective of building anything like broad left organisation in the unions; its total strategy is winning non-elected full time posts. As a result it supports the National Understanding on pay, and opposed the recent oil strike – where soldiers scabbed – as 'ultra-left'.

However, in republican politics, policy documents do not mean an awful lot. The Provos are clearly seen as the fighters against British imperialism and the most consistent agitators for a united Ireland.

In recent years something of a left wing tendency has emerged. But it is not an organised force. The left wing elements in the leadership argue for greater involvement in social issues and generally oppose the trade union bureaucracy. But they also stick rigidly to a stages theory on the national question – ie first you get a united Ireland, then you can fight for a socialist republic. They see the working class as a sort of battering ram to back up their struggle. The idea is: if we support workers in their struggles, then they support us in the campaign against the Brits. They dismiss Orange workers in block as Orange near-fascists.

In recent months they have been forced to look at the most fundamental issue for republicans: the relationship between the military campaign and a mass movement. During the H-block campaign, military attacks severely diminished. But many in the Provos were still for the bombing of Britain 'if all else failed'. They have still not distinguished themselves from the right wingers on the military question – nor called for the right to organise democratically inside the movement.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) emerged on the left as a breakaway from the SFWP, with a perspective of uniting the class issue and the national question. Despite many claims to the contrary, they have clearly failed to do that.

They have not developed any consistent industrial strategy or organisation. Their involvement in class issues is minimal, except in some local areas. As a result, there is often little to distinguish them from the left of the Provos.

They have however survived, despite the most massive harassment from state forces on both sides of the border and the armed attacks of Loyalists.

The revolutionary left groups in Ireland are tiny. There are two main groups of roughly equal size.

The Peoples Democracy (PD), formed from the fusion of the earlier PD with the Fourth International section, is mainly a student or ex-student organisation. Its primary involvement is in the national question and to a lesser extent the women's issue. It has maintained absolutely no trade union work and generally tends to dismiss it as 'economism'.

In the recent H-block campaign PD had some influence in arguing that the central focus of the campaign should be on exposing Fianna Fail and the SDLP. They regard both organisations as the equivalent of reformist organisations because of their positions on the national question. As a result one of the major slogans of the H-block campaign was a demand on Haughey to 'end his silence'.

Its recent turn arose with the publication of *The Irish Industrial Revolution*. There it argued that underdevelopment in Ireland was caused not by imperialism, but by the 'laziness' of the Irish bourgeoisie. It therefore welcomes and campaigns for the introduction of the multinationals, for the development of state industry and for sacrifices by workers in return for a greater political voice in the running of the economy.

Although in absolute decline in the North, it has grown in the South through its ability in rural areas to present itself as a more serious and consistent reformist party than the Labour Party and through its appeal to a section of the working class that has distanced itself from nationalism.

The Communist Party has always been tiny except around the Belfast area. It has been hounded for years by cold war clericalism and as a result has defensively adopted a straight pro-Russian position. Throughout its history it has vacillated between trailing the republicans and lurching into sheer economism.

In the North it argues that working class unity will be built around economic issues and campaigning for a Bill of Rights. But it has never seen the economic struggles as struggles directed against the Orange state. Its leading

trade union members have welcomed Paisley on platforms against the cuts.

It has recently turned to supporting the demands of the hunger strikers. But its militants have opposed taking industrial action on their behalf.

In the South it has a small base around the car industry. It generally adopts a more militant position than its erstwhile allies, Sinn Fein the Workers Party.

The Socialist Labour Party (SLP) originated as a breakaway from the Labour Party. It was joined by a number of revolutionary groups who had 'tendency rights' within it. At one stage the Socialist Workers Tendency – the predecessor the Socialist Workers Movement – held over a third of the positions on the national executive. Today the revolutionaries have left – mainly over its attitude to the national question.

It has one representative in parliament – Noel Browne who is completely immune to party discipline. He opposed the hunger strike, whereas the party formally supported it.

Generally, it is characterised by a total lack of any sort of strategy and by the diversity of its internal views. It has become a small electoralist grouping which places its primary emphasis on propagandising over actions like contraception and divorce.

The Republicans have moved sharply to the left in recent years with the basing of the struggle on the nationalist working class. But for republicans the *only* issue of real importance is the national question. As a result they contain within their ranks every shade of opinion from revolutionary socialists to right wing anti-communists.

The Provos proclaim themselves to be 'democratic socialists', believing that the new Ireland will be based on a democratic regional government structure. They oppose Russian-style 'socialism' as 'state capitalism'.

The Socialist Workers Movement (SWM), the fraternal organisation to the SWP, has managed to build a small foothold in the working class movement through its involvement in rank and file groups. It argues that only the working class can solve the national question, as part of its struggle for workers' power. It believes that the Protestant working class cannot be ignored while a united Ireland is being established, but that socialists must seek to involve themselves in their struggles around unemployment, wages etc. without hiding their anti-imperialism.

During the H-block campaign the SWM succeeded in initiating union groups such as Corporation Workers Against the H-blocks which brought about limited industrial action. It argued that Southern workers could not be appealed to on a simple nationalistic basis – but as a class with a direct political interest in the national struggle.

Kieren Allen

Her story of the future

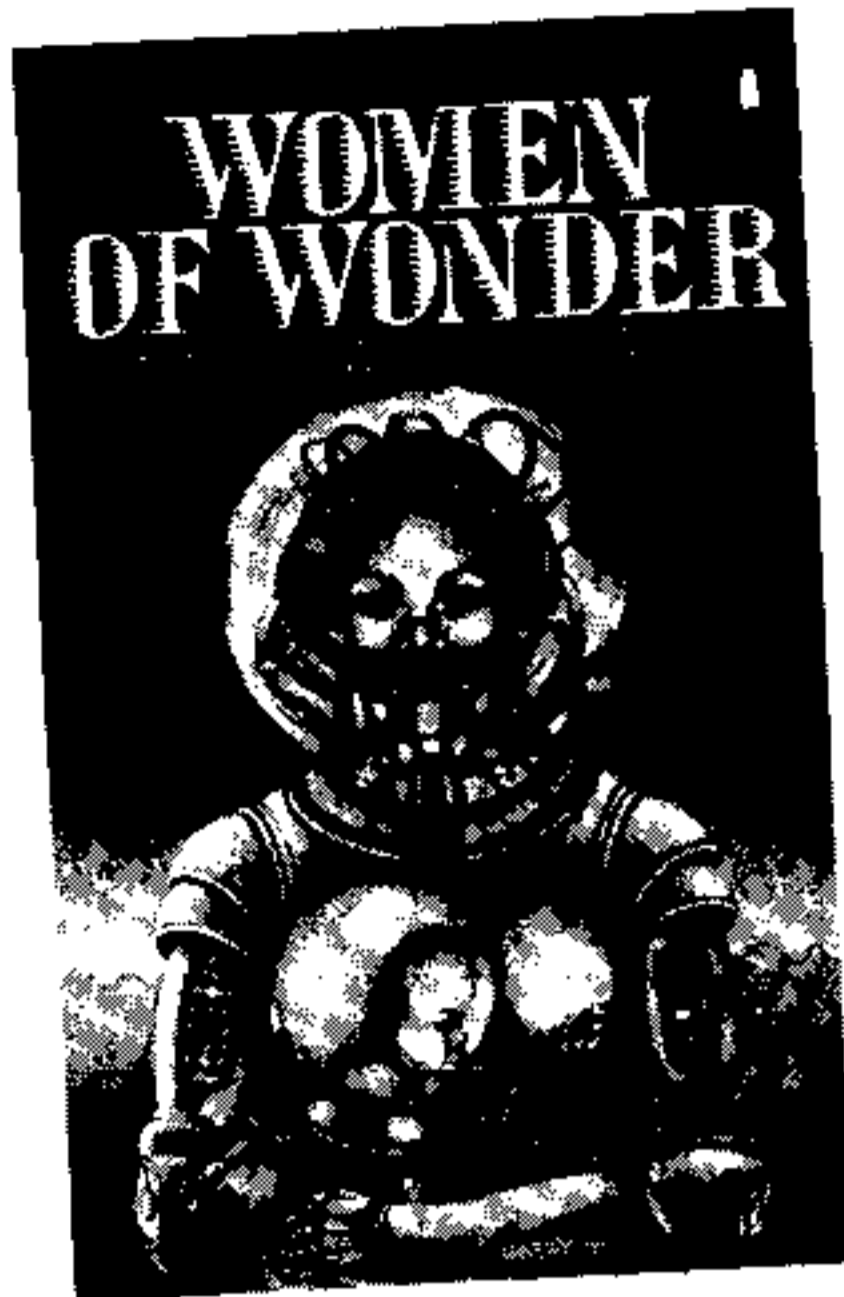
AS late as 1973, I still thought there were no women science fiction writers, and went around asking why. An avid reader of SF since the mid-60s, I devoured volumes of Asimov, Heinlein, Sturgeon and the rest with only a slight sense of puzzlement that amid all these marvellous possibilities for science and technology, even with the occasional appearance of a female space pilot or head of state, somehow *women were always the same*. So, it seemed, was the family - Mum, Dad and the Kids (with the occasional preservative Whore) adapting to the aftermath of nuclear disaster, colonising outer space, ordering robots about, and so on.

In fact *people* were always the same: dear old lovable Human Nature soldiering on through the universe (sometimes in alien disguises, sometimes maturing in a robot's metal skin) across eons of the future, usually accompanied by not-so-dear old Human War and Capitalism. Somehow, I felt, there must be other imaginative possibilities.

Then, in 1973, an Australian told me about Ursula Le Guin, and I have hunted the shelves for women SF writers ever since. They are still hard to find outside specialist shops, and I managed to miss some now unobtainable classics, including Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*. I had been late finding out about women SF writers, for not only had the ferment of American radicalism in the late 1960s produced a whole new generation; it had drawn attention to previous generations who had often hidden under male or 'neutral' pseudonyms (Francis Stevens, Leigh Brackett, C L Moore, etc.)

Women were not the only hidden group in the world of popular science fiction in the 1940s and 1950s. Magazine editors, with their fixed picture of a young, white male audience, sometimes insisted Jewish writers take Anglo names. Aggressive European males were the only acceptable type of science fiction hero, and racialism was sublimated in Bug Eyed Monster stories. Some women, like C L Moore and Anne McCaffrey, wrote rollicking male adventure stories to order, while some wrote 'the housewife's angle' stories, like Judith Merrill (once praised for her 'warm and colourful rendering of the minutiae of the future').

Some brilliant and versatile women writers, like Marion Zimmer Bradley and Anne McCaffrey, were names I had passed over because their writing was presented as 'fantasy' for the post-Tolkien market. Both Bradley's *Darkover* series and McCaffrey's *Dragonriders of Pern* are based on strange but plausible hypotheses and the undoubted truth that one society's knowledge may become another's magic and superstition. But Ursula Le Guin has (like Fritz Leiber and some other male SF writers) written purely mystical fantasies in the Tolkien style which I have not read. (My ten-year-old son



describes *Earthsea* as 'a good read, but pretty pointless!')

Le Guin's best work, and that of other women SF writers, has begun to realise the possibilities in science fiction which were only hinted at before the mid-60s. For science fiction is at its best a *thought experiment*, an exploration of future possibilities in all their social and psychological richness. Vonda McIntyre has written:

'Only in SF can one deal with societies that have not yet evolved and problems that have not yet surfaced ... SF is a tool for emotional and psychological exploration just as surely as the sailing ship was for exploring the world.'

Or as Pamela Sargent puts it: 'Science fiction opens the mind'.

In the last fifteen years, many minds have been opened by the tremendous and exciting unleashing of *women's imagination* on the future in science fiction. And when women drop the bonds of male convention and use their own experience as the starting-point for imagination, wonderful things happen.

Ursula Le Guin's best books are *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*. In *The Left Hand of Darkness* she imagines a planet on which the people are all of one sex, a combined male-plus-female physically, and the reactions of a male visitor from a 'normal' world. There is a complete absence of gender roles. 'One is respected and judged only as a human being. It is an appalling experience,' is the first participant observer's reaction. Controversy has raged around the book. Some people consider sexual identity such a basic part of human personality that its absence would create tragic problems for the inhabitants as well as for visitors. Stanislaus Lem (a Polish SF writer much admired by Marxists) has said that Le Guin 'could not create, or did not know how

to create, the cruel harshness of the individual's destiny in such a system.'

The Dispossessed tells of twin planets, one capitalist, the other colonised by the mass emigration of an egalitarian movement founded by a woman, Odo. The description of Anarres, the poorer, egalitarian planet, is remarkable for its planned reconstruction of human nature. There is no property, no family; even the verb 'to have' has been abolished by Odo. Such a world is conceivable, even workable, despite the problems of scarcity. It is not socialist, but anarchist (Le Guin is more explicit about this in the related short story, 'The Day before the Revolution'.) There has been, and apparently can be, no revolution on the capitalist world, Urras.

Le Guin's idealism and pacifism emerge more clearly in other works, but at her best she has provided marvellously fertile ground for argument and discussion. She is magnificent when she contrasts the alternative possibilities with the greed and sexism of capitalist society - and in *The Word for World is Forest*, its racism and militarism.

Several women writers have explored the theme of matriarchy, and not just as Utopia. In Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Ruins of Isis*, a married couple from the planet University travel to the closed matriarchy of Isis. He is an archaeologist, but has to pretend to be her assistant; she is an anthropologist who believes that on her own world she has achieved equality. The matriarchy of Isis is extreme, and the woman Cendri is shocked - surely the men of the 'maleworlds' don't treat women as badly as women treat men here? Or do they? ('A man, for assistant? But how surprising ... Don't you find it ... *distracting?*') A men's revolt overthrows the matriarchy, but not in favour of male domination: new ways of living are slowly emerging when Cendri and her husband leave.

Another theme popular with women writers is the cyborg or part-human, part-mechanical person. Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang* deals with a human female brain encased in a space ship shell who forms semi-permanent relationships with her male pilots. In Joan Vinge's beautiful 'Tin Soldier' both ships and pilots are female, men having proved biologically unsuitable for space flight. In 'Fireflood',



Vonda McIntyre describes creatures specially adapted for space missions which never took place.

The possibilities of alien sex and biology were long ignored by male SF writers, who tended to assume that all intelligent life must pair off and copulate like earth mammals. In 1962, Naomi Mitchison came up with some rather peculiar alternatives in *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, and it is a favourite theme of 'James Tiptree Junior'.

'Tiptree' is the brilliant woman writer I nearly missed because of the pseudonym. For years Alice Sheldon concealed her identity and her sex, turning what had often been a necessity for earlier women writers into an utterly subversive tactic. 'Tiptree's' stories were written as if from a man's point of view, with women usually seen through the eyes of a (moderately) sexist and aggressive male. The male identity was accepted completely - men recognised themselves only too

well in Tiptree's heroes. Robert Silverberg wrote: 'It has been suggested that Tiptree is female, a theory I find absurd, for there is something ineluctably masculine about Tiptree's writing.'

Eventually, Tiptree/Sheldon wrote an outright feminist story, 'The Women Men Don't See', in which two women choose abduction by aliens rather than remain on Earth - and it was nominated for a major award because it showed how sympathetic a man could be! In 1976, Alice Sheldon finally owned up and knocked the breath out of the science fiction pundits.

'Houston, Houston, Do You Read?' by James Tiptree/Alice Sheldon, is the best story ever written on the theme of the women-only world. Tiptree's male starting-point, is maintained in this story of three men, lost on an early space flight, who are rescued three hundred years in the future, after a genetic plague has eliminated men

from Earth. The reactions of the men - it is a world of chatter, an ant heap, a headless chicken, an abomination in God's eyes or a happy hunting ground for the Big Prick - are perfectly balanced with those of the women - protective concern, curiosity, and finally relief that there are, after all, only three of them. In the end, a man asks bitterly, 'Just tell us, what do you call yourselves? Women's World? Liberation? Amazonia?' A woman smiles and replies, 'Why, we call ourselves human beings. Humanity, mankind. The human race.'

Even if women never do have to shoulder the burdens of humanity alone, we do not know what possibilities lie in the future - either this or the far side of socialist revolution. Whatever revolutions we make, whatever future we shall be able to build, women's imagination has clearly a huge contribution to make.

Norah Carlin

Polemic

Workers and the Nicaraguan revolution

Linnet van Tinteren, who returned from Central America in May last year examines some aspects of the class struggle in Nicaragua today. She takes issue with the analysis offered by Mike Gonzales in previous issues of *Socialist Review* on the nature of the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) and the Council of State first convoked on May 4, 1980

What is Sandinism and where is it taking the country? Most of the workers and peasants who, as the FSLN admits, made the successful insurrection in July 1979, were ready to be accommodated under the umbrella heading of 'Sandinism'. Junta and other FSLN members ranged from Marxist to social-democratic or liberal, and there was a strong tendency, on the Latin American left, to see the struggle purely in terms of national liberation from Yankee imperialism

Since then a new struggle has begun, between the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and the workers and peasants, and the uneasy coalition on which the FSLN perspectives were based last year has split irrevocably along class lines.

Industrial Militancy and the FSLN response

The FSLN response to widespread industrial militancy at the start of 1980 was inconsistent and changed in the course of time.

In January, construction workers building the new centre of Managua demanded wage parity with others in similar work and recognition of their union, SCAAS, affiliated to the trade union organisation CGT(i), which is dominated by the Moscow-oriented communist and socialist parties. The FSLN had backed a competing union, affiliated to their own CST, the Sandinista Workers' Federation. 1,500 of the workers demonstrated on 14th January, 1980, shouting the slogans, 'Workers and Peasants to power! Down with the Bourgeoisie!' They struck

and rapidly won wage increases, a canteen and store selling basic foods, and the unification of their union representation with SCAAS.

Then 400 agricultural workers struck for wage parity with similar workers at the Amalia sugar mill, and this was followed by strikes in other mills over pay and conditions, often led by rival groups to the FSLN. These workers won pay rises with promises of more later, and a new administrative council of representatives from different sectors of the mills. Health workers followed with demands for wage parity and more money for health programmes.

On the 7th February, 1980, 5,000 Managua factory workers marched to the Ministry of Labour, demanding rises of up to 100%.

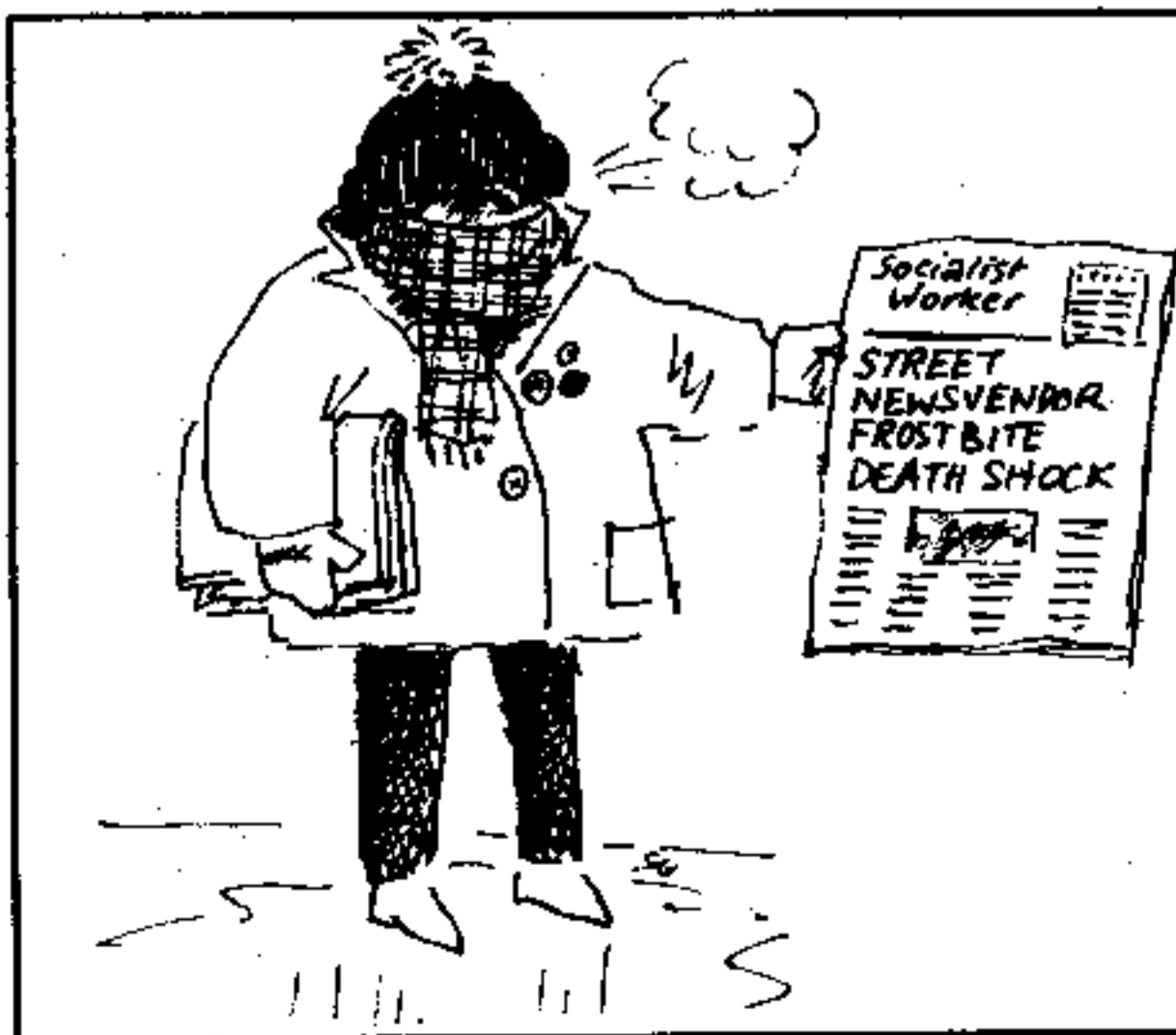
In late February, the workers of Fabritex, a part state-owned, part private factory, who had previously mobilised successfully to expel the residual Somozist administration, struck for wage increases and revalued job rates. Eventually, 20 other factories came out in solidarity and they won 10%

wage rises, loans and a commitment to better conditions. The gold mines were already nationalised by the FSLN, but workers struck in three mines for wage increases and regular supplies, winning new pay-scales which they helped to formulate.

Also, in February and March peasants dissatisfied with the extent of agrarian reform, seized large areas of land beyond the previous limits of what was owned by Somoza or Somocistas. This defied the state Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria, (INRA) who they also pressed to distribute previously expropriated land. When this spread to the San Ramon area the FSLN at first sent in the army to try to end it. Then came the government decree of March 2nd, which announced the permanent expropriation of INRA-held lands as well as legalising the expropriation of other lands.

At first, the FSLN's concern was chiefly to raise production at all costs and they resisted worker pressure, imprisoning and publicly vilifying some members of the rival FO (Frente Obrera) and Stalinist groups as the root of the problem, claiming these to be CIA manipulated.

Their change of approach emerged clearly with the Caracol strike, where the demands of the workers and raised production were both achieved by giving the workers their heads and dispossessing the owners.



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Since then they have tended to support and encourage occupations of factories or lands, though opposing strikes as attacking reconstruction. The Caracol occupation has been paralleled by others in Polymer SA Plastics, Standard Steel, SOVIPE, Nicarao, and Hurtado leather.

On the 2nd March, 1980, the government decreed for itself new powers to intervene in support of workers' actions and investigate decapitalisation by bosses. At the resulting news conference and in the FSLN political journal 'Poder Sandinista', emphasis was laid on the paramountcy of workers' action in enforcing the decree. Further series of wage strikes in June, notably in CANAL (cement) and Plynic (timber) were quickly settled by some concessions. Factory occupations in July and August were followed on August 23rd by a speech by H. Ortega of the Junta, announcing three measures against organised bourgeois opposition.

The bourgeoisie were, of course, not slow to see this process of gradual expropriation

and the developing responsiveness of the FSLN junta to workers' demands, rather than to their own, as the threat it was.

This came to a head on 22nd April, when Robelo of the MDN left the junta.

Robelo particularly objected to the composition of the new Council of State.

The new Council of State consisted of 47-50 delegates, only nine of whom represented the bourgeois parties and COSEP, the federation of industrialists, landlords, estate owners and merchants. Most of the expansion came from giving more seats to the elected delegates of mass organisation.

After this, the bourgeoisie resorted to increasingly dirty tactics: sneak raids and murders and a propaganda campaign accusing the FSLN of being anti-Christian, against individual freedom, of shipping basic grains to Cuba etc. and demanding parliamentary elections. On August 23rd the FSLN rejected demands for elections as a manoeuvre to attack the revolutionary process.

To summarise and review the position of

the FSLN: it is *not* a direct instrument of worker and peasant power in Nicaragua. It has *not* turned Nicaragua over to a government of people's soviets. It has *not* dispossessed all private property and industry. It is constrained by the need to rebuild and raise production at home and remain at peace for as long as possible with other countries. The Council of State does *not* control the government and the junta has two members who are not Sandinistas. There has been a class struggle going on for months in Nicaragua and workers' action as well as bourgeois recalcitrance has forced choices on the FSLN in a long series of confrontations. The general pattern of choices which emerged was support for worker action and accession to worker demands.

If there is anywhere in Latin America where a successful struggle for national liberation is being followed by a continuing class-struggle and where the outworn ideologies of the past are being replaced by a new workers' consciousness born of momentous experience, that country is Nicaragua.



The best money can buy

New recommendations to increase police powers have quite rightly met firm opposition from all socialists.

As anybody who has ever been in court will know, there are lies, damned lies, and police evidence. But even with the most sophisticated techniques of fiction, the striking thing about the cops is their total incompetence. A recent report suggests that the CID manage to clear up a staggering total of 2.5 (yes, the decimal point is in the right place—two-point-five) per cent of crime.

These statistics—proverbially as reliable as police evidence—emerge from a Home Office Report called *The Effectiveness of Policing*. Together with other recent studies, they build up a damning indictment of the cops.

* 93 per cent of shoplifting is detected. But only because only those who are caught in the act ever come to police attention. The interesting question is how the seven per cent caught scuttling out of Tesco with a tin of sardines in their pocket ever get away with it.

* 80 per cent of crimes of violence are cleared up. This is because the assailant is usually known to the victim.

* 20 per cent of burglaries are cleared up. Most of these are because someone caught in the act will then 'confess' to a string of other offences.

* Overall, 40 per cent of reported crime is cleared up. This is about a quarter of all crimes actually committed. Of these reported offences, only about 25 per cent are cleared up by detective work. That means, if you do the sums, that we end up with the CID clearing up that famous 2.5 per cent of crime.

But the wally on the beat is not much more use. The average copper on foot patrol can expect to intercept a street robbery every 14 years.

This is all bad news for your average cop, since fewer arrests mean slower promotion and, of course, much less chance of a back-hander.

But there is a much more serious question at stake. Since 1950, expenditure on the police has risen fivefold in real money terms. There are twice as many cops as there were thirty years ago. And as spending increases, so do the number of crimes. The correlation, as the table shows, is so striking that we have to ask is there a causal link.

Of course there is such a link. Not only does the whole structure of the police necessitate an increase in crime in order to ensure individual promotion and bureaucratic growth, but such a force is bound to be ineffective.

The classic Marxist theory of the state is that it is 'a special body of armed men'. This means that it is necessarily separate from the society it polices. Such a separation is essential if ordinary human beings are to be disciplined into attacking their sisters and brothers. But crime takes place inside society.

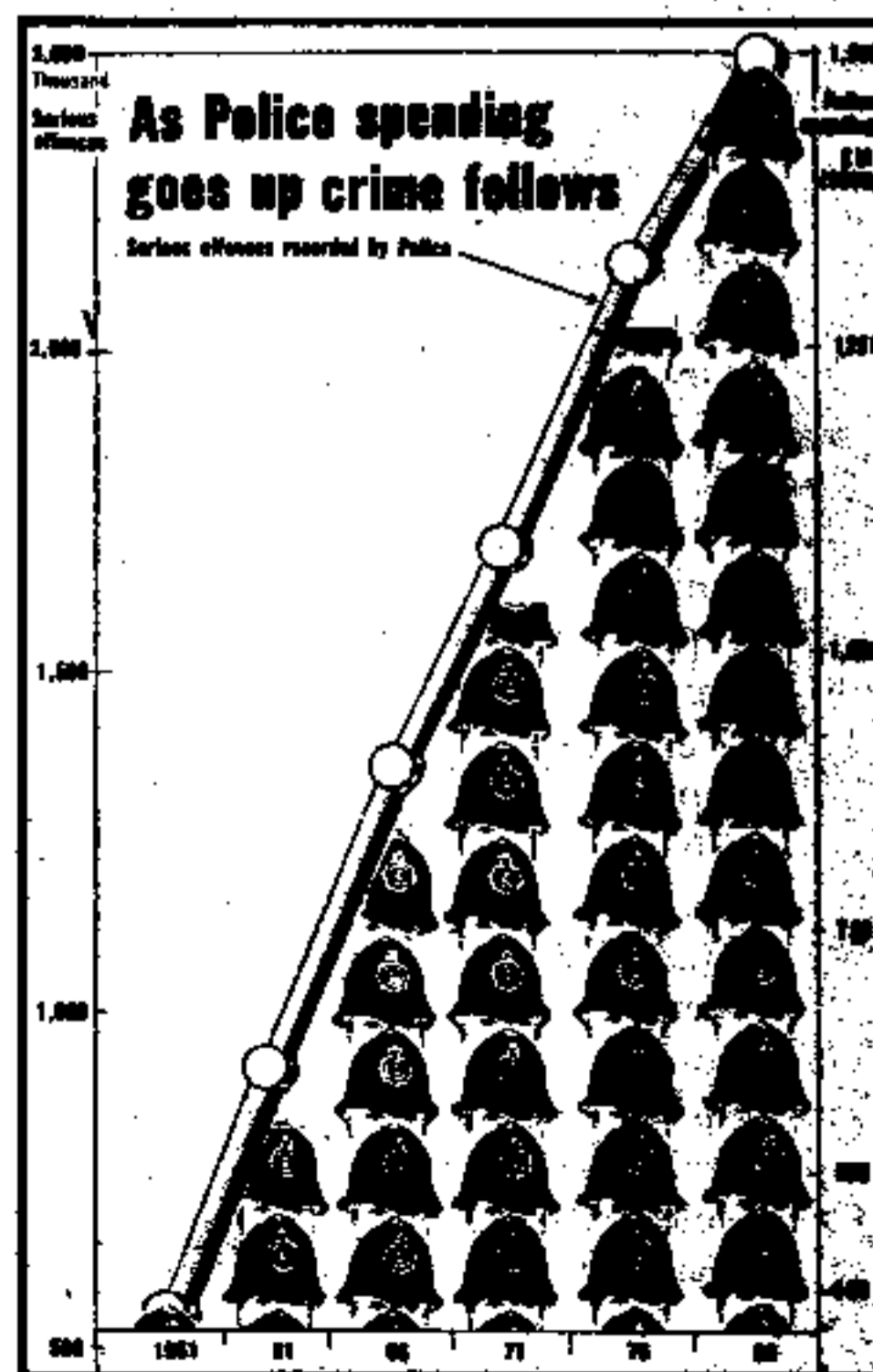
So, in order to have any hope of clearing up crime, the police must rely on people inside society. There are two sorts of such people: paid informers and ordinary citizens. Paid informers are only any use against 'professional crime' and their effectiveness is not related to the size of the police.

Ordinary citizens, on the other hand, will volunteer information to the cops only in so far as they believe that the police are doing a worthwhile and useful job. But a larger police force, and harsher legislation, mean that more and more ordinary people are subjected to some sort of police harassment. So they are

increasingly sceptical about the value of the police. Consequently, it follows logically that the larger the police force, the more likely it is to create crime and the less likely it is to be able to clear it up.

That is why Marxists argue that there will be no police force under socialism. It is not that some individuals will not commit anti-social acts, although social conditions will mean that their number will be greatly reduced. Rather it is that the only effective way to stop such people is if the mass of the population reject them and are ready to prevent them where necessary. Thus the only effective method of policing is by the citizens themselves.

Capitalism, of course, cannot adopt this sensible strategy. It needs the police for quite different things: smashing strikes and demonstrations and defending the existing order against its enemies.





TUC bureaucracy

In Congress House no-one can hear you scream

When the Tories came to power last year the experience for the whole of the top bureaucracy of the trade union movement was a little like walking along the pavement and finding a trap door open in front of you rather than solid ground. All of a sudden the elaborate courtship from the government vanished, to be replaced by a sense of isolation which has grown stronger rather than weaker in the succeeding 18 months. It did not take long for certain irreverent TUC staff who'd been to see *The Alien* to coin the phrase 'In Congress House No One Can Hear You Scream.'

The problem for the trade union leadership—collectively—has been that they have had nothing whatever to say (let alone do) in the worst post-war economic crisis. Their total irrelevance is best illustrated by the recent fate of a 'clever' initiative on new technology produced by one David Lea—the man who gave us the Concordat on St Valentine's Day 1978. TUC and CBI staff drew up an agreed document which welcomed new technology, admitted jobs would have to go, but said that changes should be negotiated. All good 1960s stuff.

Unfortunately a number of employers, especially the Engineering Employers' Federation, don't want anything to do with negotiations before bringing in new machines and sacking workers, least of all with national rules containing a TUC 'checklist'.

So the CBI rejected the 'joint' document at a recent meeting, leaving the TUC to issue press statements denouncing ... 'the real Luddites.' This was the sum total of the one real TUC initiative to have taken place since June 1979.

The Grain

In this context the extraordinary events surrounding the Isle of Grain dispute, the different unions' stances, the TUC response and the final squalid deals can be rather more easily understood. It may seem slightly difficult to recall now that the AUEW, the EETPU and the CEU were technically within two days of suspension from the TUC over the scabbing in the lagers' dispute. The 'compromise' deal advanced by the GMWU in fact conceded a large part of what Duffy, Chapple and Baldwin wanted—and virtually everything which the

Central Electricity Generating Board had wanted when it launched its offensive against local bargaining on bonus payments in July 1979.

The reasons for the big blow-up and then the subsequent 'reconciliations' were hardly to do with the lagers at all. They were first of all to do with the Chapple/Duffy attempt to assert their right to go their own way on anything and, in particular, to spite the two big general unions. Secondly, the issue for the TUC's own bureaucracy was above all defence of the Bridlington procedures. Taking an overall view, the rules on inter-union disputes are about the only thing the TUC has to call its own at the moment; if Chapple, especially, had been allowed to flout them, Len Murray and Co might just as well have stopped turning up for work.

But behind these two issues of personal politics on the general council and the 'authority of the TUC', there are several related developments which illustrate the state the trade union bureaucracy has got itself into after the first year of the Thatcher government and the lack of direction at the official level in the trade union movement.

The EETPU

Several of the more important moves concern the EETPU. *Socialist Review* readers do not have to be told about the projected merger with the AUEW—but the electricians have also been quietly swallowing other organisations, notably the UK Association of Professional Engineers, a managerial union chiefly involved in aerospace, and

INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

the Steel Industry Management Association, which 'organises' executive grades in the steel corporation. Both organisations have been notable in the past for their dubious union credentials. UKAPE for example attempted to recruit in TASS areas at the time of the Industrial Relations Act, notably at C A Parsons in Newcastle where there was a long dispute involving defiance of the law.

Clearly these mergers represent a significant step for the EETPU, which is now in a strong position to attract the Electrical Power Engineers' Association and its offshoot the Engineers' and Managers' Association, which could represent a big threat to the recruitment plans of TASS among engineering industry junior and middle managers.

Amalgamation Skirmishes

But meanwhile TASS has not been inactive. Its latest moves to frustrate the forced AUEW amalgamation without TASS, involved the courts and the legal machinery by which unions are registered. Ken Gill, the chief motivator of the legal moves, appears to have won his case and blocked a revision to the rules for the time being. At virtually the same time, the *Financial Times* carried a story about TASS full-time officials objecting to a change in the rules by which they can be removed from office by the executive or the general secretary. We can of course only speculate on the motives of those involved—but there are strong precedents for full-time unelected officials brought to office by the Communist Party becoming totally unaccountable, and TASS may need totally 'reliable' full-timers in the not too distant future.

Moves by other AUEW sections are less complex and subtle. The construction section, the initial scab union at the Grain, was the first to go along with the TUC formula, largely because it could almost be swallowed overnight by the TGWU without anyone noticing, if it were not protected by Bridlington rules. Duffy's decision to pull away from a confrontation with the TUC may have been marginally motivated by the fact that his election was taking place at the time; but more to the point, an AUEW unprotected by Bridlington would have been wide open to the T&G in the car industry, especially as the T&G since the Robinson affair at BL has been looking for a chance to strengthen its hand in terms both of bargaining and membership. The T&G stands to lose more members than the AUEW through automation and robot assembly lines.

The TGWU 'conspiracy'

A large part of the press comment on the way the TUC has been moving has concentrated on Moss Evans and the TGWU vote. In particular, in the aftermath of the threatened Grain suspensions and the TUC's crisis over Poland, the papers latched on to the fact that it was the T&G that had moved Sidney Weighell of the NUR off the TUC's Transport Industry Committee to be

replaced by its own man, and that the T&G had been prominent in moving Frank Chapple off the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

There is some substance to the view that the T&G has been asserting itself in the vacuum of union leadership. Ever since his role in the steel strike (which we documented in *Socialist Review* 1980:4) Moss Evans has been coming more to the front than previously, particularly in the Labour Party internal arguments. But this has more to do—apparently—with the decision of Alex Kitson and other T&G full-timers to push for certain policies, such as support for the October 10th demonstration outside the Tory conference, than with Evans' ability to move into the driver's seat vacated by Jack Jones.

What is in fact most interesting about the apparent T&G push for power is that it reveals the lack of centralised authority within the T&G itself as well as within the TUC as a whole. Evans' role seems more to be as a straightforward sell-out merchant—for example in capitulating over the Leyland scabs' charter (see *Socialist Review* 1980:5)—than as an authoritative leader within the union. The regional officials and national officers have in the meantime been enhancing their role.

This could be quite important in a negative sense for the 'broad left'. The T&G as

such is not the force it was under Jones, in terms of a bloc, but as a bureaucratic instrument it has thus become more useful on certain issues, particularly as some of the higher-ranking full-timers—like Kitson—are long-standing 'left' officials, a fact which has of course not prevented them putting the knife into disputes like Adwest this year.

A cripple alliance

This far we have a picture of a 'shell-shocked' TUC and, for the most part, a leaderless, rudderless union bureaucracy which can't do anything much with the employers, because of the hardliners in the CBI, can't do anything (much) about unemployment, because it's afraid that orange-jacketed marchers will swarm in and take up initiatives in all directions.

How far is this totally pathetic state of affairs likely to continue?

The only real initiatives seem to be coming from the right. By forcing Murray to play go-between, the right-wing basically got what it wanted from the Isle of Grain, including most probably being able to blame its closure on the 'left's' peace formula. Meanwhile the right-wing in both the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the National Union of Railwaymen seem to be playing around with the idea of recreating the 'Triple Alliance'—along with the NUM.

The Mancunian way

The recent strike by Manchester council Housing Department workers shows that at least the rank-and-file in local government is prepared to fight back against the cuts.

The dispute began when the Labour-controlled Manchester council, elected on a mandate of no cuts, started to push through their third successive round of cuts since June 1980.

The Housing Department management introduced a re-structuring document which amounted to about the same sort of thing as British Leyland's 'slaves charter'. The document gave management the right to prioritise areas of work at 24 hours notice and introduced complete labour flexibility throughout the department. This went hand in hand with massive de-skilling, giving work previously done by professional officers to clerical grades and increasing the role of new technology.

The document was introduced over the heads of the unions. There were no negotiations and management announced it to the membership at office meetings they had organised. At the same time, they sent personal letters to all employees over 50 offering them voluntary redundancy.

A week before the management offensive, the NUPE housing branch had unanimously re-affirmed its policy of not covering for unfilled vacancies, and the membership

were in no mood to take the new document lying down.

But the management forced the pace by victimising ten workers for refusing to cover unfilled vacancies. NUPE responded to the sackings by calling a strike meeting, and the NALGO rank-and-file pushed a very reluctant branch leadership into support for the strike. The membership in the Housing Department were determined to fight and there were strong indications of support from other council workers.

Unfortunately, the local leadership and full-time officials were not so determined. No strike committee was elected and instead the leadership was made up of representatives of the departmental Joint Consultative Committee. This quickly became bitterly divided, with those NUPE members who supported a rank-and-file approach in a decided minority. The majority, who had opposed the strike in the first place, provided no sort of leadership.

Up until very near the end of the strike, this was the sort of leadership that prevailed. At all times they were trying to stitch up a deal with management. One attempt, to get a mass meeting to return to work with a deal that did not even guarantee the reinstatement of the 10 victimised workers, was thrown out by angry members.

On the other hand, the NALGO Action

This is not the only bloc to have formed after the collapse of the social contract. The civil service unions have their coordinating committee, the public sector unions have a liaison committee and so on. The new alliance is more notably politically, however, in the sense that, like its famous predecessor, which was founded in 1913, it is an alliance of the right wing, designed to head off rather than lead any militancy.

It is early days yet, but if the new alliance does get anywhere it will surely be in trying to prevent any effective pooling of resources and strength between miners, steelworkers and rail workers. As with the burst of militancy from the Wales TUC earlier this year—of which nothing more has been heard—the operation seems to be concerned with diverting any militant movement in South Wales into safer channels.

We can expect more of these sorts of development, however—given that a number of union leaders will be coming under considerable rank and file pressure, often from their 'right-wing' bases, to do something about jobs. Now that the TUC seems to have abdicated completely, the vacuum may be filled by powerful sounding but ephemeral alliances of different groups of bureaucrats. The task as always will be to see what's actually there on the ground.

David Beecham

Group and the NUPE Rank and File Organisation were able to organise very effectively. They provided the backbone of the attempts to organise picketing and support from other workers. The pathetic official leaflets were bundled up by the members and dumped in the union offices. Rank and File leaflets were handed out instead. Successful speaking tours were organised in Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and London. A one-day strike and demonstration was organised at four days notice and it was supported by 3000 council workers. The Rank and File public address system took over and led the demonstration.

Support for a more militant stance was clearly growing and the officials moved quickly to end the strike before it got out of control. They cobbled together a new deal which did give the ten workers their jobs back and managed to force it through a mass meeting.

This was a major sell-out. Support for the strike was growing and money and messages of support were flooding in. A more determined stand in Manchester could have provided a focus for a national campaign against cuts in local government.

As it is, Manchester council have achieved all they wanted and more.

* NALGO Action Group and NUPE Rank and File have produced a pamphlet which analyses the strike in great detail. 'Lessons of the Strike' can be obtained at 30p per copy, 10 copies for £1.50, both post free, from: Flat 3, 13 The Beeches, Didsbury, Manchester M20.

Maurice Vallely.

Glad to be gay — at work

For a homosexual, the first necessary step is self-recognition. The process of coming to accept oneself as a homosexual can be very difficult and involve much agonising. Having 'come out' to oneself, the next step is to come out to friends, family and employers. For many this last step is left to the police and the courts, after conviction of one of the many offences for which the law 'reform' in 1967 made no provision. Coming out will often mean dramatic changes in your life, involving husband, wife, children and neighbours. To not be able to make that choice with due preparation can have horrifying results.

But precisely those pressures which make it most difficult for gay people to come out make it most difficult for them to organise to change their working conditions. The struggle for gay rights at work then has two components: organising against the employer to prevent victimisation; organising among fellow employees in order to make coming out a sympathetic experience.

The Unions

Because 'being a homosexual' involves what you do in your private life, few gay people see it as having anything to do with their workplace experience, until they get the sack. Queer-bashing jokes in the staff canteen, fear of recognition provoking too sharp a reaction from boss or fellow workers, and the possibility of carving out a tolerable existence in the pubs, home, foreign holidays, all combine to prevent gay people from forming the links between their oppression and organising at work.

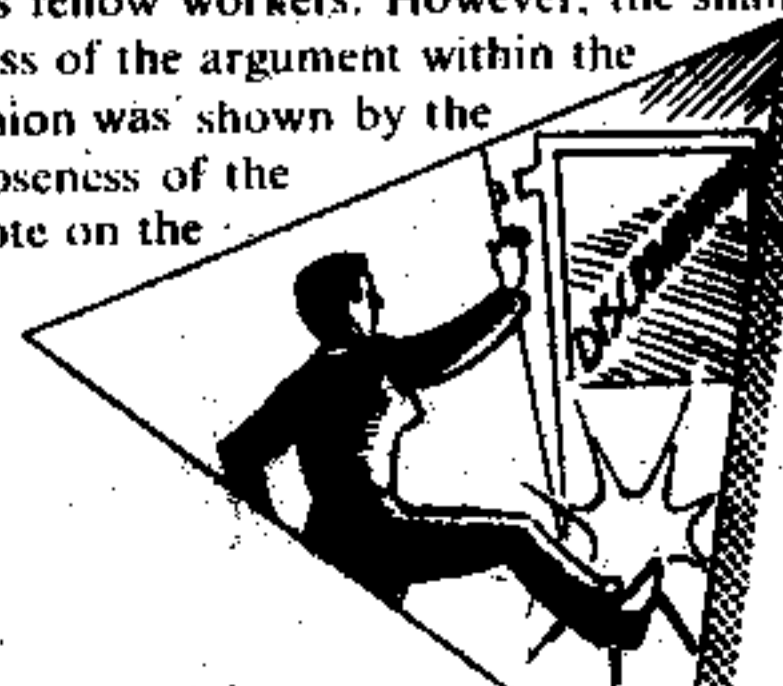
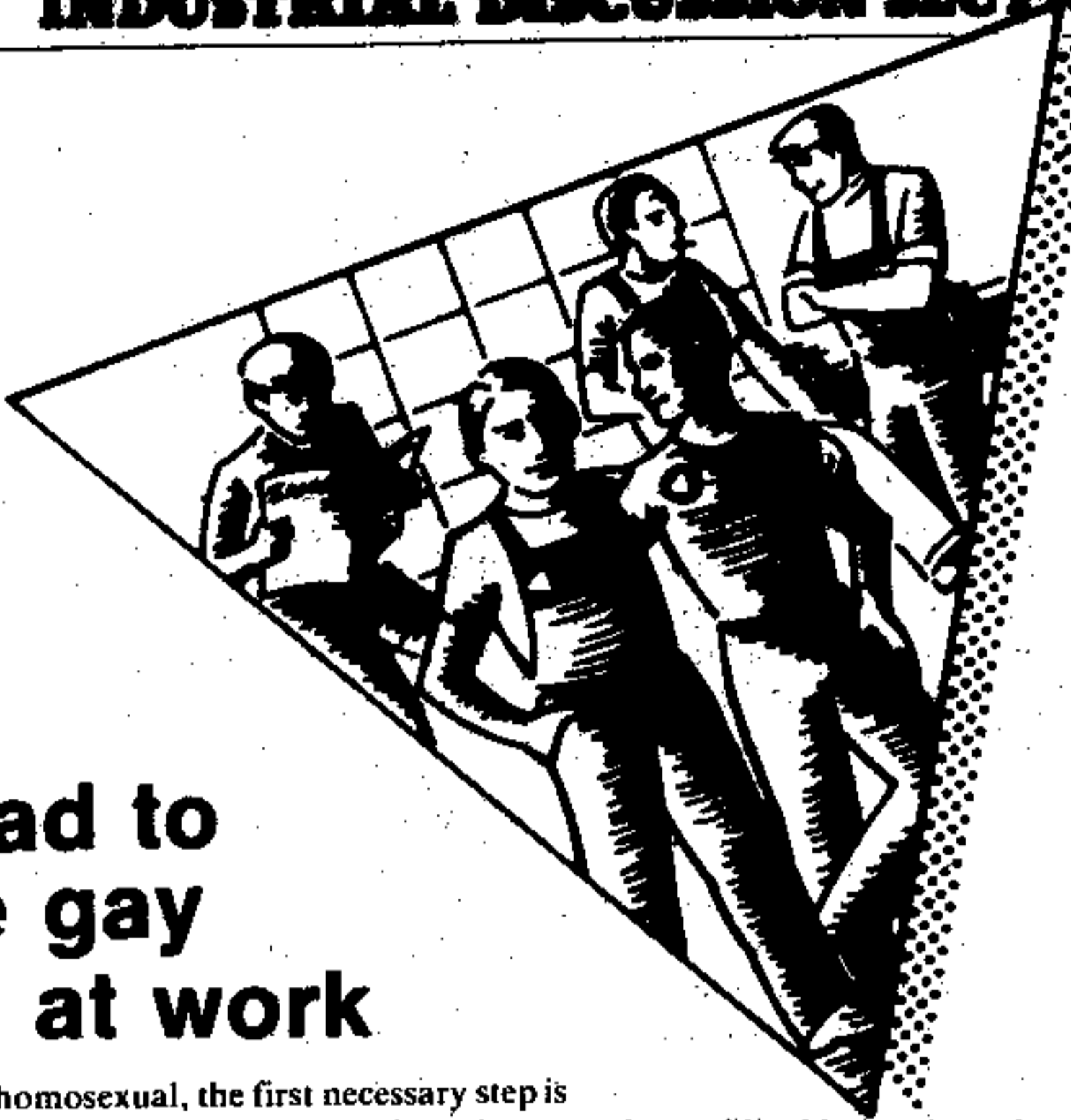
Gay rights organisations, while making genuflections towards the trade unions in the same breath as the churches, have never recognised the workplace as a point of major influence. Gay work in the labour movement has always been undertaken by a small group of gay trade unionists and the supporters of the rank-and-file groups. Given the brief period during which this work has been done, the successes are not

inconsiderable, and sections of the class have proved to be more sympathetic to gay rights than was expected.

The NUJ was the first union to pass an anti-discrimination clause, including biased reporting, but no case has ever been taken up, despite the almost continual stream of anti-gay abuse from papers, both national and regional. There has not been a case, however, of obvious sacking, so there has not yet been an opportunity of putting the position to the test.

The National Union of Students was the first union to pass a positive motion, and to campaign around it, although the NUS Gay Liberation Campaign has had a chequered career, and can present little positive proof of advance. The clearest case of discrimination concerned a student teacher, Geoff Brighton, who was prevented from undertaking his training course unless he had a medical-psychiatric examination. The case provoked unwilling support from his own union, and less from the NUS executive, and his success in fighting was a result of the activity generated from within the gay movement and from socialist students.

NALGO was the first large trade union to pass a gay rights motion, following active campaigning by the small group of gay people in NALGAY, supported by the NALGO Action Group. The best example of a fight was provided by Ian Davies who, when sacked after a conviction of gross indecency, managed to produce a mass walkout from his fellow workers. However, the shallowness of the argument within the union was shown by the closeness of the vote on the



INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

banning of Scarborough as a conference venue, after the town council refused to accept a booking from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

Within the NUT continual attempts by Rank & File Teacher and the Gay Teachers Group have still not achieved a debate at conference, although non-discrimination clauses have been negotiated locally with a small number of employers. It is possible that the enthusiasm of the fighters round the case of John Warburton, an ILEA teacher, while not achieving his re-instatement, at least has held off other employers from taking the same line.

NATFHE has been somewhat more successful, though in the sacking of Gordon Wiseman in Salford, the fact that he belonged to Equity instead of NATFHE was enough to prevent the majority union in the college and the authority taking any action.

Within the Civil Service the situation is far from clear, for the 'security' angle is pushed whenever questions are asked. However considerable work has been done within the CPSA, SCPS and the IRSF, all of which have shown themselves amenable to debate. But probably the greatest single success within the public service was the passing of a motion at the NUPE conference this year. This however has not led to any active campaigning on NUPE's part. Within the rest of the labour movement it is a sorry tale, not worth telling.

Gay Rights At Work

The evident lack of progress led to the calling last year of a conference of gay activists in the labour movement around the theme of Gay Rights at Work. 35 people were delegated, 25 branches sponsored and more than one hundred people attended. This provided the basis for setting up a committee which has produced a pamphlet, badges, provided speakers, produced action sheets around specific cases of victimisation, and orchestrated motions through a number of union branches.

However, tensions exist between the three possible directions which any campaign for gay rights at work could take:

- orienting around fighting tribunals and appearing respectable, but spending vast amounts of money on lawyers' fees;
- orienting on the official machinery, working at their pace and accepting their leadership in specific cases;
- orienting around the rank and file, trying to build the self-activity of gay people, but incurring the suspicion of the leadership and endangering individual victimisations through over-politicising.

This has prevented one single general campaign emerging. And the limitation of resources has prevented the campaign really reaching beyond a small layer of militants into either the real depths of the white collar unions, or anywhere in the manual unions. Workplace activity remains minimal and the majority of gay people unaware of the importance in their lives of the protection

which unions could provide for them. The majority of cases involving direct anti-gay victimisation (always difficult to prove anyway) still concern people who are non-unionised, have not come out to their fellow workers, are unprepared to put up a fight, and put their trust in tribunals.

The Rank and File

Two components to successful gay work in the unions are essential: there has to be a caucus of gay militants who are prepared to undertake activity, including writing letters to union papers and gay papers, pushing motions through branches, working around gay organisations and meeting places, creating enough stink to get something going. Secondly, there has to be a rank-and-file network which can generalise experience, has some experience of how the union operates, and has an agitational machine. So far only a tiny proportion of gay victimisations are fought and only a very few gays come out at work. Just as only a tiny proportion of workers have the confidence to take on the bosses, or the Tories.

Our work must still have two broad currents:

- winning the bulk of working people to an acceptance of the rights of gay people, and the understanding of how bosses use anti-gay fears to undermine workplace solidarity;

- winning the bulk of gay people to the realisation that their interests are inextricably linked with the interests of the class as a whole, and that gay liberation, as with any other liberation, has to be achieved at the point of production.

You can help

- Pass the motion below through your branch and to higher union bodies.
- Order pamphlets, badges and leaflets for general distribution
- Invite a speaker to motivate work in the branch
- Let the committee know of any case of victimisation which needs to be fought.
- Support the demonstration in Manchester on 21st February with banners.
- Support the conference on March 28th in Sheffield with delegations.

John Lindsey

This branch recognises that gay people need positive encouragement to defend themselves against victimisation at work. We call on the union to publicise the work of the Gay Rights at Work Committee, undertake to distribute its material through the branch, and agree to sponsor the conference in Sheffield on 28th March 1981.

Donations to 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9

Getting it together around the dole

In our last issue Andy Strouthous from Tyne-side told about the problems of organising the unemployed. Now Stuart Fancy, from South-East London writes on the methods they've used to build the Right to Work campaign there. He bears out many of the points made by Andy.

In the summer we leafleted the dole and sold *Socialist Worker*. We found that while the paper sold very well to the over-25s we didn't make many gains with the youth. Quite a few were interested in the idea of protest by the unemployed, but they weren't prepared to commit themselves to go on the march.

But what we did find was that by working on a social basis we did get contact with about 15 unemployed who we managed to get to various pickets. But what was happening was that you could get one group to one thing, another to the next and so on. We didn't seem to integrate the various groups of unemployed youth. The basic fact is that people do things collectively when they are in their social groups, and are very wary of going off on their own with people they don't know.

We did finally manage to get three on the Right to Work march for one week. The march sufficiently interested them to be willing to do unemployment work when they

got back.

What we find with our events is if they're organised for the youth they don't work—this was the problem with a lot of RAR's events. They must be organised by the youth.

It was decided to organise on a more social basis and try to get the various groups of unemployed we knew together. So far we've organised a couple of gigs, which have been well attended. So far things have been working quite well. We sent a minibus full up to a South East TUC demo in East London and mobilised a lot of people to give out leaflets.

We've also got a trades council backed group calling itself Greenwich Action Group on Unemployment (GAGOU). They are friendly and not sectarian, have been on Right to Work pickets and went to Brighton. But despite a very energetic beginning they have been reduced to a small group who spend so much of their time trying for council and government grants that they don't have time to campaign amongst the unemployed. At the beginning GAGOU was very energetic, working around the dole queues, but they got dispirited became inward-looking and reckon now that if they get an unemployed centre they'll be able to organise from there.

LETTERS

Ask the kids

There are elements of truth in all three options which Dave Evans presents us with on paedophilia (SR 1980:11)

- Children do have the 'right' to break out of the forced parent-child relationship
- Paedophile relationships are bound to be exploitative
- Adult attitudes towards sexuality are quite different from those of children.

It is also true that the PIE trial will be an attempt to assault the whole sexual liberation movement on the ground on which it is weakest and most divided; that many women have a different position on the question of age of consent from many men; that it is still difficult to raise any questions of sexuality within the labour movement.

But we must not be tempted into idealistic support for an oppressed minority, nor idealise romantic relations.

We must recognise that any talk of 'freedom' without economic independence is romantic.

We must recognise that young people themselves will have to struggle for their liberation, and that we must support the NUSS as the best means of achieving it.

Paedophilia is the love of children by adults. It says nothing about the opinions of the children on the question.

John Lindsey

Paedophilia harmful?

Having read David Evans' 'Dispelling the myths' in the December/January SR, I should like to try to dispel David Evans' misguided indignation. The use of a bad law against members of Paedophile Information Exchange does not automatically turn the defendants into 'martyrs'. (The forecast 'wave of press-orchestrated hysteria' and '8-week orgy of slander' doesn't seem to have materialised anyway, but that is beside the point.)

Unfortunately, many socialists imagine that any group that opposes the dominant morality of capitalist society is automatically good and progressive, and that all good revolutionary socialists should support it. This attitude is often incredibly harmful, as the 'oppressed' groups may well be genuinely dangerous to society at large or to a vulnerable group (in this case children). In such a case, the sight of socialists leaping to defend such 'martyrs' can effectively alienate large numbers of people from socialism. It is correct that we should question our handed-down sexual morality, so let's consider seriously whether paedophilia is a harmless sexual preference that does no-one any harm.

Sexual, like other relationships, should not be exploitative or manipulative. They're more difficult to regulate than other relationships as an exploited partner is under emotional pressure not to complain. As there is no way that society can or should check upon individual relationships, the

only way to minimise exploitation is to try to ensure that sexual relationships are based on equality and that people involved in them have access to any information they may want or find useful in protecting their interests. Economic equality is vitally important—women have often been forced into sexual relations with men in order to obtain civil rights, a meal ticket, respectability, the right to keep their children.

An adult-child relationship cannot be equal, economically, intellectually or emotionally. In an adult sex relationship, hopefully, each partner has a good idea of what the other expects and experiences, and so can judge whether or not they want to give it. An adult is in a better position than a child to judge another adult's motives and character simply through being aware of a wider range of possibilities; having met, read about, heard about more people and situations. Any parent and any adult who can remember its own childhood should realise the vulnerability of children to emotional blackmail; if adult women can be emotionally blackmailed into pretending to enjoy unwelcome sexual advances then so can children.

It is also necessary to take into account that a child is unaware of the re-interpretation of self and experience that happens at puberty. Adults have a responsibility to protect children from relationships that are likely to be traumatically re-understood some years later, even if apparently enjoyed at the time. Children, as a group, are dependent on adults, as a group, for food, shelter and education/socialisation that enables them to achieve an intellectual and behavioural status with which to cope with society's (any society's) demands and obligations.

I also would argue that feminists must oppose paedophilia. Girls are more threatened by paedophilia than boys, both because of the different nature of male and female sexual feelings and because of the risks of pain and actual injury, pregnancy, cervical cancer and VD (which is more difficult to detect early in females). Adult women often have difficulty ensuring men's

cooperation with contraception—what chance have nine and ten-year-old girls? From the parents' point of view, legitimised paedophilia would mean constant fear and worry and would make it more difficult to share the burden of child-care.

Barbara Finch
Camden

Slander!

Duncan Hallas once again slanders the Trotskyist movement in his article 'The return of the workers' bomb' (SR 1980:11)

Quoting the lines of the old song:
'Degenerated tho' it be
It's still the workers' property'

Hallas alleges that 'Other self styled 'orthodox' Trotskyist groups, including those in the tradition now represented by the IMG in Britain adopted the same general view.' This is a lie.

May I remind you of the correspondence from 'Tribune' on the subject in 1960-61, reprinted in *A Socialist Review* by IS in 1965. There, in the final letter of the series (p. 187-8), John Daniels and Ken Coates, of the Internationalist Group which preceded the IMG wrote:

'We are sorry to see that Mr Gerry Healy no longer attaches any importance to the international solidarity of the working class.'

'What he has failed to recognise in giving his blessing to Mr. Khrushchev's H-bombs, is that though it is true that the social systems of America and Russia are different, the implications of H-bomb ownership are the same.

'It is ludicrous to own H-bombs without being prepared to be the first to detonate them. There is no point in the Russian leaders waiting for American H-bombs to touch down on Moscow before they issue orders to demolish London and New York. The first to strike is the most likely to survive, even though this likelihood is statistically insignificant.'

'Perhaps Mr Healy thinks that the Russians have patented selective H-bombs, capable, in the words of the old song, of preserving the workers by 'dropping them leaflets while we bomb their bosses.'

'We think that in the absence of such



'You can overkill us 50 times, but we can only overkill you 49 times.'

MISSILE MADNESS

SWP pamphlet by Peter Binns on the new weapons system and how they threaten your life. 40p (plus 10p postage). Bulk orders £3.25 for 10 post free from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.

miracles of Soviet science, actions of the Russian workers to disarm their leaders would do more to help us disarm the madmen (sic) of Downing Street and the Pentagon than any amount of dialectical sophistry by Mr Khrushchev.

'As for the dialectics of Mr Healy concerning whether or not the Soviet H-bombs are healthy or degenerate workers' bombs; we think them more likely to lead us into primitive Communism than the other sort.'

John Strauther

Liverpool

Gratuitous sectarianism

The article on Missiles in the 1980:10 edition of *Socialist Review* contained a piece of gratuitous sectarianism aimed at Manchester Against the Missiles (MAM). As I was recorded as your Manchester contributor these remarks have been wrongly attributed to me.

The article claimed that the unevenness in the missile campaign in Manchester stemmed mainly from 'bureaucratic manoeuvres by the ruling group' in MAM which local groups must 'ignore or perish'. This is rubbish. As I pointed out to Peter Binns when he rang me, one significant reason why the campaign in Manchester is uneven is the lack of a consistent input by the SWP.

The SWP has both the politics and the organisation to offer the leadership and consistency which the campaign needs. Tragically the large majority of the members locally (and I suspect nationally) still see the issue as peripheral to the class struggle and dominated by brown rice and sandals persons.

The vacuum in leadership which this attitude leaves has been filled in Manchester by precisely those groups which the article sneers at. It is to the credit of those groups and individuals that MAM also has a policy of encouraging local groups rather than trying to substitute for them. It does no good to the campaign and no credit to the SWP that it is seen to be standing outside the action, making the sort of carping and ill founded jibes contained within an otherwise good article.

There are of course valid constructive criticisms which can be made of MAM as there must be for similar groups elsewhere. If the SWP expects anyone in the campaigns to take any notice of its criticisms then it will first of all have to convince its members to get their hands dirty building the campaign where it counts.

Les Kay

Coalition Against the Missiles

Anti-sex, Anti-gay, ageist ...

We were shocked and angry to read, in the article on Stalinism in the 1980:11 issue of *Socialist Review*:

'Organised Stalinist politics today may be no more than a few ageing hacks in the New Communist Party masturbating over pictures of their hero in full military regalia.'

There is nothing wrong with wanking;

there is nothing wrong with old people wanking; there is nothing wrong with fantasising about a man, whether in uniform or not, while wanking. There is certainly nothing peculiarly Stalinist about it. To suggest that there is, is anti-sex, anti-gay and ageist.

When we criticise Stalinists we do so on the basis of their political not their sexual practice, and we should not make cheap jibes linking a perfectly valid form of sexual expression with reactionary politics.

We cannot forget the treatment of gays in the Soviet Union under Stalin and, since. And we wonder whether the SWP has now adopted the Stalinist line that masturbation detracts from revolutionary fervour and therefore should be discouraged.

We notice that this article was written by Ian Birchall, who was responsible for an article in the previous issue of *Socialist Review* equating homosexuality with self-indulgence, and in issue 711 of *Socialist Worker* manages to link sodomy (and therefore homosexuality) with French capitalism.

Manchester SWP Gay Group

A serious flaw

Socialist Review is lively, informative and provides useful political analysis of the world. But there has been one glaring excep-

tion to this general excellence. I refer, of course, to an article published some months ago by one Colin Sparks. It was called *The Politics of Sport*. Sparks, to judge by his other writings, is a talented, if superficial, populariser of other people's ideas. In this case, his ideas obviously came from a book called *Sport: A Prisoner of Measured Time* by Jean-Marie Brohm.

I do not object so much to your publishing the article, scandalous and anti-Marxist though it was. Much more important is that you have not published any firm Marxist reply from your readers. The only possible explanation is that you have suppressed them, since I do not believe that you have not been deluged with serious defences of competitive sport by the hundreds of SWP members who, at Skegness and other places, prove by their actions their dedication to this ideal.

It is a serious flaw in an otherwise very open magazine that this sort of manipulation should still exist.

A. N. Hake

East London

* Many readers of the *Review* have expressed outrage at Sparks' article, and a number of them have promised that they would write a reply.

Unfortunately, so far none of them have done so. Ed.

BOOK REVIEWS

Taking the lid off the box

On Television

Stuart Hood

Pluto Press, £2.95

Most critiques of the mass media—for the past decade at least—have been written from a left wing point of view. But that does not automatically make them useful for socialists trying to understand the media. Many are written for an academic market with a view to enhancing the status of Media/Cultural Studies. Many are written in mystifying and tortuous prose and owe more to the French philosopher Althusser than to Marx.

Stuart Hood's book is entirely different. It is written from an uncompromising, Marxist viewpoint. It is lucid and completely free of jargon. It is essentially a popular book, but no less thorough in its analysis of television ranging from the images on our screen to the organisations that produce those images and their relationship to the state. Perhaps most importantly, the book is based on first-hand knowledge and experience of how the system works. During the 'left' phase of the BBC in the early sixties under the directorship of Hugh Carleton Greene, Stuart Hood somehow slipped through the security net to be employed in a fairly influential position in the organisation.

Television programmes, Hood argues,

are produced in much the same way as cars on an assembly line. The men and women who make them have little control over their product and experience a similar kind of alienation to workers in any other branch of industry. Hence when documentaries and current affairs programmes are put together, maintaining the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of television 'grammar' becomes the overriding concern of the director and the camera crew. Hood is quick to point out the ideological implications of the 'common-sense' rules about what camera angle should be chosen and how a shot should be framed. Here is one graphic example:

'...A cameraman filming the memorial to the victims of Bloody Sunday in Derry was observed to frame a shot in such a way as to avoid an unaesthetic gap on either side of the monument—a gap which would have been filled with distracting activity from passers-by. Tight framing did, it is true, cut out external activity, but it also eliminated an inscription below the official one, an inscription added by the IRA to commemorate the 'victims of British imperialism'.

At the same time he attacks those who argue pessimistically that the media system operates as a monolith, churning out ideology which ordinary people have no choice but to swallow whole:

'It is a view of the workings of the mass media which can provide no explanation for the wave of strikes of the winter of 1978-79, when the anti-trade union views explicitly expressed on television by such programmes as *Nationwide* did not prevent large sections of workers from going on strike and holding out for a very long time.

This can only mean that a considerable part of the television audience rejected the 'preferred reading' of the events they saw pictured on their screens and judged both the events and the television representation of them in the light of their own experience as workers and trade unionists—in the light of their class consciousness.

'When the programme-makers talked of 'the public' and claimed that 'the public' did not approve of the strikes, a section of the audience refused to accept that reading of the situation. They bracketed themselves out of 'the public' into which television attempted to incorporate them.'

Hood goes on to consider the development of the BBC and ITV and to discuss the possibilities for the future. Despite the availability of new technology he argues that under the present system those who fondly believe a different kind of television is possible are misguided because 'the constraints society lays on the use of any medium of communication are political and that in order to change the way a medium like television is used, we first have to change society'.

But even under socialism, he adds, with the production of television programmes firmly under workers' control, difficult ideological problems will still have to be confronted and choices made. Creating a new kind of television for a new society will be anything but plain sailing.

It is difficult to do justice to all the useful and interesting ideas crammed into this little book which is just over one hundred pages in length. I strongly recommend that comrades read it for themselves.

Jane Ure Smith

Unnatural death?

Long Life—expectations for old age

Magnus Pyke

J.M. Dent

We have all heard of racism and sexism, but what about ageism—discriminating against any citizen on account of age?

In this book Magnus Pyke highlights the plight of old people in society today. The book is full of amazing facts and figures.

In Britain now the proportion of the population over the age of sixty-five is about 14 per cent. 11 per cent of people over 65 suffer from disabilities of the joint. 80 per cent of diabetics are over the age of 50. Most of the new cases turn up in people between the ages of 60 and 70.

In England and Wales about 400 elderly people die each year from hypothermia. Hypothermia is commonly due to poverty and you won't find many rich people dying of it. In a properly run society it would not happen.

An important recent study has shown that elderly people need an ambient temperature of 21 degrees Centigrade (about 70 degrees F). Another study carried out in the 1970s showed that in England and Wales the temperature of the living rooms of 10 per cent of elderly people was lower than 12 degrees C (54 degrees F).

In his book Pyke has this to say:

'The installation of central heating in the bedrooms of susceptible elderly patients would safeguard them during the damp and foggy nights of winter. It is sensible and proper in a cold and rainy climate such as that of Britain that the houses of the elderly should be equipped in this way. After all, we do not expect children to go about without the shoes they need to keep their feet warm. Why, therefore, should their grand-parents be expected to sleep in bedrooms which are not adequately heated?'

After a long life of labour, elderly people ought to be able to enjoy the relaxation of retirement. But many retired people are unhappy for good reasons: for many it means loneliness and poverty. Workers who were earning a basic wage of £75 per week at 64 find themselves at 65 with a measly pension of £28 per week.

In Britain the oldest are the poorest. Elderly women are poorest of all. For nearly everyone, then, retirement is a financial blow. Can an old person who dies of cold or undernourishment, or of a fall on a rickety staircase, really be said to have died a natural death? Poverty and neglect still claim their victims today as they did in the nineteenth century. The suicide rate among old people remains the highest of any age group. In his book, Magnus Pyke may not advocate a socialist revolution, but he does highlight the contemptible way in which old people are treated under a rotten and corrupt system.

John Appleyard.

The motorcyclist's guide to permanent revolution

Trotsky for Beginners

Tariq Ali and Phil Evans

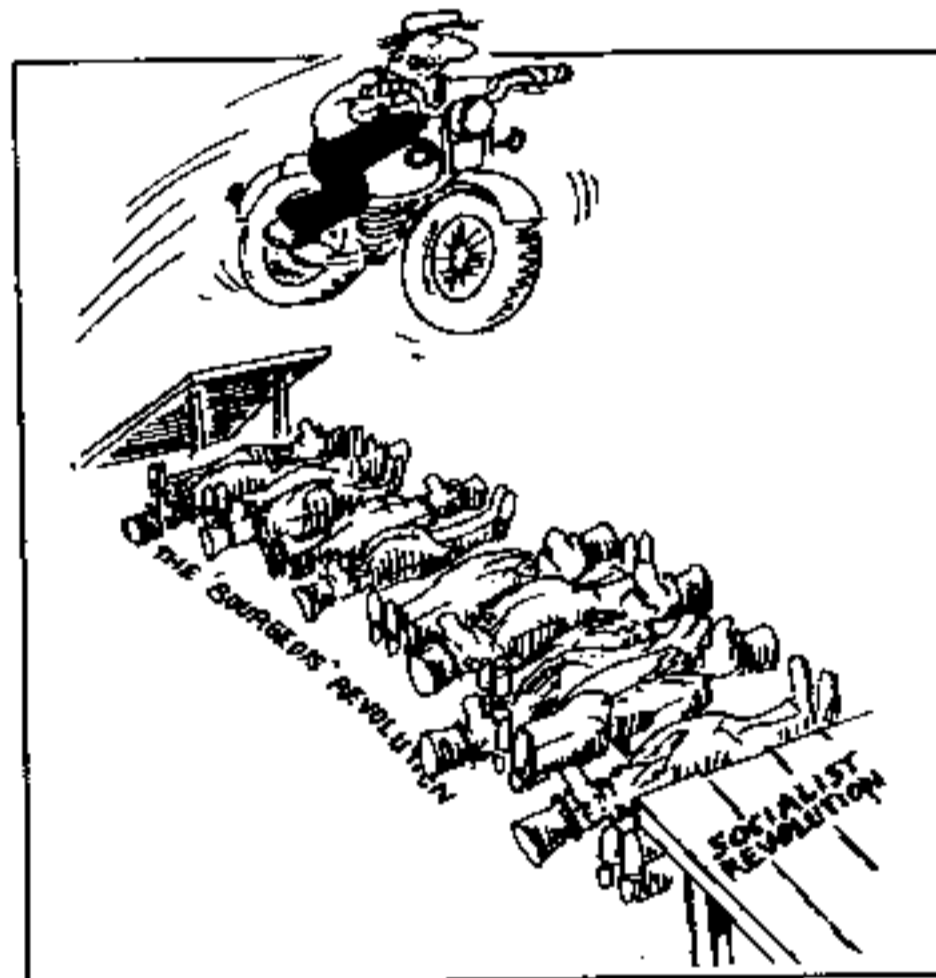
Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Limited, £1.95

I must confess I should have reviewed this book months ago but I've been rather unenthusiastic about it. This is no reflection on the book itself but rather on the Beginners series up to now. I've actually got most of the other Beginners books and I've quite liked the two I've read all the way through, those on Marx and Lenin. I gave up trying to finish *Freud for Beginners* as I found the drawings rather ugly and the text confusing.

As a method of introducing people to a difficult subject I think comic books are a really good idea. But in order to work they have to be good entertainment and up to now I've found the Beginners books lacking in humour—they've had a sort of 'worthy' feel about them. In *Marx for Beginners*, the first of them, I found that though Marx's ideas were presented simply they were also presented in a very dry and static fashion. I wasn't really surprised when I heard it's a set book for students in American colleges along with Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*.

Rius, the author of the book, has, I believe, quite an unrevolutionary idea of what Marxism is. For example, on page 35, he writes that Marx inspired many great people, who in turn influenced millions of others. A fair enough remark, but amongst these so-called great people inspired by Marx, Rius lists Pope John XXIII and General de Gaulle.

Trotsky for Beginners, however, goes a long way in convincing me that the Beginners series is an excellent idea and I'm sure Phil Evans and Tariq Ali's book will do a lot



to popularise Trotsky's work. To be completely partisan about it, Phil Evans' illustrations are largely to thank for the book's success. They actually made me laugh when reading it—they have absolutely none of that 'worthy' feel that spoilt A and Z's 'Lenin for Beginners'.

Credit should of course go to Tariq, though, for providing a clear and unpatronising text. It isn't an easy task to tackle a subject as big as Trotsky, but any book that explains the theory of permanent revolution by means of a motorcyclist doing an Evel Knievel-type leap over stages of capitalist development deserves to be circulated widely, even if it does mean it might end up as a set course in an American college.

If there is a criticism I have with the book it's not so much with the text but with the bibliography at the end. It's annoying that Duncan Hallas's book on Trotsky's Marxism is not included for it is I believe the best possible complement to Tariq Ali and Phil Evans' book.

Peter Court

Russia's silent spring

The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union

Boris Komarov

Pluto, £2.95

It is easy to be dismissive or cynical about ecology-freaks. All of us harbour our own particular prejudices. For myself, it probably started in CND in the early sixties with all of those people urging us to pick up our litter on Aldermaston marches. My prejudice was re-inforced around 1968 by the emergence in the USA of the 'ecology movement'. This, according to my American friends, was 'definitely something got up by Johnson and the CIA to take people's attention off Vietnam'. That seemed to me an extremely logical position to adopt.

Of course, the fact that it was to turn into a campaign which challenged at many levels those who actually controlled the development of society was not envisaged by whatever manipulators were at its heart.

The response of the revolutionary left has been very unclear. We have not thought through our attitude on environmental questions. For instance, how can we fail to make a clear connection between health and safety at work and health and safety in the community in general?

The factory fumes whose extraction from the work-shop we consider most important are simply expelled into the general atmosphere which we all breathe. The dumping of poisons and the pollution of rivers and seas must be a prime concern for all socialists. We shall inherit the earth, but what state will it be in?

But things are different in the Soviet Union, aren't they? Any reader of *Soviet Weekly* can tell you so. But then any reader of *Soviet Weekly* can also tell you how wonderful the Russian psychiatric hospitals and how therapeutic the labour camps at Vorkuta are.

And then, along comes a man calling himself 'Boris Komarov' and publishes a book which details the destruction of the environment in the Soviet Union in such a clear-cut manner that no-one could doubt the honesty of his account. Take, for instance, the figures quoted for the atmospheric pollution of cities. According to 'official figures', over one hundred Russian cities contain an atmospheric pollution level that is immediately dangerous to health. One thousand are at a level that should, by Russian standards, be considered as a warning zone.

The rivers and seas are also in a perilous state of pollution. In order to produce a small percentage of the durable cord used in aircraft tyres, the bureaucracy have now totally polluted one of the world's largest inland seas—Lake Baikal. The idiocy of these 'planners' is such that while, in order to produce this cord they need clean water, they have managed to pollute their only source of clean water—the lake itself.

The Sea of Azov now produces only one-ninetieth of the fish catch of 30 years ago.

The coastal resorts of the Black Sea, the famed holiday resorts of all Russian romances, are now polluted with oil. Swimming in many areas of the Black Sea is now considered harmful by official Soviet standards.

To quote from Komarov's conclusion should be enough:

'More than 85 per cent of the population has no way to get real information about pollution; and if they think at all about ecology, it is usually only after they have contracted some form of lung cancer and have been granted sufficient recupera-

tion time in a hospital bed.

'But the avant-garde of the people, as some of the representatives of the ruling elite call themselves, perceives ecological problems only from the figures of various documents. The green fences around their suburban houses effectively screen them from economic and environmental crises! Five to six per cent of our society has access to natural products, special drinking water and special swimming pools with filtered sea water (without oil or phenol).'

The effects of capitalist despoilation are obvious to us all in the West...The state capitalists of the East have once again proved themselves as equals.

Jim Scott

For Marxists only

The World Economic Crisis: US imperialism at bay

Yann Fitt, Alexandre Faure and Jean Pierre Vigier

Zed Press, £10.95 (Hdbk), £3.95 (pbk)

The Economic Crisis and American Society

Mamuel Castells

Basil Blackwell, £4.95.

Major international crisis has been with us for seven years now. Yet attempts at explanation are still few and far between. Under such circumstances virtually any book on the subject is welcome. Unfortunately, however, neither of these two works provides an adequate account of what is happening.

The World Economic Crisis is a collection of more or less journalistic accounts of how US capitalism has responded in terms of international policy as the crisis has begun to hit it.

They are, by and large, disappointing. The single exception is an introduction by Noam Chomsky. He provides a lucid account of US efforts to reassert its international power—an excellent antidote to all those who see things in terms of a simple decline of US influence.

Otherwise, the book never quite comes to terms with its subject matter. Facts (sometimes from rather dubious sources) are given which simply contradict claims made elsewhere. For example, Yann Fitt notes in passing that the world's major raw material and food producer is the US; this does not stop all three authors reproducing the 'unequal exchange' argument—the claim that the exploitation of the Third World countries takes place because they are the major raw material and food producers and are forced to sell these things at reduced prices.

The 'scientific' argument used to back up such conclusions is strange indeed. Vigier attempts to account for the effect of technological change on the rate of profit—but all he succeeds in doing is producing two or three pages of gibberish.

The pieces by Fitt and Vigier are the most

disappointing. The world economic crisis for them is little more than a conspiracy by the US. West Germany, for instance is seen as no more than a puppet of the Americans. This hardly explains the unwillingness over the last year of West Germany to support the trade boycott of Russia which was supposed to follow the occupation of Afghanistan. And the implication is that everything reactionary in Europe comes from the US-German bloc—which must be surprising news for those in the various parts of Central Africa where French troops still operate or those faced with British troops in Northern Ireland.

Castells' book is a more serious effort. Some sections of it are very good indeed—his accounts of the crisis of the cities and of the changes in the family as married women are pulled into the workforce, for example. He also provides a wealth of useful factual material. Where he fails is in his attempts in the first part of the book to provide an account of the dynamic of the system that would fit the different elements of the crisis together. The failure, like so many others before, is a failure to explain convincingly the interaction of Marx's 'theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall' and its 'countervailing factors'.

The result is that in the latter half of the book arbitrary assertion tends to replace Marxist argument (he even, at one point, goes against the labour theory of value by claiming that technical change which increases productivity also creates new value).

Despite these criticisms, the book is worth looking at for those with some prior knowledge of Marxist economics.

Chris Harman

Correction:

After criticising the Latin America Bureau for inaccuracies in our previous issue, we got their address wrong ourselves...Their book on unions in Latin America, *Unity Is Strength*, can be obtained from LAB, PO Box 134, London NW1; price £2.50.

FILM REVIEWS

Love and Death without laughs

Stardust Memories
Director Woody Allen

Woody Allen's latest film *Stardust Memories* has certainly got up the noses of the critics. 'Allen is currently the victim of what might be called delusions of inadequacy,' said one. 'Not only repulsive, but boring,' said another, '... underneath the fictive Woody Allen lies a self-indulgent, sneering, self-pitying snob.' They claim the film will almost certainly fail at the box office, in America at least. Given that Woody Allen has enjoyed unremitting critical acclaim for the past six or seven years, it is difficult to see why some of these people have suddenly become so incensed.

The story revolves around a film maker, Sandy Bates, who is no longer satisfied with making comedy films. He wants to turn his hand to more 'serious' projects, but his audience keep insisting that he should continue to make funny films. 'You want to do mankind a real service?' intone a group of super intelligent alien beings Bates accidentally encounters. 'Tell funnier jokes.' Consequently he feels rejected and misunderstood.

Clearly *Stardust Memories* is Woody Allen's most autobiographical film to date, in that he is attempting to use it to come to terms with his current predicament as a film maker. But many of the critics seem to have made the elementary mistake of saying Sandy Bates is Woody Allen, and consequently they have no choice but to see the audience, Bates' fans and critics, as themselves. And admittedly these people are given rather a rough ride. In fact they are portrayed as a bunch of idiotically shallow, pretentious and sychophantic creeps.

Woody Allen is laying into the world of Art, with a capital A. 'We're in a society that extols many of the wrong traits,' he said in a recent interview, 'and one of these that gets extolled is artistic accomplishment. The artist in society is such a privileged and looked-up-to character...'

The attack isn't altogether successful, perhaps because Sandy Bates is largely allowed to stand apart from what is being laughed at, and to get away with all the funny lines. But never mind. It does seem to me that the whole world of film-buffery, critical pontificating and film showings 'where the director will be on hand to answer questions' is well worth having a go at.

But there is a contradiction. Allen may not like the world of Art, but at the same time he cannot relinquish his own notion of himself as an Artist. Hence the gradual transition over the years to more 'serious' films. The questions about Life and Death, Sex,

God and Art which formed the basis for the humour, both verbal and visual, in his early films are now posed with some seriousness. Sandy Bates rails at his own impotence in the face of a world where there is so much suffering, but can find no explanations. Ultimately the questions ring hollow because Woody Allen has no politics with which to provide the answers.

I guess, like Sandy Bates fans, I end up saying the early films are the best. The photography is not nearly so beautiful, and they lack the inventiveness and technical refinement displayed by *Manhattan* and *Stardust Memories*. But the humour is subversive. The frenetic Woody Allen character of *Sleeper*, *Bananas* and *Love and Death* is the little guy wreaking havoc with the system and exposing all its ludicrous aspects, much in the tradition of the Marx brothers. The insights come via the humour. *Annie Hall*, a kind of half way point between the early and late films, relies on its zany humour to say a good deal about relationships.

Nowadays Woody Allen is unwilling to rely on comedy to provide the insights in the old way. It is not that *Stardust Memories* and *Manhattan* are not funny. They are.

There is one crazy scene in *Stardust Memories* where he chases a pigeon around his apartment with a fire extinguisher, shouting, 'Who says they're harmless? They're rats with wings.' But the jokes are for light relief. The attempts at profundity are what he really wants us to heed. As a result the films hang together uneasily and what seemed like

a good film in the cinema leaves you feeling empty when it is all over.

There is one other aspect of Woody Allen's recent films that makes me feel uneasy. That is his treatment of women. Sexual relationships have always been shown to be difficult in the films, but up until *Annie Hall* the difficulties arose because everyone's neuroses got in the way. The Woody Allen character had just as many hang ups as the women he tried to relate to.

Now the emphases seem to have changed. There is more concentration on women as beautiful objects; they have almost been absorbed into the world of Art. At the end of *Manhattan* the central character tries to list the things that mean something to him. It comes down to Beethoven, Shakespeare and the face of the woman he loves. The idea is replayed in *Stardust Memories* as Sandy Bates tries to identify his one moment of complete happiness. We see it as a lingering shot of Charlotte Rampling's face with Louis Armstrong playing in the background. But beneath this beautiful exterior the women in the recent films are shown to be a seething mass of neurotic anxiety. The character played by Charlotte Rampling winds up a complete mental wreck. We are shown an extremely disturbing sequence, in big close up, of her drug-swollen face as she mutters about how the doctors find her attractive. Women are paralysed by their anxieties. The Woody Allen character may be beset with doubts, but his life goes forward nonetheless.

In the end, I suppose I think in all sorts of contradictory ways Woody Allen is an interesting film maker. All his films, with the exception of the completely serious *Interiors*, are worth seeing. He's got a good line on the Nazis and he supported the recent Screen Actors' strike in America. Let's hope his political insights develop in the future.
Jane Ure Smith



Women as beautiful objects—Charlotte Rampling and Woody Allen in *Stardust Memories*

THE SOCIALIST ABC

T is for Trotsky the hero who had to take all of the blame

In the whole history of the working class movement not one person embodied the combination of the heroic and the tragic to a higher degree than Leon Trotsky.

Trotsky as President of the St Petersburg soviet was central in organising the October revolution. He built the Red Army of millions. Jointly with Lenin he headed the Communist International which led millions of workers around the world. But Trotsky ended his life as a hounded and isolated revolutionary, with very few followers and very little influence on events.

In 1906 Trotsky had developed his theory of permanent revolution that guided his thoughts and actions until the end of his life. The kernel of this theory was recognition of the interaction between international capitalism and the national backwardness of Tsarist Russia. This intersection, Trotsky argued, meant it was necessary to combine the coming peasant democratic revolution to destroy feudalism in Russia, with the proletarian socialist revolution, the revolution in one country with the international revolution. Trotsky surpassed even Lenin with the insight of this theory, arguing for the inevitable impact of the revolution in Russia on the international labour movement, and the inescapable defeat of the Russian proletariat if the international revolution failed to come to its aid.

The October revolution was a positive affirmation of Trotsky's theory while the isolation of the Russian workers after the defeat of the German revolution was a negative affirmation.

A new chapter in Trotsky's life began with his fight against the bureaucracy, for workers' democracy in Russia itself, and against the transformation of the revolutionary International into a department of the Stalinist state. Expelled from Russia in 1929, Trotsky was hounded by Stalin's agents all over Europe, most of his family were murdered, and he was forced to spend his last years in Mexico. Yet Trotsky never wavered, and his most brilliant writings are produced in this period.

The Stalinist leadership led to a continuous series of defeats of the



international working class. Again and again semi-revolutionary or even revolutionary situations that could have been transformed into victorious revolutions ended with victory for reaction.

The worst defeat of the international working class was in Germany in 1933. The significance of Hitler's victory in opening the door to international reaction was as great as the victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917 in opening the door to international revolution. But the Communist International under Stalin made no criticism of the 'social fascist' policy of the German Communist Party which helped Hitler come to power, by proclaiming the reformists rather than the fascists as the main enemy. Again and again Trotsky's analysis proved correct. However, this in no way helped Trotsky in spreading his ideas and achieving any significant success.

In the face of the monstrous machine of Hitler, crushing the bones and the souls of millions, international Stalinism was transformed into a religion, the opiate of the people in a heartless world.

At the time it was extremely painful to reject Stalin — as painful as an addict trying to stop taking a drug. I remember my friend getting a pair of shoes from the Soviet Union and really kissing them, not because he was stupid but because of the terrible pain and fear of the future. In January 1933 Hitler came to power. In February 1934 the fascists smashed the Austrian working class and in the same month they went into armed action in Paris (although they were rebuffed). Every morning when we got up the first thing we did was to look at the newspaper to see where the workers had been beaten yesterday. The attraction of Russia and the mass Stalinist party was almost irresistible. It isolated the Trotskyists. They were persecuted, including physically, by the Stalinists. I remember how the Palestinian Communist Party published a leaflet denouncing two people giving their names and addresses as Trotskyist fascist police spies. The result was that the two were

arrested immediately by the British police.

But the physical persecution was not the main thing. It was the feeling of helplessness in the face of the massive Nazi military machine on the one hand and its opponent in the form of the Russian Red Army, between Hitlerism and Stalinism.

What about the Moscow trials? After all, the accusation that the leaders of the October revolution, the majority of Lenin's Central Committee, the President of the Comintern, and the main leaders of the Red Army were all Nazi agents must have looked so stupid as to undermine the credibility of Stalin and help Trotsky. In fact it did the opposite. The fear of Nazism and impotence in the face of it was encouraged by the Moscow trials and helped Stalin not Trotsky.

Trotsky's rational thinking in no way satisfied the craving of defeated workers. In every new crisis what was necessary above all was a mass revolutionary party to transform the situation into a victorious revolution. But again and again such a party was not to be, and more and more it became difficult to build such a party. The pain and the impotence, leading to greater impotence, greater pain and greater defeats, benefited Stalinism on the one hand and fascism on the other.

In the tragic series of defeats of the Trotskyist movement (better perhaps to say Trotskyist circles), the historical and the biographical can hardly be separated. The leader of millions in 1917-1921 became a leader of tiny groups. He himself paid with blood for the defeat of the movement and his ideas. It is true our history is full of martyrs who gave their life for the cause; from the 30,000 in the Paris Commune to individuals like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. But Trotsky paid a higher price than any one of those, they were murdered only once. He was murdered again and again. Of his four children two died in Stalin's concentration camps, one was forced into suicide in Berlin and one murdered in Paris. Trotsky's first wife languished to death in Siberia, and finally Trotsky himself was murdered by Stalin's assassin.

To the shallow observer the last 18 years of Trotsky's life look like an arid period. History will prove that the basic ideas of Trotsky remain a most important heritage — his defence of internationalism, his defence of workers' democracy and opposition to all bureaucracy, his complete confidence in the unlimited ability of the working class to achieve freedom. In this sense the future belongs to Trotsky and Trotskyism.

Tony Cliff

interviewed by Simon Turner